

THE ITALIAN SYSTEM BETWEEN “WELCOMING SPIRIT”* AND THE ABSENCE OF INTEGRATION PROGRAMS

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IL SISTEMA ITALIANO TRA “SPIRITO DI ACCOGLIENZA” E ASSENZA DI PROGRAMMI DI INTEGRAZIONE

- **ASTRATTO:** Nell solo 2015, più di un milione di migranti sono arrivati nell’Unione Europea, soprattutto in Germania (e, in misura minore, in Svezia e in altri paesi). Per far fronte alla nuova situazione, questi Stati hanno attuato politiche volte alla rapida (accelerata) integrazione dei cittadini di Paesi terzi appena arrivati nel mercato del lavoro. Di fronte a questa nuova realtà, anche il sistema nazionale di asilo italiano ha subito profondi cambiamenti, con inevitabili ripercussioni sulle politiche di accoglienza e integrazione. Tuttavia, gli interventi nel settore prestano scarsa attenzione - anche concettualmente - agli aspetti dell’integrazione. Eppure, per godere appieno dei benefici dell’immigrazione, l’Italia dovrebbe sviluppare una strategia adatta a garantire una più efficace integrazione dei cittadini stranieri (compresi i cosiddetti “nuovi arrivati”). Naturalmente, ciò presuppone notevoli sforzi dal punto di vista finanziario, ma soprattutto una forte e chiara volontà politica.
- **PAROLE CHIAVE:** Integrazione; politiche pubbliche; approccio strategico.

* In original “spirito d’accoglienza”, difficult to translate into other languages, A/N.

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- **ABSTRACT:** In 2015 alone, more than one million migrants arrived in the European Union, mainly Germany (and, to a lesser extent, Sweden and others). These states have developed policies aimed at fast (fast-track) interaction in the labor market of newly arrived third-country nationals to address the new situation. In the light of this new reality, the Italian national asylum system has also undergone profound changes, with inevitable repercussions on reception and integration policies. However, the sector's interventions pay little attention – even conceptual – to the aspects of integration. Still, to fully enjoy the benefits of immigration, Italy should develop a proper strategy to assure more effective integration of foreign citizens (including, but not limited, only to so-called “newly arrived”). Of course, that presupposes both considerable financial commitments but especially clear and strong political will.
- **KEYWORDS:** Integration; public policies; strategic approach.

O SISTEMA ITALIANO ENTRE O “ESPÍRITO ACOLHEDOR” E A AUSÊNCIA DE PROGRAMAS DE INTEGRAÇÃO

- **RESUMO:** Só em 2015, mais de um milhão de migrantes chegaram à União Europeia, principalmente à Alemanha (e, em menor medida, à Suécia e outros). Para enfrentar a nova situação, esses estados desenvolveram políticas destinadas a uma interação rápida (acelerada) no mercado de trabalho de nacionais de países terceiros recém-chegados. Face a esta nova realidade, o sistema nacional de asilo italiano também sofreu profundas alterações, com repercussões inevitáveis nas políticas de acolhimento e integração. No entanto, as intervenções do setor dão pouca atenção – mesmo conceitual – aos aspectos da integração. Ainda assim, para desfrutar plenamente dos benefícios da imigração, a Itália deve desenvolver uma estratégia adequada a fim de assegurar uma integração mais efetiva dos cidadãos estrangeiros (incluindo, mas não se limitando, apenas aos chamados “recém-chegados”). Claro, isso pressupõe compromissos financeiros consideráveis, mas especialmente uma vontade política forte e clara.
- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Integração; políticas públicas; abordagem estratégica.

1. Introduction

In 2015 alone, more than one million migrants arrived in the European Union across the borders of the South and Southeast. About 850,000 of these people embarked in Turkey for Greece¹ then continuing their journey to the countries of destination, mainly Germany (and, to a lesser extent, Sweden and others). These states have developed policies aimed at fast (*fast-track*) integration in the labor market of newly arrived third-country nationals to address the new situation, such as the early assessment of skills and qualifications, teaching language, and on-the-job training specific guidelines, and mentoring.

