



**2022**

**EMVI**

**Empowering Migrant  
Voices on Integration and  
Inclusion Policies**

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**WP2: National Reports**



Project funded by the European  
Union's Asylum, Migration and  
Integration Fund





# **EMVI - Empowering migrant voices on integration and inclusion policies.**

## **WP2 - National report Italy\***

**July 2022**

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This Research was funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. The content represents solely the views of Cospe Onlus and the EMVI project partnership and is its sole responsibility. The European Commission assumes no responsibility for the use of the information contained herein.

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## I. Participation and Integration Structures in Italy

### 1. Introduction: research objectives and methodology

The importance of the political participation of migrants and their descendants is emphasized in numerous European legal documents such as the **Council of Europe Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at the Local Level**<sup>1</sup> (1992). The document, ratified by only nine countries including the Czech Republic, Sweden, Italy, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Albania, Iceland, and Norway enshrines the freedom of expression, assembly and association, that of the establishment of consultative bodies at the local level for citizens of foreign origin residing in a Council of Europe member country and the right to vote and stand for election in local elections in those countries. However, the last chapter of the convention, considered of more difficult implementation and which relates to the right to vote, has been ratified by only four countries (Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and the Netherlands).

On the other hand, at the European Union level, despite the implementation of integration policies set out in the document "**Common Principles on Immigrant Integration Policies at the EU Level**"<sup>2</sup> (2004 and 2014) by national governments, significant disparities remain between EU citizens and third-country nationals in all areas of integration. Principle No. 9 of that document emphasizes that "*The participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration. Giving immigrants a voice in the formulation of policies that directly affect them can lead to policy that better serves immigrants and enhances their sense of belonging. Where possible, they should be involved in elections, have voting rights and be able to join political parties.*" Rights on political participation of migrants in Italy have not evolved much over the years and have mainly stopped at the legislation of the 1980s and 1990s related to the first migration flows.

The **FRA** (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights) report "**Together in the EU - Promoting the participation of migrants and their descendants**"<sup>3</sup> (2017) concludes that the **political rights of migrant citizens are very limited in member countries.**

In order to understand their classification, three categories of rights are mentioned: the right to vote, the right to be voted for and the right to be consulted which is not expressly codified. Within the European Union, only 11 countries recognize the right to vote for third-country nationals (TCNs) (Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Sweden). Of these, only 8 admit the possibility for these citizens to stand for election at the local level (Denmark, Ireland, Finland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovakia, and Sweden). In contrast, Spain, Portugal, and the United Kingdom recognize the right to vote for a limited number of third-country nationals linked to their country of origin. Portugal and the United Kingdom (although no longer part of the European Union) recognize the right to run for office in local elections. In 11 Central and Southeast European countries, third-country nationals do not have the right to register in political parties. On the other hand, with regard to the right to be consulted as a form of representation, albeit informal, enshrined in various European documents, including those mentioned above, it is noted that national consultative bodies exist in 10 member countries. In other countries, consultative bodies have been established at the regional and local levels since the 1990s.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.coe.int/it/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treatyenum=144>

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/common-basic-principles-immigrant-integration-policy-eu\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/common-basic-principles-immigrant-integration-policy-eu_en)

<sup>3</sup> [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2017-together-in-the-eu\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2017-together-in-the-eu_en.pdf)

Another key document for integration policies is The European Commission's new **Action Plan for Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027**<sup>4</sup>. Drawn up on the basis of recommendations and consultations that took place with organizations and members of civil society in many European countries, while also taking into account the results that emerged from the previous 2016 plan, the new plan aims to be more inclusive by recognizing difficulties and problems in the integration process even for citizens who have attained citizenship of a member state as a result of the naturalization process. The new action plan thus focuses not only on non-EU migrants, but also on EU citizens with a migrant background. With 34 million EU residents born outside its borders (8 % in 2019) and 10 % of young people aged 15-34 born in the EU having at least one of their parents of foreign origin, democratic structures within member countries cannot exclude their voices for much longer. The new plan emphasizes **that integration and inclusion are critical for people moving to live in the European Union, for local communities, and for the long-term well-being of our societies and the stability of our economies. If we are to help our societies and economies thrive, we need to support everyone in the society, as inclusion is both a right and a duty for all.** The Action Plan reaffirms that promoting an inclusive society on a democratic basis is in line with the core values of the European Union, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Pillar of Social Rights. It is based on the principle that "the European way of life is an inclusive one," and since European societies are not yet able to deliver on this promise, as migration is still closely linked to issues of discrimination, one of the main goals of the action plan must be to raise awareness in the host societies about the importance of inclusion and participation of all.

Based on the context mentioned above, the **EMVI - Empowering migrant voices on integration and inclusion policies project** aims to investigate through research activities conducted in each partner country (Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Slovenia), aspects related to the integration process of migrants and the characteristics of their political participation. The research uses a multi-method approach, including both qualitative and quantitative analysis, desk research, interviews, and focus groups in each partner country. It focuses on migrants/people with migration backgrounds in the broadest sense, meaning: people with refugee status (international or subsidiary protection, humanitarian status) as well as third-country nationals (TCNs) and their descendants including people of different racial, ethnic origin, religion, age, gender identity and sexual orientation. The research provides a basis for exploring existing arrangements and structures and developing new ways for migrants' participation in consultative and decision-making processes concerning the design and implementation of integration policies. It aims to investigate, in this specific case, the situation in Italy in order to understand how migrants are politically involved and empowered and how their needs are met, and their voices heard, including their rights to participate in civil society and politics such as the freedom of association, the right to assemble, the right to petition, and the right to vote. The focus on women is particularly important and will be given special attention.

The paragraphs that make up the research will be organized as follows:

The *second section* presents a quantitative and qualitative overview of migration flows and migrants residing in Italy with specifics on the most numerous nationalities, gender, regions of the country with the most immigrants, etc.

The *third section* traces the legislative framework underlying migration and integration policies in Italy from the 1980s' to the present.

The *fourth section* analyzes the main institutions that are responsible for migrant integration policies at the national, regional and local levels.

The *fifth section* analyzes the national plan for the integration of foreign nationals and other relevant documents

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<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/it/qanda\\_20\\_2179](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/it/qanda_20_2179)

The *sixth section* makes an analysis on the national data on migrant associations in the country and gives some examples of good practices that aim to promote migrant participation.

The *seventh section* analyzes the model of migrants advisory council in Italy.

The objective of the *qualitative survey*, carried out through interviews (section 8) with political representatives of migrant origin who serve in their roles in various Italian cities, candidates and elected members of city councils, and representatives of parties and institutions, is to understand what are the elements that condition the political participation of citizens of foreign origin.

The *focus groups*, on the other hand (section 9) have a more territorial focus, concentrating in the Municipality of Empoli where participatory pathways for citizens of immigrant origin residing in the municipal area will be tested during the course of the project.

## 1. Facts and Figures: Migrants in Italy

The past three years have been particularly difficult for people globally, with serious social, economic, and psychological repercussions, including consequences on migration movements.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimates a decline in the number of migrants internationally by about two million due to consequences related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In Italy, immigration has seen three different phases starting in the 1970s and 1980s with an initial phase of arrivals contained in numbers, then continuing in the next two decades with significant flows and finally the most recent phase, characterized by economic crises and humanitarian emergencies during which new arrivals are mainly people seeking humanitarian protection and family reunifications.

According to the ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics) Annual Report 2022 "La situazione nel paese"<sup>5</sup> (The situation in the country), **the foreign resident population in Italy as of January 1, 2022, is 5,193,669.** In 2019, it amounted to 4,996,158, and thus increased by less than 200,000 in three years. Also, ISTAT in its document "Cittadini non comunitari in Italia 2020 -2021"<sup>6</sup> (non-EU citizens in Italy 2020-2021) analyzes how in recent years and starting from **2018 there has been a decline in new entries and residence permits issued to non-EU citizens by 26.8 percent**, which amount to a national total of 106,500 residence permits, the lowest number in the last 10 years and almost 40 percent fewer than those issued in 2019. This decline is reflected in a decrease in permits granted for study (-58.1% from the previous year) and asylum permits (-51%). In 2020, there were 13,467 new permits for asylum and international protection applications (12.6 percent of total new permits issued). The decrease affected all non-EU countries of main origin, but the most noticeable decrease (more than 80 percent compared to 2019) was in Indian and Ukrainian nationals. This balance, however, was altered with recent entries due to the war in Ukraine starting in February 2022. Permits for family reunification, which has always been the main reason for entry in Italy, also dropped by 38.3% and accounted for only 59% of new residence permits issued. On the other hand, as far as work reasons are concerned, again there was an incisive decrease of (- 8.8%) compared to the other reasons for entry partly due to the slowdown of the immigration flow decree (decreto flussi) regulating entry for work reasons into the country.

Some of the reasons for this decline in admissions and issuance of residence permits are obvious, such as the limitation of travel due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the lockdown situation has led to a slowdown in services nationwide resulting in delays in processing residence permit paperwork. In fact, in 2020, the

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.istat.it/storage/rapporto-annuale/2022/Rapporto\\_Annuale\\_2022.pdf](https://www.istat.it/storage/rapporto-annuale/2022/Rapporto_Annuale_2022.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.istat.it/it/files//2021/10/Cittadini-non-comunitari\\_2020\\_2021.pdf](https://www.istat.it/it/files//2021/10/Cittadini-non-comunitari_2020_2021.pdf)

Ministry of the Interior recorded a significant increase in arrivals on Italian shores that only partially translated into a growth in residence permits issued. The processing of applications for regularization made under Article 103 of Decree 34/2020<sup>7</sup>, an amnesty which provided the regularization of workers in the sectors of agriculture, livestock, fishing or related activities or those in care work (domestic helpers, caregivers) was also slower than for previous regularizations. As of January 2022, the files analyzed out of 240,000 applications were only 13%. The remaining 87% are still waiting for a response.

