

Inti Project “Citizenship through language tuition”

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CIDIS ONLUS

Immigration in Italy

Migration flows to Italy go back 30 years. Early immigrant workers were mainly from former colonies (Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea), catholic countries (the Philippines) and from unstable areas of the world. For some years, the most numerous community was from Morocco. In the last ten years, though, a radical change has occurred in the incoming migration flows and Italy has had to face a sudden and significant rise in immigrants from Albania, Central Europe, namely from Romania, Poland and the Ukraine.

Currently, there are an estimated 2,500,000 foreigners, from more than 180 different countries. The immigrants are thus incredibly diversified and comprise numerous small communities with very different languages, cultural backgrounds and traditions.

The biggest communities are Romanians, Albanians and Moroccans, that make up 30% of the total. Followed by the Ukrainians, Chinese, Philippines and Polish.

Immigrants from Eastern Europe are mainly women, with a relatively short term migratory project. Foreign minors account for 16% of the total. More than 280,000 children are now attending Italian schools.

Box 1 – Immigrants in Italy

Country of provenance	Immigrants	% on total
Romania	239.426	10,9
Albania	233.616	10,6
Morocco	227.940	10,4
Ukraine	112.802	5,1
China	100.109	4,6
Philippines	73.847	3,4
Poland	65.847	3,0
Tunisia	60.572	2,8
USA	48.286	2,2
Senegal	47.762	2,2
TOTAL	2.139.999	100,0

Where they are living and working

60% of the total immigrant workers are living and working in the northern regions – Valle d'Aosta, Piemonte, Lombardia, Liguria, Trentino, Veneto, Friuli, Emilia Romagna - and more than one third of the total are currently living in the North East of the country (mainly in Lombardia).

In the centre of Italy, Lazio is the region with the highest percentage of immigrants and Rome on its own hosts more than 100,000 immigrants.

Roughly half of the immigrants in the southern part of Italy are living in Campania.

Immigrants in the North are employed in small factories making third party products, in the centre they are mainly working as carers and in the South they work in agriculture, building trade or they are self employed in small business activities.

Box 2 – The immigrant population in Italy

Parts of Italy	Foreign residents	% on total	Total population (January 1 st 2003)	% of immigrants on total population
<i>North-West</i>	731.851	33,4%	15.033.085	4,9%
<i>North-East</i>	536.972	24,5%	10.749.711	5,0%
<i>Centre</i>	614.555	28,0%	10.980.912	5,6%
<i>South</i>	230.534	10,5%	13.947.599	1,7%
<i>Islands</i>	80.087	3,7%	6.609.763	1,2%
TOTAL	2.193.999	100,0%	57.321.070	3,8%

Illegal work, widespread among the immigrant population, has repercussions on the possibility for the immigrant of being granted or being able to renew a stay permit. Especially in the South, illegal work often leads to immigrant's illegal status.

Many immigrants are living in big towns: Rome, Milan, Naples.

Nevertheless, the house-hunting problem has forced them to settle in small towns or villages.

Foreigner's legal status

The foreigners' (i.e. non E.U. citizens) legal status is governed by the Law N° 286 dated 25th July 1998 (Turco-Napolitano Law), lately amended by the Law N° 189 dated 30 July 2002 (Bossi-Fini Law). The Consolidation Act states categorically that foreigners living in Italy must apply for and be granted a stay permit and that the permit will be in force for a maximum of two years and will be renewable on expiry. A foreigner with a stay permit has the same rights and duties as an Italian citizen. However, illegal immigrants will be granted fundamental human rights: the law therefore grants free access to the National Health Service and schooling for minors for the duration of the "compulsory school attendance".

Regulations cover the foreigner's access to Italy for work purposes and state specifically that the granting of a stay permit is subject to a work contract ("the stay contract") being submitted by the employer and that this must be within the annual access quota fixed by the Government.

Every year the Italian Government sets a figure for the number of immigrants wishing to work in Italy.

The foreign worker can also bring his wife and any under age children and in certain cases his parents.