Starting in 2016, the German system has become fundamentally based on the maximum integration and job placement of applicants and holders of international protection² that should be integrated, also in terms of employment, as soon as possible. To that purpose, the Federal Government has redesigned the concept of integration of applicants for international protection. It has consequently inspired legislative changes, respectively, of the law on asylum and those on the residence of foreigners. For instance, following these changes, the screening carried out in the first reception center is organized to collect - in addition to personal data - information on the professional background, knowledge of languages and the main interests, possible preferences concerning training, and others. The data collected is entered into a shared IT system to which all the competent bodies involved in the management of the migration phenomenon (including the Federal Employment Agency) may easily access, allowing the definition of coherent activities and paths during all phases of the process.

Furthermore, the Federal Republic of Germany has adopted a specific law on integration³. In the same, two fundamental concepts are highlighted. In the first place, teaching the language and civic and cultural orientation activities are made mandatory as preparatory to integration. Secondly, the law states that integration must be based on employment and identifies for this purpose the "privileged" channels of access to job and vocational training. Foreigners' failure to attend these activities, and in general to make it possible to become autonomous and reach the minimum conditions of

1 The total number of arrivals in Greece was 851,319 people. For more details, see Petrovic N. (2016), "Niente di buono sul fronte orientale", LIMES, Rivista italiana di geopolitica.

2 In particular, those from countries with a high refugee status recognition percentage, A/N.

3 Law on Integration of Foreigners - *Integrationsgesetz*, adopted in 2016, A/N.

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integration (for instance, in learning the language), leads to the loss of the residence permit and related social benefits.⁴ On the other hand, however, the procedure provides even for the suspension of repatriation if asylum seeker may demonstrate a positive integration into the society (for instance, through attending a training course or a professional activity)⁵. In practical terms, this happens if a person can demonstrate present or future sustenance capacity; the latter is evaluated especially in the light of the possibility of obtaining a job, taking into consideration the academic background, participation in training activities, etc.

Another emblematic case concerns Sweden: in fact, as for Swedish integration policy, recent changes emphasized the responsibilities of newly arrived migrants to participate in Introduction programs and receive introduction benefits⁶. In fact, in January 2018, participation in the Swedish two-year Introduction program became mandatory. In addition, the Swedish Government introduced a so-called “educational duty” for newly arrived adults with very low education and not deemed to be job-ready. On the other side, Sweden has started to condition the release of a permanent residence permit on individual efforts to integrate. Newly arrived that are employed and able to support themselves financially may receive a permanent permit.

The rest of the arrivals in Europe during the 2015 migration crisis concerned the Italian coasts, for a total of 153,600 migrants arrived⁷. In general, the national migratory reality in the last decade has been characterized by the exponential increase in the number of applicants for international protection, enrolling Italy among the countries most exposed to this flow among the industrialized countries. According to data of the UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees⁸ in 2011 and 2014, Italy ranked fourth and fifth respectively among industrialized countries as a destination

4 In both cases, the strong emphasis on the Rights-Duties binomial is evident, starting from the slogan «fördern und fordern» (“promoting and demanding”, that is, promoting rights and demanding duties). Even though the German law is defined by most as a “solidarity plan”, the link between the “duty of reception” of the host country and the appropriate duties and responsibilities of the guests is clearly recognizable in the same.

5 In particular, the law provides that in case of “sustainable integration” the repatriation process may be suspended and the temporary residence permit issued, A/N.

6 The initial interventions normally consist of accompaniment, informing, and training of the Swedish language and notions on Swedish society, the labor market, and the Swedish health system. Concerning the above, the Government has given considerable funds to NGOs or pedagogical/educational associations to provide meaningful activities for asylum seekers and create places where asylum seekers can meet other people, A/N.

7 Petrovic N. “History of the right of asylum in Italy 1945-2020. Institutions, legislation, socio-political aspects”, Franco Angeli, 2020.

8 UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2011a, 2014b, 2016c, Global Trends Reports.

chosen by applicants for international protection⁹ to become, in 2016 – with 123,000 applications for protection – the third-largest industrialized country by number of asylum requests¹⁰. Overall, in the 2014-2016 three-year period, approximately 530 thousand migrants arrived on the Italian coasts – more than they landed in the previous seventeen years –, who presented over 270 thousand applications for protection¹¹. Finally, as regards the first months of 2017, as of August 8, 2017, the number of people disembarked amounted to 96,845 units, in line with the same period of 2016, to then decrease significantly following the controversial policies of contrast of arrivals by the Interior Ministers M. Minniti and M. Salvini. These flows were further reduced due to the Covid-19 pandemic¹², but in 2021 they resumed their intensity, with over 56.009 migrants arriving in the first ten months of the year¹³.