Another reason to consider with respect to the decrease of citizens from non-EU countries is the acquisition of citizenship. Between 2011 and 2020, more than 1.2 million people acquired Italian citizenship, and it can be estimated that **as of January 1, 2021, new citizens by acquisition of citizenship residing in Italy were about 1.6 million; as of January 1, 2020, they were about 1.517.000**. Considering the whole population with migratory background (foreigners and Italians by acquisition of citizenship), the population of foreign origin has continued to grow, although not at the pace of the past, **reaching almost 6 million 800 thousand residents as of January 1, 2021**.

## 2.1 The most numerous nationalities

Again, according to ISTAT's Annual Report 2022 "The Situation of the Country," the most numerous nationalities in Italy and well established in the territory with different immigration patterns are 5. The largest one is the Romanian community. Even though Romania is a member country of the European Union, Romanian citizens are still counted in immigration studies as they amount more than 1 million of the foreign population by January 2021. Romanians are very close culturally to Italy and can be considered a recently settled community, characterized by family-based migration. The gender ratio within the community is less balanced than other 4 largest communities with 73.6 men for every 100 women. The second community, the Albanian community has similar characteristics in the pattern of migration, which is also family-based. The gender ratio is 105 men per 100 women. Albanians reach 433,000 residents in the country.

The third largest national group is Moroccan with about 429,000 residents. Immigration of the Moroccan community is mainly due to employment and initially it was the heads of households who migrated. However, there has been no shortage of family reunifications over the years, and this is also evidenced by the gender balance where for every 116 men there are 100 women.

The fourth largest community is the Chinese community with 330,000 residents and family-type migration characteristics. For every 102 males there are 100 females.

The fifth community is Ukrainian and is well established in Italy beyond the new arrivals due to the outbreak of war last February. As of January 2021, there were 236,000 Ukrainian residents, and until June 11, 2022, there were 132,129 new arrivals of people fleeing the country, according to data from the Ministry of the Interior: 69,493 were women, 20,181 were men, and 42,455 were minors. Ukrainian immigration first emerged in a big way in 2002 with regularization under the Bossi-Fini decree when 107,000 Ukrainians, mostly women working as domestic helpers, applied for regularization. Today, within the community women are still the majority and make up about 77.6% of residents.

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<sup>7</sup> Art. 10 D.l 34/2000 Emergence of labor relations

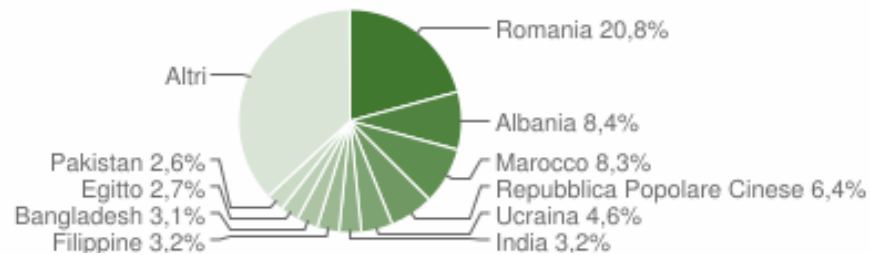


Figure 1 Source: [www.tuttitalia.it](http://www.tuttitalia.it)

Other nationalities present that make up most of the new arrivals also due to economic changes and political balances in various parts of the world are: Filipinos (3.2%), Indians (3.2%), Bengalis (3.1%), Egyptians (2.7%) and Pakistanis (2.6%). Among new arrivals in 2020, particularly among those who applied for international protection, the most numerous nationalities are: Pakistan (3,683 permits, 27.3% of those entering for this reason), Nigeria (1,395 entries, 10.4% of the total) and Bangladesh (1,152, 8.6% of those entering for asylum).

## 2.2 Gender balance in the Italian migratory scenario.

The gender balance within the Italian migratory scenario presents very interesting features because it is linked to some migration patterns where the first to migrate were women. A phenomenon not studied in depth, female migration began with a first wave in the 1980s and 1990s where the first to migrate were women from Cape Verde, the Philippines and Brazil. They emigrated out of economic needs, mostly alone and became the mainstays of their families, the "breadwinners" who supported their country with the remittances they sent. In the same years, numerous women from warring African and Middle Eastern countries moved to Italy. These were Muslim women, who in many cases rejoined their husbands who had immigrated years earlier. In the 2000s, many women arrived from Eastern countries (Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, Russia) and most of them were educated. Leaving their husbands and children at home, they moved to Italy to work in child and elderly care. Care work became a trap because beyond immediate earnings there were no career prospects. According to data from the ISMU Foundation (Initiatives and Studies on Multiethnicity), **from January 1, 2005, to January 1, 2020, the number of female immigrants increased by 141%** (compared to a 112% increase in men). Female immigration has changed the balance of the migration phenomenon, and **in 2020 amounts in 52.4% of legal adult migrant residents in Italy** if we do not consider the minor population where the prevalence is male. The largest nationalities mirror national estimates by numerical percentage, but the highest percentage of female presence is estimated to be Ukrainian (77.3%), followed by Polish (74.1%), Moldavian (66.1%) and Bulgarian (62.6%). More skewed to the male side, however, are all Asian and African national groups: Sri Lankans, Moroccans, Indians, Nigerians, Tunisians, Egyptians, and especially Pakistanis, Bengalis, and Senegalese. Among the latter three, female incidences reach only 30.4%, 28.1% and 25.4%, respectively.

In terms of new arrivals, among those seeking international protection we can say that there is an increase in the presence of women. In 2016 men accounted 88.4% of asylum-seeking migrants; in 2020 they slightly exceed 76%.

## 2.3 Geography of migration in the country

Although Southern Italy represents a gateway for many non-EU nationals, their presence is concentrated in the Center-North part of the country. ISTAT data emphasizes that as of January 1, 2021, only 14% of permits



were issued or renewed in the South where, among other things, due to the reduction in incoming flows, the decrease in regular residents was most noticeable between 2020 and 2021.

North and south also differ in terms of the prevailing reasons for the permit: the share of residence permits for asylum and other forms of protection reaches 9% in the South and 11% in the Islands (Sardinia and Sicily) against a national average of less than 5%. In contrast, long-term permits are around 60% in the South and below 55% in the Islands against an Italian average of over 64%.

Slightly less than half of non-EU citizens live in cities or densely populated areas; about 41% live in small towns and suburbs; and just over 10% in rural or sparsely populated areas. In the Northwest and Central Italy, the presence is concentrated in cities and densely populated areas; in the Northeast and the South, small towns prevail (45% and 43%), while rural areas are home to one-sixth of non-EU residents in the Northeast and the non-EU regular residents in the South. The territorial location of the various communities responds to different migration and job placement patterns. Concentration in cities is highest for Filipinos (84%), Egyptian (69%) and Bangladeshi (68%) citizens. Moroccan and Albanian nationals, the two oldest settled communities, prefer small towns.

### 3. The legal framework of immigration and integration of citizens with a migrant background

The legal framework on immigration in Italy is quite complex and has evolved in a restrictive direction over the years with a regulatory bias in terms of security, having included the phenomenon in many legislative documents as a matter of public safety. The first legislative document regulating migration flows is the **1986 Foschi Law**<sup>8</sup>, enacted after a series of amnesties and ministerial circulars that sought to address the migration flows of the 1980s<sup>1</sup>. Until 1986, in contradiction to the provisions dictated by Article 10(2) of the Constitution, which states that "The legal status of foreigners is regulated by law in accordance with international norms and treaties," the influx of foreign nationals into Italy was regulated by the 1931 TU (Unified Treaty) of Public Security Laws.<sup>9</sup> The Foschi Law had the merit of introducing a rule on family reunification, providing for tourist and study stays and declaring (formal) equality between Italian and foreign workers; the law was accompanied by a large amnesty involving more than 100.000 immigrants.

Next, the subject of immigration was regulated by the **Martelli Law (l. 39/1990)**<sup>10</sup> which was created in response to emergency needs, but it is a rather organic law that is still the basis of current legislation on the subject. A mechanism for scheduling entry flows is introduced with this law, which is set according to the needs of the Italian labor market and consists in the issuance of a residence permit. The law also contains a repressive part, with criminal provisions, and regulates for the first time the procedure for the expulsion of foreigners considered dangerous and irregulars. Provision was also made for the amnesty of irregulars already in the territory and the first measures to promote the integration of immigrants, including the establishment of reception and first aid facilities, the hiring of 200 social workers, police officers and so on. It is during this period that, because of the collapse of the Soviet regime and communist dictatorial regimes in Europe, the arrivals of Albanian citizens on the coasts of Puglia begin. This led to a change in the perception of migration flows in the Italian society that would influence many subsequent policies in a negative direction. The following years saw a succession of laws and decrees designed to remedy the loopholes within the Martelli law: in 1992 a **new citizenship law**<sup>11</sup> increased the deadline for the naturalization of migrants to 10 years of continuous

<sup>8</sup> L. Dec. 30, 1986, No. 943 Regulations on the placement and treatment of non-EU immigrant workers and against illegal immigration. <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1987/01/12/086U0943/sg>

<sup>9</sup> Royal Decree No. 773 of June 18, 1931, Approval of the Consolidated Text of Public Security Laws.

<sup>10</sup> L. February 28, 1990, No. 39 Conversion into law, with amendments, of Decree-Law No. 416 of December 30, 1989, containing urgent rules on political asylum, entry and residence of non-EU citizens and regularization of non-EU citizens and stateless persons already in the territory of the State. Provisions on asylum.