Under the Consolidation Act, after a period of six years, the immigrant with an income sufficient to support himself and his family, may apply for a "stay card", i.e. a stay permit for an unlimited amount of time (subject to validation after ten years), enabling foreigners to have access to all State Services (e.g. pensions, accident indemnity, etc.).

A foreigner who has been officially resident for at least ten years may apply for Italian citizenship thus granting the right to vote. Under current legislation, citizenship is granted gradually: the stay permit, the stay card, after six years, and Italian citizenship after ten years of official residence.

The 1992 law, which is currently in force, states that the main criterion for obtaining citizenship is "ius sanguinis" (based on the nationality of the parents), as foreseen by the previous law in 1912 when a large percentage of Italians was emigrating.

The 1992 law was not really aimed at making in-depth reforms and, in comparison with other EU countries, in certain aspects the new legislation does not appear to fully take into account the extent of the latest immigration phenomenon.

Over the last few years, and as immigration in Italy has become more stable there has been a progressive increase in the number of applications for naturalisation, mainly through marriage to Italian citizens.

Changes to Italian legislation on citizenship are currently being debated: some likely amendments have in fact been approved by the Lower House Commission on Constitutional Affairs.

Reforms centre around three main points; citizenship for immigrant children born in Italy, speeding up of the naturalisation process and more stringent regulations for acquiring citizenship following marriage.

The preliminary assumption that in order to obtain Italian citizenship the immigrant must demonstrate an adequate knowledge of the Italian language and culture, is both highly significant and innovative.

This is not foreseen under current legislation. However, the Authorities making decisions on requests for citizenship are forced to evaluate the legal requirements and a series of factors to establish the merits of making the immigrant a permanent part of the host society. Good conduct is of particular importance, together with his or her level of integration into local society, income and the desire to become part of the Italian community as a whole.

Cidis Onlus

Cidis Onlus is a non profit association working in Italy with the general aim of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for the immigrant population, by offering them services and by organising information and awareness campaigns on immigration aimed at the Italian public.

Founded in 1987, Cidis Onlus is officially recognised by the Ministry of Social Affairs as qualified to offer services to immigrants and is included in the list of appointed associations drafted under the framework of the general immigration law.

Cidis Onlus is part of a network of associations, lead by Alisei Ong, all active in the fields of humanitarian aid, international co-operation and development education.

Cidis Onlus has offices in: Perugia, Terni, Caserta, Napoli.

Personal Services

To inform and guide immigrants through the integration process, introduce them to the country's laws, rules, services, etc. Cidis onlus counters provide:

Information and guidance services;

Social secretariat and assistance in obtaining services

Housing assistance

Assistance to refugees and asylum seekers

Exclusion and discrimination

In order to monitor immigrants' discrimination and social exclusion and to prevent the establishing of biases and racist and discriminatory behavior, Cidis Onlus co-ordinates and manages:

a racism and discrimination watch

Information and Guidance services for foreign prisoners and ex-prisoners.

Cultural mediation services

Education and training

To support the integration of foreign students in schools and in order to favour adult immigrants' inclusion in the job market, Cidis Onlus offers:

Counselling for schools and families

Educational Support for foreign students

Updated Intercultural courses for teachers

Intercultural workshops

After-school Language courses for immigrant students

Social-linguistic and cultural language courses for adult immigrants

Professional Training courses

Computer courses

Training for operators of both Public and private services

Research and Publishing

Cidis Onlus has its own publishing activity and produces a large number of research works, educational volumes, guides, books, essays on specific subjects, and promotional leaflets and brochures.

Cidis has developed a multimedia sector for the production of cdroms, videos and websites.

Cidis Onlus and literacy

Considering that the migratory project of the biggest immigrant communities in Italy, namely Albanians and Moroccans, is becoming more and more a medium and long term plan, an appropriate knowledge of the Italian language is a matter of greater importance in relation to the immigrant integration process.

First of all, it must be stressed that immigrants in Italy are from numerous countries and have experienced very different educational systems with a variation in terms of years of school attendance. The immigrants' entrance level in language courses, varies considerably and is hampered by previous knowledge, and often by not knowing the Latin alphabetization.