In the light of this new reality, the national asylum system has undergone profound changes, with inevitable repercussions on reception and integration policies. The evolution of the phenomenon has highlighted the need to set up a reception system for applicants for international protection, also in the application of the specific obligations provided by the EU directives¹⁴. A complex network of reception centers was set up, consisting of both those set up to accommodate those arriving by sea and those specifically aimed at asylum seekers and refugees. There are currently extremely numerous¹⁵ with a very composite articulation that includes first¹⁶ and second reception centers, as well as “generic” reception centers for foreigners legally residing¹⁷. In the years of particularly strong migratory pressure, the “ordinary” reception circuits are also reinforced with many emergency structures¹⁸ However, as summarily

9 Immediately after the United States, Germany, and France (and, in 2014, Sweden), A/N.

10 After Germany and the United States, A/N.

11 Petrovic, N. cited.

12 Petrovic N., Sbutega A.; *Immigration and rights in the pandemic era: new and consolidated vulnerabilities. The effects of the historical-institutional and socio-political approach to the issue in Policies on the health of migrants*, Nuova Cultura, Rome, 2021.

13 Daily statistical dashboard, edited by the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration, Ministry of Interior (www.interno.it), consulted on 8 November 2021.

14 For more details see Petrovic N. (2016), *Rifugiati, profughi sfollati - Breve storia del diritto d'asilo dalla Costituzione ad oggi*, Franco Angeli, third edition.

15 According to the Court of Auditors, in 2017 – the year of its greatest expansion – the national reception system was composed of well 9303 governmental (ordinary and extraordinary) centers. For more details, see Battistelli F. (2019), *La rabbia e imbroglione, La costruzione sociale dell'immigrazione*, Mimesis/Eterotopie.

16 Some of them are organized according to the so-called Hotspot model, A/N.

17 Established pursuant to the Consolidated Act on Immigration in 1998, A/N.

18 In 2008, over 40 additional first reception centers were inaugurated throughout the country. In 2011 over 20,000 people were housed in the extraordinary centers set up by the Civil Protection Department through the c.d. Regional Actors. Finally, in 2014, pursuant to the so-called Unified Conference Plan, numerous new CAS (Centri di accoglienza straordinari – Extraordinary reception centers) were set up.

described, the reception centers are established on different legal bases with extremely heterogeneous quality standards and generally characterized by reduced effectiveness and efficiency in the face of high management costs. In addition, the interventions of the sector pay little attention – even conceptual – to the aspects of integration. In fact, unlike countries like Germany and Sweden, but also some other EU countries¹⁹, in many Italian reception centers, there are usually no systematic and structured interventions of teaching Italian and civic orientation as well as referrals to the vocational training system and active employment policies.

Indeed, faced with the rapid and disorderly growth of migration flows regarding integration, national institutions have reacted slowly and without a strategic approach. In practice, there was a *de facto* delegation of integration interventions to local administrations and civil society organizations. As a result, the actions were developed autonomously and voluntarily, with a sort of “spontaneity of integration” guided and managed from the bottom up and a strong differentiation of the policies on the territory, based on the different capacity (and sometimes different “political will”) of the local authorities and the NGOs to take action.

In fact, concerning the protagonism of associations and local authorities²⁰ – with the partial exception of the experience gained in the context of the so-called SPRAR/Protection system for asylum seekers and refugees²¹ – the integration policy is implemented at the local level without national *governance* of the interventions. While other countries²² promote strong coordination in the conduct of integration policies between central, regional, and local authorities. In Italy, these policies are developed without a defined framework of reference and governance and without the resources allocated for this purpose.

¹⁹ For example, France.

²⁰ The involvement of local authorities in integration policies is not new to the European scene. Although the integration policies of third-country nationals remain a national competence, local authorities are the main guarantors of integration policies in many EU countries. This role also derives from the traditional function of these institutions in the organization and the provision of direct services to citizens. In other words, although the management of immigration matters involves the performance of normally typical and exclusive functions of each state (since they involve first and foremost the international relations of the same), the management of these matters also involves interventions on social services, social assistance, housing for public or subsidized residential buildings, promotion of association and cultural activities, professional training and other services, A/N.