<sup>11</sup> L. Feb. 5, 1992, No. 91 New regulations on citizenship.

legal residence, while in 1993 the **Mancino law**<sup>12</sup>, against xenophobia and discrimination, and the **Conso Decree**<sup>13</sup>, introduced new crimes attributable to migrants and modified the expulsion procedure. During 1995, a temporary act was approved, later converted into **Law No. 563/1995**<sup>14</sup>, the so-called Apulia Law, which decreed the opening, for the years 1995, 1996 and 1997, of Reception Centers along the Apulian coast: this law has been extended from time to time and still constitutes the foundation of the first Italian reception system.

**The Turco - Napolitano Law (l. No. 40 of 1998)**<sup>15</sup> was the first law of a general and systematic nature. Among the major innovations introduced was the expansion and greater planning of migratory flows; the introduction into the Italian regulatory system of the **Consolidated Act on Immigration**<sup>16</sup>, which concentrated within it all national regulations concerning the sector. This law operated both with a view to the labor and social integration of immigrants, through measures such as the provision of entry for job search, the introduction of a residency card to stabilize long-term residents and the extension of basic health care to irregular immigrants as well, and by strengthening control and deportation policies, which were deemed necessary and complementary to integration measures and national needs. Temporary Stay and Assistance Centers (CPTs), created to detain and identify immigrants and eventually deport them, were introduced with this law. Detention at these centers, was provided for a maximum of 30 days, and has been the subject of much criticism over the years due to discretion rights granted to law enforcement agencies, as well as the fact that prolonged detention at these centers entailed a limitation of fundamental rights.

In the following years, there was an increase in new arrivals due to the enlargement of the European Union, which made the political debate on these issues even more heated. **Law No. 189 of 2002**<sup>17</sup>, the so-called **Bossi-Fini Law**, amended the Turco-Napolitano in a restrictive way for non-EU citizens interested to immigrate to Italy. It shortened the duration of residence permits from 3 to 2 years, gave greater role to CPTs (Temporary Residence Centers) and the deportation to the border, introduced fingerprinting for all foreigners and the crime of illegal stay. This law changed the procedure on new entries, introducing the residence contract for immigrant workers, which made the procedure much more complicated. The law was accompanied by a gigantic amnesty, which involved more than 650.000 foreign nationals.

**In 2008, the center-right government issued the so-called security package (pacchetto sicurezza) through three main legislative instruments:**

**Law No. 125/2008**<sup>18</sup> introduced new criminal offenses for illegal immigrants and those who facilitate their stay on Italian soil (including employers who hire them off the books), the new aggravating circumstance of clandestinity for criminal offenses, the tightening of penalties for those who declare false personal information, and deportation for EU or non-EU citizens with convictions of more than 2 years of imprisonment.

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<sup>12</sup> Coordinated text of Legislative Decree No. 122 of April 26, 1993, on "Urgent measures on racial, ethnic and religious discrimination."

<sup>13</sup> L. August 12, 1993, No. 296 Conversion into law, with amendments, of Decree-Law No. 187 of June 14, 1993, containing new measures on prison treatment, as well as on the expulsion of foreign nationals.

<sup>14</sup> L. Dec. 29, 1995, No. 563 Conversion into law of Decree-Law No. 451 of Oct. 30, 1995, on urgent provisions for the further employment of Armed Forces personnel in maritime border control activities in the Apulia region

<sup>15</sup> L. March 6, 1998, No. 40 Discipline of immigration and regulations on the status of foreigners

<sup>16</sup> Legislative Decree No. 286 of July 25, 1998, Consolidated text of provisions concerning the discipline of immigration and rules on the condition of foreigners

<sup>17</sup> L. July 30, 2002, No. 189 Amendments to immigration and asylum legislation.

<sup>18</sup> L. July 24, 2008, No. 125 Conversion into law, with amendments, of Decree-Law No. 92 of May 23, 2008, containing urgent measures on public safety.

**Legislative Decree No. 160/2008**<sup>19</sup> provides rules that restrict the possibility of family reunification by limiting the number of family members that can be reunited and increases the level of income required to access this right.

**Law No. 94/2009**<sup>20</sup>, finally, provides regarding several public safety elements such as the introduction of the crime of illegal entry and stay, the tightening of penalties for the crime of aiding and abetting illegal immigration, a further lengthening of the maximum detention time, up to 6 months, in CPTs (renamed CIEs - Centers for Identification and Expulsion), the introduction of new economic and other stakes for entry, family reunification and renewal of residence permits, including the integration agreement and the points-based residence permit.

This approach is relaxed by the implementing decrees of European Directives **2009/50/EC**<sup>21</sup>, **2009/52/EC**<sup>22</sup> and **2004/38/EC**<sup>23</sup>

### 3.1 The most recent legal measures

**Law no.46 of 2017**<sup>24</sup> provides regulations aimed at speeding up international protection proceedings and combating illegal immigration: in particular, 26 specialized immigration courts are established, which have to deal with, among other things, the numerous cases of appeals against the rejection provisions of the Territorial Commissions; more streamlined procedures for the recognition of international protection and the deportation of irregular migrants, based largely on interviews immigrants make at the Territorial Commissions; and the maximum period for the detention of migrants inside the Centers (CIE) is raised.

**The Security Decree** (Decree-Law No. 113 of Oct. 4, 2018, converted into Law No. 132 of Dec. 1, 2018) has significantly altered the regulatory scenario regarding immigration, worsening the status of the rights of third country nationals already residing in Italy and of those who enter the country for international protection. The law, containing **provisions on immigration and public security, as well as measures for the functionality of the Ministry of the Interior and the National Agency for the management of assets seized and confiscated from organized crime**, introduced major changes within the Consolidated Act on Immigration (TUI) and in other provisions implementing EU regulations regarding the recognition of different forms of protection for asylum seekers (refugees, holders of subsidiary and humanitarian protection). Among many, some changes concern the repeal of humanitarian protection and introduction of the "special cases" typology. New cases of revocation and denial are provided for international protection. For the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees SPRAR modified in SAI (Reception and Integration System) in 2022, the number of beneficiaries is reduced; the procedure for the acquisition of Italian citizenship by naturalization is modified by bringing the waiting period for the evaluation of the file from 2 to 4 years. The aim of this reform was to limit the system of entry and stay of foreigners in the national territory with more stringent conditions.

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<sup>19</sup> Legislative Decree No. 160 of October 3, 2008, Amendments and additions to Legislative Decree No. 5 of January 8, 2007, implementing Directive 2003/86/EC on the right to family reunification.

<sup>20</sup> L. July 15, 2009, No. 94 Provisions on public safety.

<sup>21</sup> Council Directive 2009/50/EC conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment

<sup>22</sup> Directive 2009/52/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 18, 2009, introducing minimum rules on sanctions and measures against employers

Who employ third-country nationals whose stay is irregular

<sup>23</sup> Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States

<sup>24</sup> L. Apr. 13, 2017, No. 46 Conversion into law, with amendments, of Decree-Law No. 13 of Feb. 17, 2017, on urgent provisions for the acceleration of international protection proceedings, as well as for the fight against illegal immigration.

A change of government, a pandemic and various political vicissitudes led to the latest **Immigration Decree**<sup>25</sup> of 2020, which was created with the aim of amending the Security Decree. This decree has been much criticized because it was supposed to neutralize the harms and limitations introduced with the Security Decree, but this was achieved only partially. The reformed parts concern reception, a form of humanitarian protection and the system of widespread reception are restored. It fails to repeal the criminalization of sea rescues put in place by the Security Decree and the process for obtaining Italian citizenship is reduced from 4 to 3 years. This process was then restored to 2 years except for its extension to 3 years due to the need to longer proceedings period. The provision for revocation of Italian citizenship for those with final convictions of terrorism-related crimes also remains in place.

In the span of 2022, public discussion has begun in Italy about reforming the citizenship law<sup>26</sup> which dates to 1992. Specifically, the change concerns the status of immigrant's children, the so-called "Ius Scholae," which would give those born in Italy and those who arrived in by the age of 12, the opportunity to obtain Italian citizenship once they have successfully completed a schooling cycle of at least five years.

It is a much-debated reform on terms and content and was discussed in the House of Representatives in June 2022.

The political situation in Italy in July and the early dissolution of the Houses of Parliament postpones discussion on the decree-law until a date to be determined.

#### **4. Multilevel governance on immigration issues**

As we know, the competence par excellence in immigration matters lies with the European Union regulated by Articles 79 and 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). In particular, it defines the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals who enter and reside legally in one of the member states, including family reunifications. Member states retain the power to set admission volumes for people from third countries seeking work. In the area of integration, on the other hand, it does not provide for harmonization of regulations among all member states but provides incentives and support for the measures they take to promote the integration of third-country nationals.

