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# TIME TO MOVE ON

A comparative study into gender, migration and counselling in Europe



# The IARS International Institute IARS PUBLICATIONS

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Published in the UK by IARS Publications

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First published August 2016

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

ISBN 978-1-907641-35-0



## **Table of Contents**

INTRODUCTION	p. 7
LITERATURE REVIEW FINDINGS	p. 8
Immigration in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain United Kingdom – Statistics	p. 8
Problems / Obstacles faced by immigrants regarding their integration and their access in the labour market	p. 9
Immigrants regarding their integration and their access in the labour market	p. 10
Gender inequalities in the labour market	p. 10
Counselling and support services promoting immigrant employment	p. 11
FIELD RESEARCH FINDINGS	p. 11
Immigrant Focus Groups/ Interviews	p. 11
Experts' / Professionals' Focus Groups/ Interviews	p. 12
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	p. 14
REFERENCES	p. 15
EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES	
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – THE UNITED KINGDOM	p. 16
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – ITALY	p. 23
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY _ GERMANY	n 31

p. 43

p. 59

p. 66



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - GREECE** 

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - POLAND** 

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - SPAIN** 

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# TRANSNATIONAL REPORT

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# STATE OF ART GENDER AND DIVERSITY SENSITIVE EDUCATIONAL AND COUNSELLING METHODS

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# STATE OF ART GENDER AND DIVERSITY SENSITIVE EDUCATIONAL AND COUNSELLING METHODS

### The Italian context

In 2014 the number of immigrants in Italy regularly registered was 5.014.000 (8,6% relating to the Italian population)<sup>1</sup>, mainly arriving from Romania, Albania, Morocco, China and Ukraine. Their territorial distribution varied among regions, mostly in Northern Italy (59.3%) with an average percentage of women reaching 51,3%. Those regularly employed were 2.294.000 among which 1.238.000 men and 1.056.000 women. Those data referred to a period preceding the present migratory crisis: it has been roughly estimated that the number of newly arrived immigrants has been increased by 50% in only one year.

# Methodology

The desk research focused on different aspects of the issue: after a brief overview on the latest statistical data related to migrants in Italy, the research analysed with a gender perspective their main obstacles/problems and their consequent needs concerning access to the labour market. Articles were searched using the key-words: "migrant women", "foreign women" in combination with the words "gender inequalities", "orientation", "work". Words were searched both in Italian and English. We included sources referring to the Italian national context, except for the characteristics of the orientation sector and the specific services addressed to migrant women that were examined on a territorial basis, looking at the Regions were ANS and Arcobaleno are based, respectively: Emilia Romagna and Toscana.

The field research was conducted through semi-structured questionnaires addressed to two different target groups: stakeholders and migrant women.

The interviewed stakeholders were chosen among those who are providing a service of – but not be limited to - professional counselling to users' profiles that include migrants women. Those services, mainly operating in Emilia Romagna and Toscana Regions, belong to the public, private or social private sectors.

The sampling criteria followed to select migrant women were: not being Italian, have a previous experience of job research in Italy and a good knowledge of the Italian language. Immigrants were recruited in Emilia Romagna Region through the job intermediation service in the care sector run by Anziani e non solo, while in Toscana Region they were individuated through the network of institutional and personal contacts and the services provided by Associazione Progetto Arcobaleno.

These sample of migrant women may not be fully representative or either statistical of all the typologies of migrants currently present in the country: some nationalities are missing as well as second generation or newly arrived foreigners. On the whole there have been realized 7 interviews to stakeholders and 6 interviews to migrants women.

# Findings from the desk research

# PROBLEMS/ OBSTACLES FACED BY THE IMMIGRANTS REGARDING THEIR INTEGRATION AND THEIR ACCESS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The latest official data on immigration in Italy here presented are contained in the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) reports, the Statistical Dossier on Immigration and the Fifth Annual Report on "Migrants in the labour market in Italy" released by the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.