²¹ Established pursuant to art. 32-sexies of law 189/02 and following to the limited legislative interventions transformed first into SIPROIMI – Protection system for refugees and unaccompanied foreign minors and, recently, into SAI – Reception and integration system.

²² Germany and Sweden but also France, Spain, etc., A/N.

Moreover, the only instrument that can be defined as such, the National Integration Plan for holders of international protection²³, not only is it characterized by a certain conceptual confusion²⁴ when not stylistic²⁵, but does not provide for the allocation of any specific national financial resource for its implementation²⁶.

The lack of allocation of specific resources in the integration field appears to be completely illogical considering the enormous expenditure of resources for generic "reception" activities. In fact, according to the Court of Auditors, in 2017 alone, the total expenditure committed for the reception activity amounted to over 4.5 billion €. ²⁷

As a final result, the reception measures do not bring beneficiaries to a true inclusion²⁸, despite the considerable expenditure of public money. In other words, the reception in Italy does not seem to be based on accompaniment (*Accueil*) and integration, but rather appears to be a measure in its own right, if not linked (even when prolonged over time) to the aspects of "rescue" and victimization of beneficiaries.²⁹ Net of quite frequent episodes of speculation³⁰ the reasons for that should be pursued in "cultural setting" or "mental frame", with the prevalence of an assistance-emergency approach, at the expense of approach - through the definition of objectives and tools - based on beneficiaries empowerment.³¹

23 The National Integration Plan for holders of international protection (2017), Ministry of the Interior-Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration.

24 The Plan is adopted in the implementation of Legislative Decree 18 of 21 February 2014, concerning holders of international protection, but in various parts deals with the issues of integration of migrants *tout court*.

25 From reading the text, the "multi-hand writing" with different degrees of deepening of single themes and of detail of the proposals is clear.

26 Except for some resources available under the so-called AMIF - Asylum, Migration, Integration Fund, A/N.

27 Battistelli, F. cited.

28 Yet, a good integration - of migrant populations in general and of applicants/holders of international protection in particular - should be set from the first moments of reception, A/N.

29 Ambrosini M., Migrazioni, EGEA, 2017.

30 The reference is not only to the episodes of a criminal nature but also to the "intentional" absence of integration measures in order to make applicants and holders of international protection remain in the centers for a long time (the longer they stay in the center, the longer funding is provided), A/N.

31 The historical-institutional, socio-political, and socio-cultural reasons for this "cultural setting" or "mental frame" go back long. In fact, the unique case in the "Western" panorama, Italy adheres to the Geneva Convention on the status of the Refugee of 1951 by adopting -- through the ratification authorization law no. 722 of 24 July 1954 - the so-called "Geographical reserve" whereby the recognition of refugee status is attributed only to individuals of European origin (based on art. 1 B paragraph 1 of the same, the application of the Convention in the law of the Contracting State may be limited to subjects from Europe if the Contracting State signs this option). The political reasons that led to this choice are primarily economic. The Italian authorities, in fact, despite having expressed repeatedly their desire to withdraw the reserve, maintain it for several decades: in fact, the withdrawal of the "geographical reserve" occurred only in a context of the radical change of international political scenario of the late 1980s, characterized by the fall of the Berlin Wall on the one hand, and by the start of the process of harmonization of European policies on immigration and asylum, on the other. Thus, based on an implicit international agreement, Italy for almost forty years performed only the role of so-called "first asylum" while other countries (Germany, France, and the United Kingdom but above all the United States, Canada, and Australia) were instead delegated the task of providing more stable and systematic protection for refugees.

2. Development – “Reception without integration” instead of “integration without reception”

The lack of integration of asylum seekers and refugees in the territory produces negative repercussions both under the profile of fear³² and social cohesion – as it contributes to the feelings of the hostility of a large part of public opinion to the reception phenomenon³³ – then under the profile of inaction and deterioration of human capital³⁴ of beneficiaries of the reception system.

Indeed, the phenomena of hardship and social marginalization affecting the applicants and holders of protection, even if hosted for long periods of time in the first and second reception circuits, have become the norm, particularly in the main urban areas. In fact, over the years, there was an increasing number of holders of protection leaving the centers both of first and second reception³⁵, which, although having a residence permit of multi-annual validity, end up in situations of social exclusion (occupied buildings, railway stations, etc.). Therefore, the Italian state spent billions of euros for an intervention that does not bring any concrete benefit to the protection holders for the purpose of true integration but rather simply represents a “bridge” to the subsequent situation of social hardship.