##### **4.1 Distribution of the competences on immigration at the national level**

In Italy, competence in immigration matters is divided among several ministries. The Consolidated Text on Immigration (Legislative Decree 286/1998, Article 2 bis) established the Committee for the Coordination and Monitoring of Provisions Concerning the Discipline of Immigration, chaired by the President or Vice-President of the Council of Ministers or a delegated minister and composed of the ministers concerned with the issues discussed at each meeting and a representative designated by the Conference of Regions and Autonomous Provinces. Supporting the Committee is a Technical Working Group established at the Ministry of the Interior, whose members include, in addition to the Ministry of the Interior, representatives of other ministries and three experts designated by the Unified Conference (State-City and Local Self-Government Conference, ex art. 8 of Legislative Decree 281/1997). The Technical Group is configured as an open interinstitutional table where other representatives of the public administration can also be invited. (V EMN Italy Report)<sup>27</sup>

The responsibilities of ministries are organized as follows:

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<sup>25</sup> DECREE LAW 130/2020. Urgent provisions on immigration and security, converted into law Dec. 18, 2020, No. 173

<sup>26</sup> LAW Feb. 5, 1992, No. 91 New regulations on citizenship

<sup>27</sup> V European Migration Network Italy Report

[http://ssaistorico.interno.gov.it/download/allegati1/rosa8\\_fifthemnitallyreport\\_immigrantsandrefugees\\_legislation\\_institutions\\_and\\_2012\\_ita.pdf](http://ssaistorico.interno.gov.it/download/allegati1/rosa8_fifthemnitallyreport_immigrantsandrefugees_legislation_institutions_and_2012_ita.pdf)

**Ministry of the Interior.** The organization of the Ministry of the Interior regarding migration policies hinges on **the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration and the Department of Public Security**. The Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration carries out the functions of **civil rights protection, including those concerning asylum and immigration** by making use of the Central Directorate for Immigration and Asylum Policies, the Central Directorate for Civil Services for Immigration and Asylum, and the Central Directorate for Civil Rights, Citizenship and Minorities. **This Department is responsible for the initiatives conducted in the territory for the integration of immigrants and the various types of centers provided for immigrants and asylum seekers** (those for reception, identification and deportation and those for asylum seekers). Operating within, it's the "**National Commission for the Right of Asylum**," the State's highest authority on asylum and the recognition of international protection status, which performs the functions of guiding and coordinating the "**Territorial Commissions for the Recognition of International Protection**" and has decision-making power on immigrant and refugee matters. At the decentralized level, the Ministry of the Interior is organized into **Territorial Councils**, which are functional for the development of a network between the center and the periphery that improves the cognitive system and promotes the most appropriate choices for **removing obstacles to the economic, social, and cultural integration of immigrants**. They bring together the various local problems related to immigration; promote consultation among all administrations; promote the participation within them of associations representing migrant communities in Italy; promote initiatives for the socio-territorial integration of immigrants; and convey to the central government level the areas of intervention and proposals emerging at the provincial level.

**Ministry of Labor and Social Policy.** Within this ministry, the **General Directorate of Immigration and Integration Policies** has on the one hand, competencies that are related to the discipline of entry for work, such as the programming of flows and entry quotas for migrant workers, the monitoring of the labor market with reference to entry flows, and bilateral cooperation with countries of origin. On the other hand, there is a number of competencies related to the policies of inclusion and social cohesion of foreign citizens, such as the promotion of initiatives pertaining to active policies and the involvement of the relevant services in the activities of job placement and reintegration of foreign workers, the coordination of policies for the social and labor integration of immigrant foreigners, initiatives aimed at preventing and combating discrimination, xenophobia and the phenomenon of racism; maintenance of the register of associations and entities that carry out activities in favor of immigrants, coordination of activities related to policies for the protection of foreign minors, etc.

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.** Through the **Directorate General for Italians Abroad and Migration Policies** this ministry holds some important competencies in immigration matters. In particular, the Directorate General oversees consular affairs and dealing with issues concerning foreign nationals in Italy, as well as analyzing social and migration issues in relation to international organizations and bodies. It has competence in matters of visas and the entry regime for foreign nationals.

## 4.2 Integration policies at regional and local level<sup>28</sup>

The Italian state has exclusive competence in immigration matters. With the amendment of Chapter V of the Constitution through Constitutional Law No. 3/2001<sup>29</sup> the Regions were recognized spaces of intervention both on profiles of exclusive state competence and on those of concurrent or residual competence - such as social services, health care, school insertion and social integration of foreign citizens, legitimizing them to a promotional action to be realized through the involvement of local authorities. In aiming first and foremost at the realization of social inclusion and the fight against discrimination, the law conceived of local authorities and, above all, municipalities as co-leaders in its elaboration and implementation. They have thus been recognized as holders of specific functions, either in "competition" with the Region or exclusively - such as, for example, in the implementation of socio-cultural integration projects, in the reception of asylum seekers and

<sup>28</sup> Lino Panzeri Constitutional Observatory Issue 1/2018

<sup>29</sup> Amendments to Title V of Part Two of the Constitution

refugees, in the promotion of tools for consultation and participation in the social and institutional life of the entity, in the proper use of legal protection tools or, again, in language mediation services and awareness-raising activities on issues of intercultural dialogue. In implementing Directive 2013/33/EU<sup>30</sup>, laying down rules on the reception of applicants for international protection, Legislative Decree No. 142/2015<sup>31</sup> so-called Reception Decree has in fact defined the role of local authorities through their involvement in the management network SIPROIMI modified into SAI by Law Decree 130/2020<sup>32</sup>, which is the pivot of the Italian reception system.

## 5. National plan for the integration of third country nationals and other relevant documents

Planning in the area of integration of third-country nationals is the responsibility of the **Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Directorate General of Immigration and Integration Policies** and is carried out through the drafting of the document of **"Multiannual Integrated Programming in Employment, Integration and Inclusion"**<sup>33</sup>. It is drafted every 6 years in response to European programming such as the **European Commission's Action Plan for Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027**<sup>34</sup> which is precisely transposed into national programming documents. Programming is also carried out taking into consideration the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by identifying objectives, targets, and lines of intervention. After the previous 2014-2020 programming between October 2021 and January 2022, a long series of qualified stakeholders were invited to comment, make suggestions and proposals on a first draft of the Integrated Multiannual Programming in Employment, Integration, and Inclusion 2021-2027. The version that followed, benefited from contributions from nearly 100 international organizations, other central governments, regions and municipalities, social partners, universities, and public and private research bodies, third sector entities, associations working on behalf of migrants registered under Article 42 of the TUI and associations of migrants and new generations. At the level of the Region of Tuscany, on the other hand, the latest planning document is the **Integrated Address Plan for Immigration Policies 2012-2015**<sup>35</sup> which has not been updated in subsequent years.

Other important documents that have defined an articulated work plan to be followed at the national level regarding the condition of citizens of foreign origin is the **National Action Plan Against Racism, Xenophobia, and Intolerance (2014-2016)** drafted by UNAR (National Anti-Racial Discrimination Office and in Defense of Differences). In early 2022, UNAR launched a notice addressed to associations and entities working in the field of preventing and combating ethnic-racial discrimination to define the new National Action Plan 2021-2025. Most recently, the document **"National Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Sinti 2021-2030"**<sup>36</sup> has been adopted following the EU Council Recommendation of March 12, 2021 (2021/C 93/01) of which the document bears the same title.

## 6. Associations founded by migrants.

<sup>30</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013L0033&from=lv>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/gu/2015/06/22/142/sg/pdf>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2020/12/19/20A07086/sg>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/Documents/Programmazione-integrata-gennaio-2022.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/it/qanda\\_20\\_2179](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/it/qanda_20_2179)

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.regione.toscana.it/documents/10180/71336/Piano%20Immigrazione/523ed7e1-0722-459d-bdba-6735349227e7>

<sup>36</sup> [https://unar.it/portale/documents/20125/113907/Strategia\\_Nazionale\\_di\\_uguaglianza\\_inclusione\\_partecipazione\\_di\\_Rom\\_e\\_Sinti\\_2021-2030+%28ITA%29.pdf/1e4ccc9c-aeba-e7b2-864d-ee1eced7e4df?t=1653399043993](https://unar.it/portale/documents/20125/113907/Strategia_Nazionale_di_uguaglianza_inclusione_partecipazione_di_Rom_e_Sinti_2021-2030+%28ITA%29.pdf/1e4ccc9c-aeba-e7b2-864d-ee1eced7e4df?t=1653399043993)

According to 2019 ISTAT data, published in the "Structure and profiles of the nonprofit sector"<sup>37</sup> document (Struttura e profili del settore non-profit), the number of nonprofit institutions in Italy is 362,634. The study analyzes the activities carried out and the composition of the associations. It surveys but does not make a division to identify associations founded by migrant citizens and those with a migrant background or even provide a ranking regarding the most relevant associations at the national level. This information can be found partly within the Integrazione Migranti<sup>38</sup> website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, which has been mapping migrant associations in the country since 2014. The database, however, is not exhaustive because it is fed based on requests from associations that must voluntarily apply for membership. There are currently 1150 member associations on the database.

Also, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies on the basis of Article 42 of the Consolidated Immigration Act (Legislative Decree 286/98)<sup>39</sup> established the **"Register of Associations, Entities and Other Private Bodies Carrying Out Activities in Favor of Immigrant Foreigners"** (Presidential Decree 394/99, Article 52)<sup>40</sup>. This register includes associations that promote the integration of foreign citizens through activities pertaining to different areas such as providing language courses, disseminating information to support the process of integration of migrants in the society, enhancing the cultural expressions of the country of origin, preventing and combating all forms of discrimination and xenophobia; intercultural mediation, organizing training courses for those in public or private offices who work in contact with the migrant population, etc.

The register is organized as follows:

- The First Section includes organizations and associations that carry out activities for the social integration of foreigners.
- In the Second Section, associations, organizations, and private bodies qualified to carry out social assistance and social integration programs are registered. In this section belong organizations that carry out social assistance and provide services in the areas of violence against women, prostitution, trafficking, violence and child abuse, and assistance to workers under severe exploitation.

Membership in the registry requires registered organizations to complete by January 30 of each year a report on their activities of the previous year on behalf of immigrant citizens. Only upon submission of the report will the association appear on the list updated annually by DG Immigration. While the list of associations registered in the First section is published on the Ministry of Labor's institutional website [www.lavoro.gov.it](http://www.lavoro.gov.it) and on the Migrant Integration Portal [www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it](http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it), the list for the Second section is not public. Even from this list it is difficult to infer how many associations are composed or founded by migrants.