The condition of social exclusion in which many immigrants live, tends to increase language fossilization and to encourage the use of inefficient communication patterns or even miscommunication that will be useless in different working and living environments.

The classes in the courses are very diversified, even when immigrants' entrance levels seem similar. This problem, though, can not be not solved with an all-in-one solution, but must be treated individually and tackled with an ad hoc solution. Our approach is based on a on-progress language learning method and its final goal is to make sure that immigrants reach effective communication language skills.

Courses are for adult immigrants living in Italy and are based on a communication centred approach.

Courses are aimed at developing students' language comprehension and communication abilities and at providing them with a knowledge that they can use for their own independent integration process into the host society.

Courses are always organized with different levels in order to ensure that the teacher has a class of students with similar learning needs, even though from different countries.

Courses are organised in modules and unit-lessons with likely content variation, the flexible learning steps enable the students to miss some lessons without creating too many problems.

The evaluation of the language entrance knowledge is made on the basis of oral and written language abilities. Levels vary from total lack of knowledge, to understanding single phoneme and grapheme, up to the comprehension and production of complex sentences and grammatical structures.

Enrolment is open throughout the year, there are no established attendance limits. Nevertheless requirements can be set if the courses are financed in the framework of certain institutional budget-lines, in which case the possession of a valid stay permit is compulsory.

Courses

First level of integration

The first level is generally attended by the newly arrived immigrants who need to acquire basic language skills for "Survival communication" (basic language skills related to every-day life that the immigrant needs to master). The linguistic areas tackled are those of: job-hunting, doing the shopping, accessing social services, etc.

This so called functional methodological approach, allows the student to gain basic oral comprehension and production language skills, following a highly flexible and step-by-step learning process during which only the teacher offers relevant inputs.

This particular methodology enables the students to learn new linguistic structures, by means of language fixation techniques, simulations, role play, educational games, exchange of information, image descriptions, peer education if the group is made up of people of same nationality.

Each single didactic unit is based on certain communication structures, beginning with the most common.

Morphosyntactic contents are presented in daily life context: at the market, at the train station, in the

chemistry.

Working materials are often used during simulations to make the exercises more effective and to allow the students to become familiar with forms and documents issued by the Italian authorities.

Each didactic unit tackles a limited number of essential Italian words. By the end of the course the student must have learned a certain number of morpho-syntactic structures and have a vocabulary that enables him or her to communicate or to “ survive linguistically ”.

Second level of integration

The second level is for those who can understand and speak Italian but are still in a “transitional phase” in the language learning process. The students already have a reference language system that the teacher must learn to access and expand on. In doing so, the teacher can help the students to improve their knowledge of the language and avoid common mistakes.

In addition to the systematisation of the language, the students are introduced to different linguistic registers and to vocabulary that enables them to express their own opinions. Moreover, the students learn specialised terms that can be of help in finding a job or in solving any problems related to house hunting, children's integration in schools, etc. Students should, thus, get to know the language to a degree where they can express their own identity. Reading and listening texts and self-evaluation tools are used during the courses. The teachers tend to require a pro-active attitude, working on keywords, filling-in sentences and doing written work.

Experimentation - Third level of integration

The third level is an advance language course tackling different topics: from politics to literature, newspapers and mass media.

From a linguistic point of view, this course is intended for an immigrant capable of expressing him or herself on a wide range of subjects and with good language comprehension and writing skills. The course enables the students to improve their communication and linguistic abilities and provides useful strategies for a high level of oral and written Italian.

Characterised by strong meta-linguistic activity, the third level is an interesting experience in cultural exchange and integration in which students play a central role. The language, thus, becomes a fundamental tool in tackling issues central to the process of social integration: universal rights and cultural relativism, Citizenship rights, equality and diversity safe-guards, national and international institutions and how they work. On the content of the courses and the characteristics of the students a specific methodological criterion is applied, selected from a wide range of linguistic tools including: face to face lessons and open discussions, group and inter-group work, workshops, tests, role play and simulations, interviews, individual research work, meetings, oral and written work. Learning and teaching texts, cassettes and multimedia tools are used during the course.