This fact should be reflected, especially when compared with the Italian experience of the nineties that saw hundreds of thousands of former Yugoslav and Albanian citizens lead to real integration (and against which practically no accommodation initiatives were organized)³⁶ and with the fact that almost none of the five million regular immigrants in Italy have ever benefited, a single day, from any form of reception. In both cases, a real bottom-up integration occurred mainly through employment³⁷, worked better than a solidarity-assistance approach without a vision: finding

³² Battistelli, F. cited.

³³ There is undoubtedly a growing feeling of intolerance (or even hatred) towards the reception of asylum seekers and refugees. In the opinion of the author, among the triggers, there is also problematic governance of the interventions, to say the least.

³⁴ With the result of “eroding the rights of accepted people, taking away their ability to make decisions”, Ambrosini, M. cited.

³⁵ In recent research published by the network of diocesan Caritas (“*Mediazioni metropolitane*”, Caritas di Roma, 2012), it clearly emerges that the vast majority of people occupying large metropolitan areas’ abandoned buildings have passed through a relatively long period of reception in both first and second reception centers.

³⁶ For more details see Petrovic, N. (2010), “L’esodo dalla ex Jugoslavia ed il dispositivo nazionale d’accoglienza”, in “*Rifugiati - venti’anni dell’asilo in Italia*”, Donzelli editore, Roma, 2010.

³⁷ Even if of low-skilled quality, A/N.

a job is essential to take part in economic and social life, as a job guarantees greater autonomy, access to housing, and decent living conditions. In other words, it has proved to work more an integration system without a reception than a reception system without integration³⁸.

Before addressing the desirable priorities of public policies in the field of integration, it is necessary to focus on the conceptualization of the topic and on its relative position in the Italian and European panorama. The theme of integration represents only a segment of the overall migration policies, but at the same time - especially in the countries with the longest migration tradition - the most relevant part. However, it is often difficult even to delimit the areas of the same starting from the very definition (the use of different terms and meanings - interaction, inclusion, cohabitation, etc.).³⁹

On a national level, according to the Consolidated Text on Immigration, integration means "*a process aimed at promoting the coexistence of Italian and foreign citizens, respecting the values enshrined in the Italian Constitution, with a mutual commitment to participate in the economic, social, and cultural life of society.*"⁴⁰.

Furthermore, according to the Charter of values of citizenship and integration,

Italy is committed because every person from the first moment in which it is on the Italian territory can enjoy fundamental rights, without distinction of sex, ethnicity, religion, social conditions. At the same time, every person living in Italy must respect the values on which the society is based, the rights of others, the duties of solidarity required by law⁴¹.

Indeed, both documents place a strong emphasis on the theme of mutual respect and, in general, on cultural and religious aspects. However, it doesn't make explicit references to public policies that may respond to the real and daily needs faced by migrants and even less to forms of public support to break down barriers in employment and housing integration.

More elements in the direction of "concretization" of concepts are offered by various legislative instruments and numerous working documents of the European Union such as, for example, Directive 2003/109/EC on long-term residents and Di-

38 Ambrosini, M. cited.

39 Ambrosini, M. cited.

40 Legislative Decree 25 July 1998, n. 286.

41 Ministerial Decree of 23 April 2007 Charter of the values of citizenship and integration, GU n. 137 of 15-6-2007.

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directive 2003/86/EC on family reunification, as well as several EC directives in the field of asylum.⁴² Regarding the latter, it should be recalled especially directive 2013/33 / EU on minimum reception standards - which provides, among other things, for the possibility of access to work if no answer is given within a maximum of nine months regarding the application for international protection- as well as directive 2011/95⁴³ which defines a series of commitments relating to access to employment, education, recognition of professional qualifications, social assistance, health care, and housing. In particular, the art. 34 of this last directive provides:

In order to facilitate the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in society, Member States guarantee access to integration programs that they consider appropriate so as to take into account the particular needs of beneficiaries of refugee status or subsidiary protection status or create the conditions that guarantee access to such programs.