What can be pointed out in general, however, is that over the years there has been an evolution regarding associations founded and/or managed by third-country nationals. There has been a shift from the first type of associations founded by the first generations of migrants with a strong imprint of supporting their communities of origin in the territories, as they are mostly associations organized on a community basis, to the rise of multicultural type associations founded by migrants and second generations, children of migrants born and/or raised in Italy who are born as associations that invest on capacity building, acquire project skills, obtain funding and manage to promote co-development projects with their countries of origin.

One example is CONNGI<sup>41</sup> (Coordinamento Nazionale Nuove Generazioni Italiane), which began as a project of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and then became established as a second-level association gathering within it 35 associations founded by second-generation youth nationwide. Another example, which supports

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.istat.it/files/2021/10/Report-nonprofit-2019.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> <https://integrazionemigranti.gov.it/it-it/Ricerca-Associazioni>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1998/08/18/098G0348/sg>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1999/11/03/099G0265/sg>

<sup>41</sup> <https://conngi.it/>

migrants' associations in increasing their skills is the A.MI.CO Program<sup>42</sup> promoted by IOM ( International Organization for Migration ) which offers the possibility of subsequently participating in a call for proposals and obtaining funding in the form of grants.

Mention can also be made of other such funding promoted by the International Activities sector of various regions such as the Tuscany Region through the "Simple Projects on International Cooperation," the Lombardy Region, etc., which have over the years also provided funding for migrant associations in the form of regranting.

## 7. Inclusion of migrants in integration policies <sup>43</sup>

Given the restrictive legislation on the right to vote and the lengthy process provided by Italian law on the acquisition of citizenship by naturalization, which consists of 10 years of uninterrupted legal residence plus 2 years of file evaluation, after fulfilling a series of other requirements such as income, housing, etc., third-country nationals find as the only way for political participation in the territories where they reside alternative tools of participation that contribute to their paths of integration and that promote active citizenship. These tools consist first of all, of the right of association and assembly and thus the establishment of associations by foreign nationals as a means of unity in the community and interlocution with the local government. Secondly, Presidential Decree 394/1999<sup>44</sup>, in compliance also with the provisions of the Strasbourg Convention on the participation of foreigners in local public life, in Article 57 gave the possibility to local authorities to establish ad hoc consultative bodies that can, in part, make up for the non-recognition of the right to vote. With the emergence of these consultative mechanisms at the local and regional levels, participation has been taken to another level. The Advisory Boards and Councils of Foreigners are bodies composed of representatives of the various communities present in the territory and appointed by national associations and communities or directly elected by resident foreign citizens. They do not have decision-making powers but have an advisory function on immigration policies and aim to represent the voices and demands of immigrants.

In Italy, the National Council for the Problems of Non-EU Workers and their Families and the Regional Councils were introduced by the first immigration law (L. 946/1986)<sup>45</sup> with the aim of dealing with the initial reception and job placement of migrants. In the following years, some local experiments of Advisory Boards and Councils of Foreigners were reported, while other municipalities established the figure of the Deputy Councilor, who could participate in the City Council and could present petitions regarding resident immigrants, but without voting rights. The consultative bodies implemented at the local level appear to be more oriented toward promoting the cultural and political integration of immigrants. The first experience was in 1994 in the municipality of Nonantola, where the figure of the Deputy Foreign Councilor was established. Despite the significant turnout in the elections and the experimentation of this figure in other Italian municipalities as well, the initiatives implemented, like the Advisory Boards and Councils, have never been considered satisfactory (Martiniello 1999). There are, however, positive effects such as the socialization to voting. Indeed, in order to compose the Councils on an elective basis, real elections were held, involving a plurality of lists and candidates.

<sup>42</sup> [https://italy.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11096/files/documents/Amico\\_Digital\\_.pdf](https://italy.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11096/files/documents/Amico_Digital_.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> [https://www.regione.toscana.it/documents/10180/512216/COSPE\\_Operation+Vote\\_Rapporto+di+ricerca.pdf/01f15b1b-9227-4c26-82f0-23e8dfb016e5;jsessionid=D3814FF21AF12A838408CC40E7056C9B.web-rt-as01-p1?version=1.0](https://www.regione.toscana.it/documents/10180/512216/COSPE_Operation+Vote_Rapporto+di+ricerca.pdf/01f15b1b-9227-4c26-82f0-23e8dfb016e5;jsessionid=D3814FF21AF12A838408CC40E7056C9B.web-rt-as01-p1?version=1.0)

<sup>44</sup> Presidential Decree No. 394 of August 31, 1999 Regulations on the implementation of the Consolidated Text of provisions concerning immigration regulations and regulations on the status of foreigners, pursuant to Article 1, paragraph 6, of Legislative Decree No. 286 of July 25, 1998.

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1986/12/10/086U0832/sg>



Another effect induced by the creation of the migrant councils has been the increase in the number of associations, mostly mono-ethnic in nature, as the mechanism of the councils is based on a horizontal relationship between representatives of different communities, but also on a vertical relationship between representatives and their own compatriots. To this respect, the instrument of migrant councils has often ended up marginally nurturing real dynamics of dialogue and cooperation between national groups, on the contrary reinforcing the ethnicization of forms of representation. In general, researchers who have studied the dynamics activated by these instruments have revealed their weak capacity to affect decision-making processes, emphasizing their predominantly symbolic character (Caponio 2006; Recchi 2006; Colloca 2008). Years after the first experiments, migrant councils and advisory boards now seem to have concluded their function of creating networks between institutions and ethnic communities and among the communities themselves. Experience teaches that consultative instruments, marked by ethnic representation, cannot replace individual mobilization within the circuit of representation, and they fulfill their function in contexts in which the priority is recognition, and this is all the truer since the Councils, as of 2004, no longer involve a significant proportion of foreign nationals, who have meanwhile become communitarian, thus reducing their target population. Other municipalities, given the obstacles encountered in granting the right to vote in local elections, have introduced into their statutes the right to participate in local referendums to all those registered at the registry office, providing a very short time of residence as a requirement (six months/one year). This is the case in the municipalities of Turin, Milan, Livorno, Pescara, and Gorizia.

As far as the Region of Tuscany is concerned, as early as 2004 it has included in its Statute, among its general principles, the promotion 'with respect to constitutional principles, (of)the extension of the right to vote to immigrants'. In addition to experimenting with the tool of the Advisory Boards and the Migrant's Council in different municipalities and provinces, to stimulate the participatory ferment of society, the Region approved Law 69/2007<sup>46</sup> with the aim of enhancing the civic spirit of the territory, in order to contribute to increasing the quality of collective decisions. This legislation promotes the active involvement of individuals, entities, groups, parties, and associations in the elaboration of regional and local policies, expressing the clear institutional will to introduce forms of participatory and deliberative democracy to nurture the legitimacy of institutions. Citizens, migrants, or stateless persons who are resident in the territory or temporarily present in Tuscany for study or work can take part in participatory processes. The opening of processes to nonnationals as well, whether resident or not, is seen as a symptom of awareness of regional multiculturalism. The participation of nonnationals encourages their social and political inclusion, allowing the visibility of their needs and interests. ANCI (National Agency of Italian Municipalities) has actively supported this "bottom-up" push, asking the Parliament to pass a bill entitled Norms for Political and Administrative Participation and the Right to Elect without Discrimination of Citizenship and Nationality, aimed at foreigners who have been residents for five years (Giovannetti and Perin 2012). The text of the law drafted by ANCI was later re-proposed as part of the "L'Italia sono anch'io" 2015 campaign, a broad mobilization promoted by a plurality of civil society organizations, which through committees established throughout the country collected signatures to present the text as a popular initiative bill, along with another text, concerning the recognition of citizenship to children born in Italy to legally resident immigrants. The continued closure of institutional participation spaces to non-EU immigrants thus introduces an internal differentiation within the population of foreign citizens residing in Italy, attributing the right to vote, with the exclusion of political elections, only to EU citizens.

## II. Evaluation of the One-To-One Interviews

### 8. Qualitative survey: The individual interviews

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<sup>46</sup><https://www.regione.toscana.it/documents/10180/11537824/Legge%20regionale%20N.69%20del%202007/e782eb5a-8787-4647-acb6-518b6c56cf8e>

For the purpose of the qualitative survey, 10 individual online and in-person interviews were conducted to political representatives with migration backgrounds, active association and community members in the month of June and July 2022. Interviewees were chosen taking into consideration aspects of origin, gender (5 women and 5 men were interviewed) age (24-47), and personal history of political activism. Almost all the representatives have a history and experience in the world of associationism, such as volunteers, former members of regional councils of foreigners, city councilors, etc. Special attention was paid to the geographical aspect, trying to include respondents residing in different cities in Italy. This made it possible to gather different points of view and bring to light different policies on migrant inclusion and participation at the local level.

## 8.1 The needs of migrants

### 8.1.1 The right to vote as the main instrument of political participation

Much debated by national politics over the years, the right to vote in local elections still remains a contention between political forces, social parts and people of foreign origin living in Italy. A right that is currently acquired through the acquisition of Italian citizenship and therefore not accessible to all those immigrants who have lived in Italy for many years, often more than 10 years of residence and cannot vote in local elections in the places where they reside. The absence of the right to vote touches everyone. Newcomers, long-time immigrants who for various reasons cannot or do not want to apply for citizenship, and new generations.