Among all the problems that immigrants usually face during their integration process, the residence permit is one of the first and most important ones as it is tightly linked to the possession of a regular job contract. For this reason, having an employment becomes necessary to develop all other aspect of life.

The types of jobs that immigrants usually have access to are in low-skilled sectors (in 2016, the jobs of 29,9% of immigrants are lower that their qualifications and skills (ISTAT, *L'integrazione degli stranieri e dei naturalizzati nel mercato del lavoro*, 2015) with low salaries and often lacking of regular contracts. The difficulties in the recognition of their professional qualifications and in the learning of the Italian language along with a tendency to a selective professional counselling based on ethnic-racial prejudices and discriminations, contribute to this situation of low social mobility. The labour sectors that mainly employ immigrant men are the construction and agriculture ones, while women are more often hired in the care or cleaning sectors, those occupations are also known as "3D": Dirty, Dangerous, Demanding.

Immigrants also often victims of discriminations, xenophobia and racial phenomena: in 2013 the 68,7% of discrimination denunciations was for ethnic-racial issues (UNAR, *Dalle discriminazioni ai diritti*, 2014).

#### IMMIGRANTS TRAINING/ EDUCATIONAL / COUNSELLING NEEDS

One of the main need is the linguistic training, perceived by migrant women as an essential step for an effective integration and also considered important to access services and opportunities to find a better job or/and to help recovering their parental role. The recognition of the trainings already accomplished in their country of origin and the requalification or upgrading of their qualifications are other important necessities that reveal how much the process is still difficult and complex in Italy (Malfone, 2006), even more for migrants with a refugee status. (Progetto PRO.RI.TI.S., 2011)

#### **GENDER INEQUALITIES IN THE LABOUR MARKET**

According to the Global Gender Gap Index 2015, Italy holds the 109<sup>th</sup> position among 145 Countries concerning salary inequalities between men and women: in Italy women are generally employed at lower levels and less paid. Keeping in mind the "habit" to employ migrant in 3D jobs, thus migrant women combine two "disadvantages".

As a result, migrant-women are the social group less paid, earning -7,4% of migrants men and 27% of Italian women (Pizzalunga, 2012 – on 2008 data) and almost 50% of them work in the personal care service sector (Ginevra, 2015).

#### **EMPLOYMENT POLICIES AFFECTING IMMIGRANTS AND/OR GENDER ISSUES**

The Italian policies concerning immigrations are tightly connected to the working status of the migrant. According to the "Decreto-flussi" (L. n.40/1998), the Government periodically plan the number of migrants that can regularly enter in the country, thus finding and keep a job is an essential need to remain in Italy.

Concerning the gender issue, the laws on victims of trafficking and domestic violence (art.18 and 18 bis of TU) support the first type of victims by providing professional training, internships in companies, help for job searching and job placement.

Other important measures, even if not limited to migrant women, are related to the domestic work sector, to which many regional and national initiatives are addressed to solve the irregular work that is still most diffused.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF THE OF THE CAREER ADVICE & COUNSELLING SECTOR**

#### In Italy, career counsellors work mostly in and for:

- Schools
- Universities
- ✓ VET agencies
- ✓ Public and private employment services
- Services aimed to support social inclusion

#### Counselling activities may include some or all of the following functions:

- Educational (aimed to support self-orientation and wellbeing of the client and to encourage pro-active behaviors)
- ✓ Informative (supporting the activation capacity of the client, through the provision of knowledge)
- ✓ Tutoring (in the framework of specific transition processes, to prevent their failing)

Counselling (to support the development of individual career plans of the client)

Concerning the qualification of professionals in the sector, there is no standard educational curriculum for career counsellors, however in 2014 an agreement<sup>2</sup> between the Italian Government, Regional and Local Governments set minimum standards for the provision of counselling services, including minimum skills for professionals. It is interesting to mention that the list of identified skills does not include any reference to gender or cultural related issues.