A further step forward in this direction is represented by the Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals⁴⁴, that in line with the previous soft law instruments⁴⁵, invites Member States “to further develop and strengthen their national integration policies for migrants from third countries”). The Action Plan, in recognizing growing challenges of diversity (“European societies are, and will continue to become, increasingly different”), defines integration as

[...] a dynamic two-way process on integration means not only expecting third-country nationals to embrace EU fundamental values and learn the host language but also offering them meaningful opportunities to participate in the economy and society of the Member State where they settle [...] Actively contributing and being allowed to contribute to the political, cultural, and social life is at least as important to creating a sense of belonging and feeling fully anchored in the host society and to building socio-economically thriving societies. Developing welcoming,

⁴² Caggiano G. (2014), *L'integrazione dei Migranti fra Soft-law e Atti Legislativi: Competenze dell'Unione Europea e Politiche Nazionali*, in Caggiano G. (edited), *I Percorsi Giuridici per l'Integrazione. Migranti e Titolari di Protezione Internazionale tra Diritto dell'Unione e Ordinamento Italiano*.

⁴³ /UE. So-called “Qualifications” directive.

⁴⁴ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions, COM 2016, 377 final, of 7 June 2016.

⁴⁵ “To fully enjoy the benefits of immigration, Europe must manage the diversity and multiculturalism that characterizes its societies through a more effective integration of immigrants”, Common Basic Principles on Integration approved by the Council of the European Union (2004) - European Agenda on Integration; “The effective integration of long-term residents remains the key to maximizing the benefits of immigration” - Stockholm Program (2009).

diverse and inclusive societies is a process that needs the engagement both of the third country nationals and of the receiving society.

Further indications are contained in the EU Action plan on integration and inclusion, presented on 24 November 2020⁴⁶, that defines the main political priorities, presenting, at the same time, a political-strategic framework for identifying the instruments and measures of operational and financial support. Specifically, the Plan, in proposing innovative and broader measures compared to the previous soft law instruments, identifies four main sectors relating to the promotion of more inclusive policies for access to education and training, the enhancement of the work potential and skills of migrant workers, the promotion of the right to housing and health services.⁴⁷

The realization of these principles naturally presupposes a strong political will but also a considerable financial commitment. However, not only is the cost of "non-integration" much higher, in the long term, than the use of integration tools⁴⁸, but an integration that works can really represent an opportunity for growth for the country. Moreover, the challenge of investing in integration can also prove to be an opportunity.⁴⁹

3. Conclusions

In light of all the above, in order to fully enjoy the benefits of immigration, Italy too should manage - in line with the community guidelines - the diversity and multiculturalism that now characterize its society through more effective integration of foreign

46 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, 24/11/2020, [SWD (2020) 290 final] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/pdf/action_plan_on_integration_and_inclusion_2021-2027.pdf.

47 The additional actions, transversal to all the areas, are also envisaged ("Actions to support effective integration and inclusion in all sectoral areas"), such as the need to build strong partnerships between the actors, to exploit opportunities offered by European funds ("through greater EU funding opportunities under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework") and to promote participation and encounter with the host community. Finally, specific attention is paid to the use of new technologies and digital tools as well as to monitoring progress.

48 "Failure to release the potential of third-country nationals in the EU would represent a massive waste of resources, both for the individuals concerned themselves and more generally for our economy and society. There is a clear risk that the cost of non-integration will turn out to be higher than the cost of investment in integration policies".

49 This will be a challenge for the many Member States, but with the right conditions for swift and successful integration, it is also an opportunity, especially for the Member States undergoing demographic changes. That includes on the economic front, as evidence shows that third-country nationals have a positive fiscal net contribution if they are well integrated in a timely manner, starting with early integration into education and the labor market"; European Commission - Communication of 7 April 2016: Assessment of progress on structural reforms, prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and results of in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011 (COM(2016) 95 final/2).

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citizens⁵⁰ (including but not limited only to so-called “new arrived”). In that regard, it is extremely necessary to rethink the entire national system of reception, of which the horizon and the initial approach have been completely lost over the years. In other words, a “strong discontinuity” of the management methods of the phenomenon is indispensable, starting from the “rethinking” (and not only, although necessary, improvement) of the reception measures. In fact, growth and social attention to the phenomenon impose the need to proceed not only with the constant increase of the overall accommodation capacity but with the urgency of modifying, in a consistent way, the management methods of the phenomenon, on the one hand, through the overall reorganization of the reception system⁵¹, and, on other, through enhancement of the preparatory services for integration.