Two of the respondents considering the issue of utmost importance expose the problem as follows:

**"An important need concerns granting the right to vote in local government for long-term residents, as it works in many European countries, while in Italy we still struggle to conceive of the fact that working citizens can take the floor and express themselves through voting. " (Int. No. 1, Santa Croce sull'Arno)**

**"I believe that you cannot think of involving foreign communities in the world of politics if they de facto do not enjoy the right to vote. Taking my own personal experience as an example, that of a young boy who grew up in Italy from the age of three, being active in politics as a teenager and then being denied the opportunity to vote generated a lot of frustration in me as I did not understand why I had fewer rights than my peers who were perhaps even less interested and engaged in the field. " (Int no. 6, Quarrata)**

### 8.1.2 The right of citizenship and the protagonism of the new generations

Most of the respondents are immigrant children born or raised in Italy. People who have concluded their entire education and vocational training in Italy and, despite this, most of them have become Italian citizens in adulthood. Italian law does not provide for those born in Italy to foreign parents the right to become citizens at birth. This issue has been extensively debated and starting from February 2022 there is a bill<sup>47</sup> being debated in the Chamber of Deputies which discussion has been postponed in September and that provides new cases for the acquisition of Italian citizenship for those who arrive in Italy before the age of 12. The same law on citizenship as underlined by the interviewees should be reformed from many points of view also in reference to the first generations but in the meantime, it is necessary to recognize a new protagonism that has arisen in Italy in recent years on the part of second generations through the birth of numerous associations at the national level. One of them is the CONNGI network that all interviewees mention as a relevant organisation and among the few that they consider doing important work on the political participation of people with a migrant background. Another network working on political participation is IDEM network<sup>48</sup>, which also has goals of creating trainings in the political sphere. There have also been numerous campaigns and social movements in support to changing this law, some of which were mentioned in section 6 such as [L'Italia sono](#)

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.giuseppebrescia.it/ius-scholae-ecco-il-testo-per-una-nuova-legge-sulla-cittadinanza/>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/IDEMITALIA>

anch'io<sup>49</sup>, Rete G2- Seconde generazioni<sup>50</sup>, the Italiani senza cittadinanza<sup>51</sup> (Italians without citizenship) movement, Dalla parte giusta della storia<sup>52</sup> (On the right side of history), Tavolo Cittadinanza (Citizenship round Table), etc. Several of the interviewees have been and are currently active in these initiatives. Many of them, now professional politicians are familiar with the issue of participation and have a high awareness and knowledge regarding the area in which they work.

One of them says:

**There is a citizenship law that dates to the 1990s and does not reflect the needs and structure of today's society, in which there is now a strong representation of young people, from immigrant families, born and raised in Italy.**

**We even speak of a third generation, yet there is no compatibility between the need for participation expressed by this portion of the population and the official recognition of new Italian citizens, regardless of having formally obtained Italian citizenship. They are still citizens who participate and work in daily life and build the future of Italy and deserve attention from politicians. There have been proposals that have failed and that I think change is urgent.**

**I think it is vital for there to be active forms of participation and for there to be regulatory adjustments that formally make these people an integral part of the Italian population.**

**(Int. No. 1, Santa Croce sull'Arno)**

#### 8.1.3 Bureaucracy: Optimising and simplifying procedures

The bureaucracy of residence permits, constant renewals, and updates of residence documents are complicated and time-consuming. They often require procuring documents from the country of origin and their possession is critical to the life of a foreign person and their family in Italy. Services are interconnected and the lack of a residence permit prohibits access to other services such as health, education, etc. Even when access is granted, the bureaucratic process of documents and forms to be filled out makes access to services very difficult. These are some aspects identified by the interviewees of how bureaucracy in reference to immigrant people makes it extremely difficult to deal with their path to inclusion and how simplification in this regard is needed to make services more accessible to all and avoid discrimination. One respondent recounts how in Emilia-Romagna, in order to have their children participate in summer centers, it is necessary to register them through a bonus and an online application. However, almost 80 percent of parents of children of immigrant origin do not take advantage of summer centers, as they are expensive but above all they are not aware of the existence of this service due to a long and cumbersome document in which personal data entry is required. Not only that, but the existence of this bonus that allows a facilitation for children's enrollment is poorly disclosed and is only in Italian language and present on the website of a few municipalities. The fact that administrations are often unable to engage the migrant population through adequate information is also emphasized.

Another need identified by other interviewees regarding bureaucracy is precisely the need for an integrated system of migration policies. The current system often deals with so many regulations on multiple fronts such as on citizenship, surfacing of irregular flows, protection of human rights for applicants for international protection, etc. The need to create a more organic system is highlighted.

#### 8.1.4 Language inclusiveness and capacity to listen

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<sup>49</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/italiasonoanchio/>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.secondegenerazioni.it/>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/italianisenzacittadinanza/>

<sup>52</sup> <https://dallapartegiustadellastoria.it/>

The language that is used in various media, books, political and public discourse is crucial to building a correct collective imagination when talking about immigration. It is important to overcome the stereotypes of the past and to recognize dignity to the experience and present life of foreign nationals. Language is especially important in school and educational settings. Some of the interviewees who have experience as educators or teachers in various contexts emphasize that there is still a lot to be done on the level of how immigration is communicated even in written texts but not only. On the local policy level, language is also crucial.

One of them relates:

**During a research I carried out with some colleagues, looking for documents related to the school environment, we realized that the language of the school is poor in elements that would make it clear that there is a willingness to include diversity in general. In Genoa, starting in the mid-1990s, a very important path was started, which led to the creation of a cultural center that entertained a dialogue between the community, the university, and the regional school office. This was a model for the inclusion of children and adults within the city, offering workshops, spaces for discussion and reflection. This is to come to the point that policy innovation must also correspond to an innovation in the language that is used to describe the intentions and policies that are to be put into practice. Reversing the order of certain words would allow the construction of a new paradigm, capable of giving impetus to the formation of policies that can thus consolidate a living and authentic participation of immigrant citizens. (Int. No.4, Genova)**

Another element mentioned is the ability of municipal governments to listen so that they can be able to produce inclusive policies that also meet the needs of immigrant citizens.

**"I think that the local migrant communities have not been listened to about their needs, an example of this is the fact that in certain localities there is no ad hoc butcher shop that the Islamic community uses, thus depriving them, particularly during the pandemic, of the possibility of eating meat for quite some time. This example, points to a need of the Islamic community that no one, however, has tried to solve because the local governments basically did not care.**

**More generally, at the national level, especially during the critical period of the pandemic, we experienced the serious problem that prevented the transfer of corpses to the country of origin, and besides, not all cities have a space reserved for foreign citizens.**

**Administrators are still quite rigid about meeting certain needs of migrants, let alone promoting real involvement of the immigrant, not just because of immigration issues alone, but because of the mere fact that he or she is not a citizen." (Int. No. 8 Castelfranco Emilia)**

#### 8.1.5 Training

All respondents emphasize the importance of training to promote the participation of immigrant citizens on multiple fronts.

Among the suggestions on topics and methodology we can mention the following:

- Training on the importance of exercising the right to vote. One of the interviewees stresses the importance of explaining the value of the right to vote and how it can affect a person's life while also starting from a local administrative dimension.
- Training courses on active citizenship that can combine theoretical aspects of citizenship and concrete ones to demonstrate the results achievable through participation. The importance of informing and raising awareness among foreign communities about the choices and decisions that are made and that directly affect them is emphasized.
- Training on the sphere of constitutional rights and civic education aimed primarily at foreign nationals but also at the entire citizenry especially at a historical stage when they can increase their awareness about the fragility of rights and the threat of their eventual suppression. Offer a reading of national political history, but also bear witness to the political history of the countries of origin of foreign nationals.

- Empowerment, skills assessment and working on one's attitude that can enhance the linguistic and cultural background of people as an added value for the whole community of the area where one works with the aim of generating protagonism and working on identity and self-esteem by making a person feel welcomed and an integral part of the community.
- Political training to give tools on how to communicate engagement, do advocacy and lobbying, question an institution, and so on, to what tools are available to boost participation and learn how to build a winning campaign.

## 8.2 Willingness of migrants to engage politically

Often the willingness of migrants to participate politically is related to their level of awareness regarding the possibility and opportunity to be active in the political sphere. This is confirmed by all interviewees, and some of them assign this element to a lack of habit of exercising the right to vote in the migrants' country of origin, poor representation in relation to local citizens, lack of information and communication capacity on the part of institutions, and insufficient training that is able to better develop activism in the political sense.

As also mentioned in the previous section, the interviewees come from various cities in Italy and report examples from their reality and community of experience regarding the level of migrants' involvement and participation from a political perspective.

### 8.2.1 Participation at the city level

One of them residing in the city of Pistoia tells how there is a large community of Albanian citizens in Pistoia, almost 11,000 residents out of about 90,000 citizens. A very large group whose members share membership in the same area of Albania and a community linked by a structured and strong internal social network, which in part has meant that its members are not very active outside their own community. However, the municipal government and local associations have tried to activate the community by promoting public and social participation, but there is still a low level of cooperation due to a sense of detachment and distrust towards institutions, and this results in the absence of participation in social activities. In fact, out of 11,000 community members, only in 20 to 30 are recognized active members among local associations.

In Reggio Emilia, on the other hand, one of the interviewees points out that in the face of the local government's work to promote multiculturally oriented associations, there is medium to high participation level of foreign citizens in the city's social and cultural activities.

### 8.2.2 Migrant advisory boards and councils

It was mentioned in paragraph 7 the history of Advisory Boards and Migrant's Councils in Italy and some of the interviewees report some insights and reflections due to their personal experience.