#### **Concerning regional specificities:**

**EMILIA-ROMAGNA REGION.** The career advice and counselling sector in the region are provided mainly by the Public Services for Employment: they offer to unemployed or employed persons free individual counselling interviews to better understand personal professional inclination and interests and to provide information on training and working opportunities, group laboratories for the active job search. The service Informagiovani, Universities and VET Institutions offer specialised services for, respectively, young people and students.

None of those services is specifically addressed to women or/and migrants, nevertheless within every regional Employment Centres there are linguistic-cultural mediators to facilitate immigrants. Concerning the gender, the regional Anti-violence Centres promote services for professional counselling and support to job placement to women: guidance interviews, motivational courses, tutoring and cultural mediation.

**TOSCANA REGION.** Also in this region the services of professional counselling are mainly provided by the Employment Centres, that helps around 300.000 every year and are mostly funded by ESF.

Within the programme "Giovani Sì" some initiatives were specifically addressed to the employability of young women. Concerning immigrants, in the ex-province of Florence, now called Metropolitan City, within the Employment Centres there are specific desk for migrants, with information services run by operators trained on intercultural issues, legal experts on working sector and linguistic-cultural mediators.

## DESCRIPTION OF SPECIFIC CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES/ INITIATIVES TARGETING IMMIGRANTS

**EMILIA-ROMAGNA REGION.** Even if there are no specific career guidance and counselling services for immigrants in the region, there have been found many local initiatives with this target, including - usually not exclusively – counselling services: for instance, Women Intercultural Centres and Associations of Immigrant women (Engroba Oberti & Cataneo, 2009). Concerning refugees and asylum seekers, the SPRAR system (System for the Protection of Asylum seekers and Refugees) in Emilia Romagna (as well as all around Italy) offers professional counselling and support for work placement: even if women are less numerous than men (17% - Fiorini, 2015) in the last few years some specific reception projects for migrant women have been developed (Bassi, 2015).

**TOSCANA REGION.** Professional counselling services are mainly part of Employment Centres. In some specific metropolitan areas, organizations of the private social sector run these services on behalf of the public bodies, providing migrants with linguistic mediators and, sometimes, legal assenstance (Bracci, 2012). Associazione Progetto Arcobaleno itself manage one of them, consistently with some voluntary activities for migrants' reception. Supporting and integrating these services, many local organizations (trade unions and migrant associations) offer professional counselling and support for entering the labour market, in some cases with specific attention to women (i.e. ANOLF - Associazione Nazionale Oltre le Frontiere of the CISL trade union or NOSOTRAS, which also develops tailor-made projects for migrant women).

There are also SPRAR centres that have realized various activities and projects of professional counselling and work placement support to refugees and asylum seekers, without any specific gender-oriented initiatives.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Accordo tra Governo, Regioni ed Enti locali sul documento recante: "Definizioni di standard minimi dei servizi e delle competenze professionali degli operatori con riferimento alle funzioni e ai servizi di orientamento attualmente in essere nei diversi contesti territoriali e nei sistemi dell'Istruzione, della Formazione e del Lavoro". 13 November 2014.



## Findings from field work

#### INTERVIEWS TO MIGRANT WOMEN

The outcomes of the six interviews were not homogeneous, as they expressed different perceptions and opinions about their experiences with the counselling services they used. This can be probably explained by the variety of their backgrounds in terms of nationality, qualifications, professional profiles and time they have been living in Italy.

Generally speaking, the 3 care workers from Emilia Romagna, although currently unemployed, are happy and feel integrated in the labor market. The main problems mentioned include: the language barrier, being non-Italian nationals, and age. One mentioned the risk of exploitation linked to the profession of in-home caregiver. Two out of three claim having being victims of gender and religious based discrimination and they also express needs of further training. Two out of three claimed to be well aware of counselling services available at local level and said they are useful, supportive and gender and culturally sensitive.