Regarding the latter, in addition to the need to pay more attention to the measures that promote exit from the circuit of second reception centers - the c.d. Sprar/Siproimi/Sai centers - “for reasons of integration”⁵², further interventions should be introduced both at regional and national levels, aimed at building referral systems capable of using active tools and policies for employment.

Through the aforementioned interventions, organized in such a way as to maximize the period of reception of the beneficiaries in the centers through the implementation of initiatives preparatory to full integration and, in particular, the inclusion in the job environment, the twofold aim of responding would be achieved; on the one hand respond to the needs of applicant and holders of international protection, on the other to a need of a labor market, particularly accessible as applicant and holders of international protection do not fall within the classic mechanisms of “entry flows”. In fact, they are not only already present on the national territory and in most cases already possess the basic knowledge of the Italian language, but at the time of their exit from the centers, they often obtain a regular residence permit of multi-year duration, renewable upon expiry.

⁵⁰ “The effective integration of long-term residents remains the key to maximizing the benefits of immigration “- Stockholm Program (2009).

⁵¹ For example, through the organization of reception measures in order to take into account the previous reception phases, with a view to graduality and “capitalization” of their period of stay in the centers, A/N.

⁵² The Sprar/Siproimi/Sai is the only one of the reception circuits in Italy that has among its explicit aims that of integration. However, the percentage of exit from the centers “for reasons of integration” has been very low for many years. This is an aspect, though little observed, of crucial importance for the overall functioning of the national reception and integration system, A/N.

At the same time, a more structured approach to the integration aspects would assume even greater importance because the phenomenon of “newly arrived” has completely monopolized the media and institutional attention, to the detriment of the overall migratory reality. In just over a few decades, Italy has reached and exceeded the EU average in terms of the presence of the immigrant population out of the total resident population, passing from around 500,000 foreign citizens in 1990 to over five million (5.035.643)⁵³ as of today⁵⁴. Moreover, the current percentage of the foreign presence on the total number of residents at the national level (around 8.5%) in the territory of some municipalities already represents 10%, 15%, 20%, 25% of the presence on the total of residents, with some local communities in which the percentage exceeds 30%.

The response of Italian society to this exponential growth and migratory presence, up to the most recent developments, has been of substantial openness. In fact, in relation to integration issues, until the adoption of some recent and limited national legislative provisions, Italy could be defined as a “resilient” country: more than governing, the country “suffered” an impact of over five million foreign residents, leaving them to integrate themselves on the territory, and/or at most delegating to local and regional authorities the task of developing the so-called good practices.

However, in the face of a phenomenon of this magnitude and characteristics and of its perception in public opinion, the traditions and culture of hospitality that characterize our country require a definition of strategies and public policies. To respond to the new challenges of social cohesion, it would be necessary thus to define an integrated intervention strategy, characterized by a “holistic” approach aimed at doing the experiments that can take place replicable and sustainable, and accompanied by the creation of an institutional framework for integration, to which all ordinary and extraordinary public investments are brought back.

In fact, while in relation to the integration the topics related to reception, education, and training, access to work and housing policies are “given for granted”, Italian institutions are much less used to considering the issue from the point of view of economic and financial inclusion, social and political participation and, ultimately, equal

⁵³ Source ISTAT, 2021.

⁵⁴ Italy ranks among the 11 countries in the world with the highest migratory presence. As far as the European Union alone is concerned, more than three-quarters of the foreign population (76.2%) is hosted by Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, and France, N/A.

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opportunities. However, all the themes mentioned above must be considered as part of an evolutionary and continuous process with areas and topics that cannot be separated from each other and that are intertwined in a broader integration process, which sometimes continues even after the formal acquisition of citizenship.

In fact, even in consideration of the scarce possibility of arriving, in a short time, at the definition of a real “national integration model”⁵⁵, it would be necessary to define at least a reference framework in which to guarantee on the one hand a strategy to implement and, on the other, the channels of funding continuity and stability in political planning⁵⁶.

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55 Even if the definition of a model would help to share the horizons, strategies, and tools, N/A.

56 Without which good practices do not become political but remain experimentations, N/A.

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