In particular, the case of Emilia-Romagna is mentioned, which has initiated projects for the activation of councils at both municipal and regional levels. Initially, Emilia-Romagna also decided to appoint 2-3 migrants, bearers of a different vision within the regional council, but without voting rights. The same figure was also provided in the province of Bologna, where a citizens' council was created, composed of 30 councilors, which met within the provincial council and could give an opinion on the provincial budget. This was a very effective tool, bringing very important and innovative issues to attention, which were followed by a vote. Subsequently, the BODs discussed and approved by the provincial council were forwarded to the president of the province. This path lapsed when the provincial council was disestablished by the time Bologna became a metropolitan city. Today, the Metropolitan Cities Council is represented by the mayors of the metropolitan cities or capital city.

The respondent on this topic shares the following reflection:

"What I think is useful in today's day and age, given that the time of migrant's councils is outdated, are the activation of real councils as bodies of the City Council to which associations sign up to discuss specific issues. This solution in my opinion would be viable for 2 main reasons: first, there are no nominations, and second, it involves associations that are representative of the interests of a sometimes very large group. However, we are aware of the existence of realities that are not represented by associations, but this solution could at the same time spur people to take this step, that is, to associate so that the satisfaction of needs, primarily political, reaches them as well.

In general, the goal to which I refer is to establish an innovative migrant's council that will transform the needs emerging from a portion of the citizenry into bills, services and more. " (Int. No. 3, Bologna)

### 8.2.3 Informal participation

It is the opinion of most respondents that the model of Advisory Boards and Councils of Foreigners composed only of foreign nationals is an outdated model. All of them agree on the importance of the existence of participatory paths that can involve both migrants and natives at the same time in informal and why not even mono thematic forms of participation.

One of the interviewees suggests as a model of informal participation the creation of a shared table between politicians and representatives of associations who, often more than the administrations themselves, are in direct contact with citizens, thus enabling an interactive and shared dialogue from which interesting proposals can emerge. Such a model, with the presence of politicians would imply a commitment to meeting the needs and what is represented by local communities.

Another proposal concerns the creation of mixed groups in the various neighborhoods, in which foreign and native citizens, and possibly social science scholars, can discuss and pursue together a path of growth that can promote participation.

### 8.2.4 Participation through digital tools (e-participation)

All interviewees agree that using a digital platform as a space for discussion and participation would be easily accessible to many people. They emphasize, however, that the virtual space should not only be a place in which to denounce and complain, but also a space where activism can be done, and positive energy can be transmitted through a path of activation. To be effective, virtual work must also be juxtaposed with real, concrete work where people are engaged and involved as bearers and carriers of demands and needs.

One of the interviewees explains this point as follows:

**"Online participation is a way to gather and raise awareness of more and more people. The platform alone is not enough, but together with all the opportunities it can certainly work. This, in fact, also allows to find varieties of participation and engagement, but especially drawing this diversity from the most sensitive individuals, such as the younger generation who can act as a bridge to the rest of the community. "** (Int. No. 5 San Pietro Terme)

Respondents agree that online participation is a tool that can get more feedback and use from young people and second generations. Conversely, those of a certain age want to be physically present and thus have more physical contact with those who represent them, especially if language and digital skills difficulties are present. In general, people of a certain age, e.g., parents, need support to be able to combine participation and use of the web platform. Respondents recommend providing technical help.

## 8.3 Barriers to participation

### 8.3.1 Meeting key needs

All interviewees point out that participation in many cases can be considered a privilege especially for those immigrants who find themselves in specific situations of stay and encounter various kinds of limitations and do not have even the main basic human rights such as health, study, etc.

One of the interviewees recounts how in her work she has heard the story many migrant women who have had great difficulty in carrying a pregnancy to term because of the lack of information about access to certain services. Because of this, these women felt left alone, deprived of adequate medical care.

In the area of health, another respondent highlights a case of discrimination involving those with study permits, for whom access to public health services is not included but this burden falls on the shoulders of foreign students.

A final interviewee from Bologna, on the other hand, recounts how immigrants have great difficulty in finding housing and often face situations of discrimination from tenants who do not want to grant rent even migrant families with good incomes. Such a situation is reported by others, and the situation is so difficult that they feel it is easier for them to buy a house rather than look for rent, but this is of course very difficult for those who have recently arrived in Italy.

### 8.3.2 Formal and institutional obstacles

A first obvious obstacle that all interviewees identify regarding political participation is related precisely to the oft-mentioned recognition of rights. The absence of the right to vote is the first step and affects in a negative way people's sense of belonging to the territory by stifling their voices. On the other hand, however, they agree that even if the right to vote were to be recognized, the social work to be done on raising awareness would still be great because electoral abstentionism touches everyone and is a global phenomenon.

Still on this level, one of the interviewees explains how there is also often a lack of feedback from public institutions for those who need adequate help and support. Specifically, she recounts the example of Pistoia where the immigration office was closed in 2017, offloading this responsibility, costs, and burdens onto the shoulders of many immigrant families who found themselves paying unsustainable costs just, for example, to be able to send an email to their country's embassy or even just to be able to renew their passport. In addition, she reports that there is also a lack of diplomatic support in general.

Another example comes from Genoa, where one of the interviewees reports that the URP (Citizen Relations Office) has been closed in some town halls. The absence of this channel, he says, ends up stifling a dialogue.

**"For this reason," he continues, "I think it is essential to revive these kinds of tools, either by strengthening the Citizen Relations Offices or still renewing the ones that are already there. "**

**(Int. No.4, Genova)**

### 8.3.3 Barriers to the participation of migrant women

When questioned about the level of participation of immigrant women, participants reported various difficulties affecting the status of immigrant women.

The obstacles according to them are the following:

- Women are more prone to discrimination for various reasons such as gender factor, origin, but also strictly cultural factors such as the disadvantage of muslim women who wear the veil. It is possible to observe from the point of representativeness that a person who comes from another country, even if she was born and raised in Italy, is not considered capable of being able to represent the expectations of the community. Not only that, this condition, however, may be exacerbated just by the mere fact of being a woman, adding further degree of negativity to what may be the feeling to the political representative.

One of the interviewees recounts her experience as a candidate in municipal elections where she often found herself bringing her infant daughter along during the campaign. **"I experienced the unpleasant feeling of being judged and frowned upon for merely bringing my daughter, who was only a few months old, to meetings. I later realized that when I was not bringing my daughter to work, people**

**were more willing to interact with me and listen to me. In short, the message I got was that if I want to engage in politics, I cannot do it with my daughter in my arms. "**

**(Int. No. 2, Pistoia)**

- The existence of occupational barriers. Companies today are still not ready to welcome diversity into the workplace. Unemployment is not conducive to participation.
- Recognition of educational qualifications. Many women who in their countries of origin held high professional roles, in Italy suffer occupational segregation that leads some nationalities to be relegated to certain work sectors such as care work or domestic work.
- Sometimes, the migrant community they belong can take on negative connotations for a woman, especially if the community is tied to cultural aspects that can shrink her space for activity. For example, playing sports and taking care of one's body or even using means of transportation such as a motorbike, all can be contestable factors in some communities. In fact, these sort of "escaping" from culturally acceptable patterns tend to make the community feel like a "prison," so it is important to work on smoothing out the corners and allowing them to emerge from a safe but highly limiting shell.

#### **8.4 Conclusions and recommendations**

When talking about participation, the regulatory aspect cannot be ignored. All interviewees repeatedly stress the urgency that migrants feel in Italy for the amendment of the citizenship law and the introduction of the right to vote for long-term residents. Without these changes, it is difficult to talk about real political participation. Despite this, among the second generation in recent years there have been many candidates at the city hall and municipal level and many cities now have a councilor or councilwoman with a migrant background. For several cities such as Genoa, Turin, etc. that have had a right-wing city government and anti-immigrant policy for many years, a counselor with a foreign background is a first. All of them, (7 of the interviewees are political representatives) implement or plan to activate city or migrant councils, innovating their model, within their area. They are familiar with the history of city and/or regional councils of migrants in Italy and agree that this chapter would seem to be over, but the model should be innovated. This is because the migration landscape in recent years has changed and there is a need to invest in activation and participation pathways for inclusion and insertion on multiple fronts of newcomers. On the other hand, there is a strong protagonism of the second generation who have become spokesmen of instances, have founded associations and movements, and are extensively trained on the mechanisms of participation of migrants. Each of the interviewees is familiar with the migratory composition of his or her city, and they all stress the importance of getting immigrants to participate in policies that directly affect them. They say that the work to be done is two-sided in the sense that there is a need to sensitize administrations in finding more effective tools to inform and involve foreign citizens. Participation begins with information about possibilities and opportunities, and there is a need for higher attention to the way in which communication is done. In addition, a need to innovate the mechanisms of participation at the local level is also highlighted, the very systems of advisory boards which is a mechanism of participation that still exists.

Many of the interviewees agree that the most effective way to talk about participation today is to do it in a transversal way by treating all foreigners as citizens who can also have a say on issues beyond immigration alone but with their specific needs in mind.

Some recommendations collected from respondents are the following:

- Support and promote processes of representation. Foreign nationals need role models that are more than just active members of a political party, but they need representatives with a migrant background. Representation processes often strengthen community-government dialogue.



- Create spaces and channels of access to promote the participation of new generations to enable to participate and share their demands.
- Beware of the invisible. In Italy, regularization of undocumented immigrants is carried out through a decree that provides an amnesty which comes as a concession, points out one of the interviewees. More programmatic policies are needed to this regard.
- Improving immigration policies requires social and cultural work to raise awareness of the added value that migrant citizens bring to society in various spheres (schooling, training, work, welfare, tourism, etc.). From a point of view of employment, for example, there are many young people who, having graduated from Italian universities, currently represent the new ruling class (engineers, nurses, lawyers, doctors and so on), and Italy must take note of this, paying particular attention to the recipients of these policies, namely those who are directly involved and immersed in the problems of the "administrative cage" and within which migrants have to move in order to be recognized at the formal level and beyond.
- Develop policies and processes targeting migrant women by promoting their empowerment, autonomy, and awareness of their own value and abilities.
- Greater focus on facilitating access to services and meeting migrant's main needs (health, schooling, residence permits, etc.)
- In policymaking, more attention in promoting cultural discovery is requested. One respondent points out that foreign-born citizens are less considered when it comes to cultural activities, but even they themselves undervalue themselves simply because they believe that some cultural offerings are reserved exclusively for natives.