On the other hand, the satisfaction among women from Tuscany is lower. Two out of three don't feel integrated in the labor market because of the precariousness of their jobs. Among the main barrier the language is again mentioned, but they also add the lack of recognition of their qualifications and the consequent need to pay to get further training. They claim that the employment services did not provide them with any support and they had to find a job on their own, through the internet or word-of-mouth. Gender is considered a ground of discrimination by some of the interviewed. They all agree on the need of further training. They are all aware of the services offered by the public employment agency but they are not happy with them. More specifically, one of the woman said that she didn't feel listened and, being an Albanian woman, "automatically relegated among those good only for housekeeping".

#### **INTERVIEWS TO STAKEHOLDERS**

The group of 7 interviewed stakeholders is composed by 2 Employment Centres (public sector), 4 association of the private social sector (1 of them promoted by CISL trade union) and 1 Job Agency. More specifically: 4 provides services to all citizens while the other 3 are targeting migrants.

Different levels of taking charge of the users generate a differentiation in the services provided: from professional counselling and job search support packages (4) to an integration with other activities aiming at supporting the migrants from a broader perspective including all life aspects (3, all belonging to the private social sector): Italian language courses, micro-credit, active job research, support for filling in documents/ elaborating the CV and, in 1 case, initiatives for second generation migrants, aiming at integration, recognition of educational qualification and, in general, their educational path.

Even between the 2 Employment Centres analyzed, as operating in 2 different local contests, there are significant differences: in Modena, services are addressed to all citizens and provide cultural-linguistic mediation only in case of migrant users, while in Florence area there are specific *Help desks for Migrants* (*Sportello Immigrati*) giving professional counselling, cultural-linguistic mediation and legal assistance exclusively to migrants.

The association promoted by the trade union provides assistance to no-EU immigrants only: Italian language courses, orientation on training, profession and legal protection in collaboration with professional unions, while the job agency, without any specific attention to migrant or women, offers professional counselling, coaching, skills assessment, active job search, scouting and internships.

A common element among all these stakeholders is the individual approach toward users: all of them offer personalized paths, mainly through individual interviews.

Among obstacles faced by migrants while accessing these services, there are the language (Employment Centre of Modena and the Job Agency), a low knowledge of the system (Employment Centre of Modena), long waiting lists and difficulties for fixing individual appointment (1 association), accessibility based on word-of-mouth (1 association). 3 out of 7 don't mention any barrier.

Concerning the training needs, learning the Italian language and acquiring specific qualifications or skills immediately usable in the labor market are the most required. It has been noted that migrants often need to be oriented by service operators on their needs as not always they autonomously perceive them. One stakeholder has also underlined the need for transversal knowledge such as how to approach the Italian labor market.

4 stakeholders provide services with particular attention to gender and culture, but none of the them has specific quality standards or guidelines on gender and culture sensitive approaches, except for the association promoted by the trade union which bases its activity on the national guidelines on the issue and the Employment Centre of Firenze which refers to a mainstream of gender and culture in their activities as public bodies. 2 stakeholders pay specific attention to cultural background but not gender issues, while the last one do not have any specific attention to any of them.

Almost all stakeholders believe that specific training for operators would be important. More in detail: 5 of them

consider their operators as highly skilled, 1 delegates cultural aspects to mediators, 1 stakeholder hasn't operators trained on gender and cultural issues.

In general, among these stakeholders there is only a little - and superficial- knowledge concerning similar services or good practices at local, national or international level.

## Good and promising practices

It has been difficult to find good/promising practices of professional counselling services sensitive both to gender and culture. Usually public or private organizations providing these type of services reserve only little attention to one of them (and almost never to both), being more focused on all aspects of the labor market. Only when the focus is turned to the peculiarities of the individual, thus a woman and/or a migrant, and the professional counselling is only part of a broader range of activities that support the person, a gender and cultural sensibility seems to arise strongly.

