

THE CONTEXT AND THE PROJECT AIM

The European context

According to the Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini, migration is one of the most important political issues facing the EU and its Member States and should be at the top of the EU's agenda.

The Treaty of Amsterdam conferred powers to the Community in the areas of migration and asylum and, from 2000 to 2001, several acts were proposed and adopted for the development of a common policy on this field. For example, the Commission and the Council adopted a directive on family reunification and another one on the status of third country nationals who have been long-term residents.

Moreover, in order to create a comprehensive common migration policy and to manage migratory flows effectively, the Commission and the European Council of Laeken (July 2001) proposed the adoption of an open method of co-ordination for the Community Immigration Policy, which sets appropriate objectives at Community level and at the same time implements national action plans suited to the various Member States' circumstances.

The regional context

Following up the proposals of the Commission and its Green Paper on an EU approach to managing economic migration whose aim is to launch a process of in-depth discussion about immigrants' integration, the Veneto Region sets up and carries out several projects and activities strengthening its partnerships and relations with other European States.

The Veneto Region, promoter of the benchmarking programme on the best practices for the immigrants integration, is one of the most developed regions of Italy: it was pioneer of the original local development through the "industrial clusters & districts" and the bottom up strategies with specific incentives for the business and job creation in small and medium size enterprises.

This development model is well known in Europe and resulted in very high economic performances: the GDP increased 5 times from 1970 to 2000 and a certain number of the new global corporations born in the region.

The link between social and economic capitals played an essential role in providing the impulse of those performances: the Veneto Region wants to keep carefully such a link, in order to ensure both the continuity of the economic and territorial capital and the improvement of the social capital, through the social inclusion of all new people coming as immigrants and their capabilities, in the

same way the capabilities of the resident peasants and other marginalized people were involved in the start up of the local development of the region in the sixties.

The objectives

According to the statements and guide lines of the social balance approved by the region government in 2004, it is required to create the best conditions to underpin the capabilities of each person and value its contribution for the community and its actors (enterprises, labour and human resources, schools, etc.).

For this reason, the local government of the Veneto Region deems it necessary to compare its experience with other European countries in order to recognize best practises and significant experiences before creating and promoting a regional model of immigrants' integration.

Through this strategy the Veneto Region will build a successful and original system of immigrants' integration which could become a benchmark for other Italian and European regions concerned by migration flows.

Three countries invited to the benchmarking programme (France, Germany, United Kingdom) have a long and well tested tradition in this domain: this is the reason why the Veneto Government would be grateful for any help, suggestion or proposal coming from the best practices of these countries. One of the partners, that's Spain, is involved in the immigration more or less since the eighties, like Italy: its experience could be a good affinity in the processes adopted to face such a challenge in appropriate ways.

The outcomes of the benchmarking will be introduced into the programmes of the regional government for its policies and plans.

PROJECT WORKPLAN

The Veneto Region Government, aware of the increasing problems rising from the immigration flows, would like to set up and carry out with its own resources a specific programme on that matter and asked Italia Lavoro, the executive body of the Labour & Welfare Ministry of Italy, to prepare an action focused on the "best practices" available in 4 european countries (Germany, France, United Kingdom and Spain) on the 4 main facets of such a programme, namely:

- the integration or inclusion of immigrants within housing policies;
- the integration or inclusion of immigrants within social & cultural policies;
- the integration or inclusion of immigrants within educational & linguistic policies;

- the integration or inclusion of immigrants within labour market.

According to the resolution of the Veneto Region Government (DGR 2575, 27th September 2005), Italia Lavoro was asked to set up and carry out three main activities:

a research on migration issues on 4 European countries: Germany, United Kingdom, France and Spain. The research should highlight good practices and relevant experiences developed in these countries on the following migration issues:

- Housing integration policies;
- Culture, education and language integration policies;
- Social and civic integration;
- Vocational training and labour market integration policies.

Creating and strengthening partnerships between the Veneto Region Government, on one hand, and Germany, United Kingdom, France and Spain, on the other hand, through phone contacts, meetings, twinnings, exchange of information, etc.

For each country it is necessary to point out a core partner and some supplementary partners in order to create a network dealing with immigration issues.

The main partners selected by the Italia Lavoro team are the following:

- Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales – DG Integración de Inmigrantes in Spain
- Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge in Germany
- Job Centre Plus in the United Kingdom
- ANAEM –Agence Nationale de l'Accueil des Etrangers et des Migrations in France.

The organization of a final meeting to be held in Brussels with the core and the supplementary partners in order to explain the results of the benchmarking programme and the future lines of development of the project.