### III. Evaluation of the Focus Group Discussions

#### 9. Focus groups with migrant communities in Empoli.

For the purpose of this research, 3 Focus Groups were conducted with representatives of migrant associations of the Municipality of Empoli, active members in the Council of Migrants which was active until 2013 and local political representatives. The objective of the discussion was to analyze the history of participation of migrants in the city of Empoli, think of new ways to involve migrant citizens, young people and second generations, think about current needs, pay special attention to the needs of migrant women. The focus groups, carried out in June and July 2022, had a total of 19 participants who were selected taking into consideration their level of active participation in the city of Empoli. All focus groups were held in person. Among the participants 4 were women aged 20-50 and 15 men aged 20-60.

##### 9.1 Motivation for participation and its effectiveness.

Empoli is a small municipality of Tuscany with 7890 foreign nationals representing 16.2% of the resident population. The municipality for several years now, no longer has an immigration office, but such services are outsourced to other associations and cooperatives in the area such as "La Società della Salute Empolese Valdarno Valdelsa", "Associazione Arturo", etc., which in addition to services also offer training courses, Italian language for foreigners and others.

Regarding migrant associations operating at the local level, the historical ones reflect the larger communities in the area such as Senegalese, Filipino, Albanian, and so on.

What the participants testify to and emerges from the discussion is that communication or relationship with the city government often happens through the association or community representative and that community associations have not evolved over the years at the level of expertise but have remained at the level of self-financing.

That said, the role they play in the community they belong where these associations organize social and cultural events for their members, provide information about services, etc. should not be underestimated. One of the participants recounts how in these pandemic years, so many families in economic hardship were unable to find information on how to apply for financial aid, manage their children's online education, etc. so the association became a point of reference to make up for these shortcomings.

Regarding the level of participation within the associations they mention that it is varied and that after the pandemic and lockdown period there is a greater difficulty for people to resume relationships and activate. Despite this, these associations still manage to organize socializing moments for their members even on national or religious holidays, such as on Eid Al Fitr for Muslims, the independence holiday of their home country, beauty contests for women, and traditional festivals to celebrate their culture.

### 9.1.1 Youth involvement

Additional concern for participants, reported particularly by members of the Senegalese community, is the low involvement of second-generation youth. The hurdle for them to access and engage in politics seems insurmountable because they lack citizenship. In fact, this appeal is echoed by the youngest member of the community, a university student and worker, who claims to have many of the rights proper to a citizen recognized. However, despite his 13 years of schooling, he is not granted the right to exercise his right to vote, denouncing in his view the existence of an imbalance in the system of citizenship recognition. The same participant points out that many other young people like him are restricted in their right to study, as they cannot study abroad because they are tied to their residence permit and its renewal, and in his case, he cannot participate in certain public competitions in Italy to make his professional dream come true. Beyond the documentary aspect, other members report difficulties in involving their children in association activities or in social work in general because after finishing their studies, many of them emigrate to other European countries to seek work and build a better future for themselves. For those who instead decide to stay in Italy, their main focus is finding a job.

### 9.1.2 Involvement of women

Unlike the interviewees, the participants in the focus groups were mostly male.

When questioned as to why they think women do not participate, they put forth a multiplicity of reasons. In the area of Empoli and neighboring municipalities, most migrant women work as street vendors. They have greater language difficulties as they are often unable to participate in training courses due to childcare and household care in addition to the jobs they procure. This was particularly highlighted by members of the Senegalese community who also point out the absence of services in the target area referred to women.

As for the Filipino community, greater participation of women in the association's cultural activities is reported. For example, the association involved organizes an annual beauty pageant with a public event open to the entire citizenry where there is a high involvement of women of the community. Even their members report, however, difficulties of sustained and continuous commitment precisely because women are very busy with work, often more having than one job and engaged in jobs that fall under the sphere of personal care. They also highlight language difficulties that make it more difficult to become active outside the association.

### 9.1.3 Online participation platforms.

Almost all first-generation participants report training needs on digital skills for both them and the women in their community. They see the use of digital tools to send their petitions as difficult and impersonal. However, they agree that it can be one more tool to complement other tools and pathways however they feel the need

for support in this regard. They agree that young people are more likely to use such tools as in most cases they were educated in Italy, speak the language better and have a higher level of schooling.

## **9.2 Inclusion of migrants' voices in the decision-making process**

### **9.2.1 The migrants' point of view.**

Several of the participants are aware of the existence of the ex -Migrant's Council in Empoli. One of them served as its vice president. It has been 9 years since the last council, and participants report that in fact already since its instauration the council has not functioned. It was a considerable commitment for its participants and unpaid, with meetings taking place in the evening hours. Its functioning governed by regulations issued by the municipality which are still in force, provided for demanding procedures regarding decision-making, elections, etc. When questioned about the willingness to participate in joint tables or new avenues to bring their demands to the municipal administration and have a voice on local policies that directly affect them some showed interest and willingness stressing, however, the importance of activating the youth and that participation in this initiative should be aimed at all members of the community, as each must be heard and taken into consideration. Other participants, particularly from the Filipino community show interest but report difficulty in participating due to lack of time cause of onerous work commitments.

### **9.2.2 The views of political representatives**

The members of the municipal administration of Empoli who participated in the focus groups express the willingness and desire of the administration in establishing an ongoing dialogue with foreign citizens residing in the territory. During a focus group dedicated to them, there was an opportunity to analyze the previous experiences of the Council of Migrants and to analyze in detail the regulations still in place. There is a vision within the administration and a desire to innovate the model of the Migrant's Council and through the activities of this project in which the municipality is a partner, to co-design together with the members of the migrant community of Empoli a participatory path that is sustainable and long lasting.

## **9.3 Barriers to participation**

### **9.3.1 Formal obstacles.**

Most of the participants emphasize of how after years of participating in projects, initiatives, and dialogue with the municipal administration they are still not Italian citizens, much less their children. They, too, like the respondents mentioned in paragraph 8, point the need for new laws, amendment of the current ones, and the allocation of the right to vote in order to have a say in choosing their political representatives.

They reiterate that their social engagement will continue to exist but there is a need for progress and evolution in their legal status.

### **9.3.2 Training needs**

Participants report that to activate migrants and make them participate more actively on more fronts there is a need for training. Starting with language courses for which participants report an insufficiency in the city of Empoli, other training needs are also identified particularly of a professional nature aimed at women such as, in the hotel industry or other sectors that can provide more job opportunities and a better psycho-physical condition without seeing themselves obliged to continuous and long journeys around the region. They also report the need for support and courses in the IT and digital sphere, courses on bureaucratic aspects related to residence permits and citizenship, etc.

### **9.3.3 Precarious condition**

The training mentioned above, is considered a precondition for finding satisfactory employment to provide for the needs of their families but it is also a prerequisite for participation. In fact, participants report that it is very difficult for them to become politically engaged when they are living in a situation of hardship and cannot even provide for their basic needs. Many of the Senegalese community members recount that the area offers few job opportunities, and that some of them only after years of precariousness have managed to find a job with a regular contract. They do not feel supported and do not feel that they can rely on the administration in case of need, but many issues they solve with the support of other members of their community.

#### 9.4 Conclusions and recommendations

What can be seen from what emerged from the focus groups is that the pandemic left a bitter feeling in the lives of these people who during these years more than ever felt abandoned and no tools to cope with economic difficulties, bureaucracies, digitization of services, the closing of offices where they could no longer go to attendance, not being able to bring the corpses of their loved ones to their home country, not being supported in applying for housing, being discriminated against in seeking housing, etc.

What emerges is that during these very difficult years the association and their community has been their only reference and support in dealing with these problems.

Complete informational darkness about services and subsidy possibilities for families in need has created even more of a mechanism of self-sufficiency of these communities that continue to solve everything internally. On the other hand, however, awareness about the need for dialogue and joint work with the city administration to raise awareness and create more support for migrant citizens has increased, especially for their representatives.

Participants are convinced of the importance of effective dialogue mechanisms with the city administration and the need to involve and activate as many members as possible. As also emphasized in the paragraphs above, participation is a difficult process, requiring persistence, perseverance, but above all, vision. Higher awareness is needed on the importance of the presence of migrants in the territories, recognizing them as citizens and bearers of economic, social and cultural value.

Lastly, participants stress the importance of involving the younger generation, who most need reference points and belonging and who can bring informed points of view on all issues.

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## **Appendix: List of interviews and focus groups**

Interview 1: Arturo Association - Santa Croce sull'Arno

Interview 2: Municipal election candidate, ICSE&Co Association - Pistoia

Interview 3: City councilor, Former president Next Generation association - Bologna

Interview 4: City Councilor, CONNGI President - Genoa

Interview 5: City Councilwoman - San Pietro Terme

Interview 6: City Councilman - Quarrata

Interview 7: City Councilwoman - Reggio Emilia

Interview 8: Former - city councilwoman - Castelfranco Emilia

Interview 9 : Mbolo Association - Empoli

Interview 10: Philippine Community Tuscany - Empoli

## **Focus Group**

Focus group 1: Mbolo Association , Arturo Association

Focus group 2: Philippine Community Tuscany

Focus group 3: Representatives of the Municipality of Empoli.