The 3 good/promising practices meet many of the criteria defined by the project: implemented in EU countries, including career guidance and professional counselling, being gender and/or culturally sensitive, based on a highly skilled and well trained human capital, following a general approach but also be tailor-made based on the cultural and socio-economic environment of the country, as well as on the specific needs and requests of the migrants regarding their career and their integration into the labor market. In two cases there is also a good link to the policy level. They are all innovative and replicable, only in one case the sustainability is not clear.

More in detail: 2 out of 3 are run by associations of private social sector, mainly composed by foreign operators, while one is managed by a consortium and it is linked to the SPRAR (national system for the protection of refugees) activities. The beneficiaries are mainly migrants women but not exclusively: 1 targets specifically at women, both migrants and Italian, 1 is also open to Italian citizens, both men and women, and the last one targets specifically to refugees and asylum seekers, both man and women (much less numerous). These differences reveal different visions and attention towards users: the basis on which the professional counselling services are built on.

The personal experience of the operators is recognized as one of the strengths in the first 2 cases, while in all cases great importance is given to an individual approach for developing *tailor-made* professional paths.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The desk and field researches reveal a clear picture of the overall characteristics of the Italian situation on the issue. Migrant women are still relegated to typically female occupations (housekeeping or caring activities) and fragilities such as exploitation, scarce social mobility and failed recognition of previous qualification and skills are very common. Specific professional counselling services dedicated to migrants are rare, and even less those targeting migrant women. In most cases the "sensibility" towards migrants is limited to the activation of a linguistic-cultural mediation (that is often itself restricted to mere interpreting or document translation) as one of the greater and most perceived problems faced by migrants is the knowledge of the Italian language. There are a few good experiences and initiatives at local level: two of them seems to have obtained a particular success in terms of job placement and satisfaction among migrants women as users: its main characteristic is the attention paid to the specific professional skills, ambitions and needs as a starting point for defining the adequate job offer. The realization of *tailor made* professional path seems to be the best way for efficacy.

Thus the system of services still need not only to be developed and integrated to become functional and synergistic, but also to share methodologies and guidelines: projects and initiatives are still too diversified and not integrated. Even only improve the level of reciprocal knowledge would be useful and important in order to support the individual more effectively.

It is no coincidence that a representative of one of the selected best practices suggests a combined training for operators of different organizations (public and private sectors) in order to "enhance the knowledge of each other services, share practice and strength points". Moreover, from informal talks with public operators emerges how much public bodies are positively moving to develop strategies to facilitate user's access to services but without any networking approach,





that would be probably much effective and less expensive.

#### In detail, specific issues for improving counselling services:

#### 1. gaps and key challenges

**ON MIGRANTS SIDE:** low knowledge of Italian language, missed recognition of foreign professional qualifications and skills, training needs other than language (computer literacy, safety training, emergency health card, etc..), low knowledge of Italian labour market "culture", scarce awareness of own specific labour needs.

**ON COUNSELLING SERVICES SIDE:** rarity of specific professional counselling services dedicated to migrants women, mere activation of linguistic-cultural mediation/translation as the unique "tool" to help migrants access to services, lack of reciprocal knowledge and integration among services, quick evolution and changes of the immigration and asylum situations and related laws.

#### 2. recommendations for the training

In particular, the analysis of the good practices revealed the need for tailored counselling services and gave some reflection points and hints:

- ✓ the development of migrants women's unexpressed potential and the enhancement of their awareness, capacities and self-confidence should be at the centre of the orientation and the counselling path,
- ✓ the listening phase of the interviews needs time and attention,
- ✓ the individual migration project should be the starting point to build up a tailored path,
- ✓ services should aim to help migrant women placing themselves at the centre of their perception of life and job
- ✓ the importance of the connection to the local network of services
- multidisciplinary interventions
- ✓ free trainings (language, computer skills...)

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ISBN 978-1-907641-35-0