



ITALIAN MEIC STRATEGIC PLAN

Migrants' Economic Integration Cluster: a working definition.

LIME Project – Labour Integration for Migrants' Employment





1. Introduction

Migration is not a new phenomenon since «human beings have always moved in search of new opportunities, or to escape poverty, conflict or environmental degradation»ⁱ. However, this *Age of Migration*ⁱⁱ has an important socio-economic impact on the destination countries' welfare policies because of its global dimensionⁱⁱⁱ.

In the last few years, the growing migration flows from North Africa and Middle-East countries to European Union Member States have highlighted the most complex and politically sensitive issue of international migration, namely the socio-economic inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers^{iv}. Indeed, the “refugee crisis”^v has shown the paradox of the global society wherein borders seem to disappear for goods, services and capital but they are strengthened for people who leave their own countries forced by the *push-factors* of poverty, conflicts, oppressive regimes, persecution of minorities, and environmental disasters.

Furthermore, the crisis revealed the unclear European migration policy based on the implementation of Member States' measures to contain refugees' mobility. Hence, in 2015 the European Commission began rethinking a shared action in order to «bring together European and national efforts to address migration, to meet our international and ethical obligations and to work together in an effective way, in accordance with the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility. No Member State can effectively address migration alone. It is clear that we need a new, more European approach»^{vi}.

The Commission calls the attention to the shared responsibility involving all actors, Member States, EU institutions, International Organisations, civil society, local authorities and third countries in the definition of an effective integration policy through the implementation of *cluster network*^{vii} looking at refugee as a "third country national"^{viii}, i.e. a holder of rights and obligations comparable to those of citizens.

The LIME Project – *Labour Integration for Migrants' Employment* – moves from the interest of promoters (CIES Onlus, LUMSA University, ALDA, Guarani ONG, CNOS-FAP, Confocooperative Roma, and Pinaridi) to respond to the European Commission call. The project promotes the swift integration of young third country nationals (aged 18-29) in the labour market, by fostering the *cluster network* methodology at the local level. The core of the project are two pilot actions implemented in Rome (Italy) and in Madrid (Spain) which allow to develop the *Migrants Economic Integration Cluster* – MEIC among socio-economic key actors (associations of employers, vocational training providers, employment services, local authorities, companies) aimed at identifying more adequate tools to increase the effectiveness of existing labour market integration policies.

This position paper refers both to economic and sociological literature on networks^{ix} and integration policies^x and to the analysis of best practices already experienced in Roma Capitale. It aims to draw up a strategic action plan through which partners are guided in the entire process, from the establishment of *cluster networks* to the planning and implementation of actions for the labour integration of third-country nationals – hereafter TCNs (refugees, asylum seekers, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, and ex unaccompanied minors) paying particular attention to women.

2. Theoretical Background

The complexity of social phenomena highlights the need to develop organizational models more adequate to plan and to implement sustainable socio-economic development policies. Networks become, therefore, the main tool of cooperation among public-private actors of the society and they seem to offer effective and sustainable solutions to wicked problems such as human capital development, environmental protection policies and global health policies. Actually, wicked problems are characterized by interconnected causal factors that cannot be broken up into different parts in order to outline clear and punctual political-economic strategies^{xi}.

Nowadays, one of the major wicked problems affecting society is the dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon of migration^{xii}. It is part of the structural change that brings policymakers to rethink the concept of integration not only as an individual process but also as networks of formal and informal relationships involving migrants and local communities^{xiii}. In this context, the multi-level governance plays a key role because it allows activating collaboration between public and private actors of the society.

A vast literature has examined networks highlighting their evolution from public governance and regulatory economics as well as a valid alternative to top-down organisational models^{xiv}. According to Provan and Kenis (2007), networks are «groups of three or more legally autonomous organizations that work together to achieve not only their own goals but also a collective goal»^{xv}. The significant interdependence among members does not depend on formal agreements but on networks' tasks^{xvi} because no members, either public or private, have adequate knowledge, information or power to solve complex, dynamic and multifaceted problems^{xvii}. Nevertheless, interdependence is not a sufficient condition, even though necessary, to form a network. Members have to be aware of their own interdependence and of the added value produced by the collaboration^{xviii}.

Networks are therefore horizontal models wherein members define rules and share resources to achieve a common goal through continuous interactions^{xix}. It is possible to identify three types of networks, each with its own peculiarities^{xx}. More specifically:

- **Cooperative networks** focused on the exchange of information and/or expertise. They are based on informal and short-term relationships.
- **Coordinated networks**, focused on the integration of services for solving complex problems. Its participants take substantial risks, also because of the high interdependence. They, therefore, develop a shared action plan to which all members are committed to.
- **Collaborative networks**, formed not so much to provide services, but to find innovative solutions that lead to changing the way services are delivered. They are long term, risky and involve systemic changes.

Each type of networks can activate a *cluster*. The concept of cluster network finds its roots in the phenomenon of "industrial district"^{xxi} which can be defined as the geographical concentration of business activities that facilitate the flows of knowledge relying upon the trust established among members. Hence, the elements making up the cluster are similar to those present in industrial districts: a production network connected to a multiplicity of members (institutions, research bodies and third sector associations) in a geographical and relational dimension of proximity. The core element of a cluster network is the mutual collaboration among members, through which cluster is able to adapt to the society that is constantly changing sharing knowledge and good practices and even anticipating risks.

The LIME project applies the cluster methodology to the labour integration policy of TCNs so that *Migrants' Economic Integration Cluster* – MEIC – could support social territorial responsibility involving the society as a whole (public administration, enterprises, representative organizations, third sector and research institutes) in the definition of labour integration actions. Indeed, Italian MEIC should be the organizational and procedural tool that allows the shift from humanitarian

reception systems to labour integration programmes *empowering* migrants as persons and talented workers.

3. Italian Project Context: Methodology, Findings, Aims

Rome is a dynamic migration hub by dimension and ethnic composition of flows. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2019), Rome welcomes about 380'000 foreign residents in 2017 coming from 183 different countries^{xxii}.

In 2015, the year of the refugee crisis, 180'000 migrants arrived in Italy, 15'000 of whom moved to the metropolitan city of Roma Capitale^{xxiii}. The growing flows of migrants (refugees, asylum seekers and holders of international protection) pointed out the weakness of Italian reception system introduced in 2001, the SPRAR system^{xxiv}, not able to manage the flows of newcomers and, for this reason, enhanced by a parallel emergency reception system (Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria)^{xxv}. Hence, the SPRAR system has begun to focus only on the provision of reception services leaving out the additional services of education, training, and legal support needed to the inclusion process. Furthermore, the fragmented government structure of Rome Municipality does not facilitate the definition of a multi-level and multi-sector action.

The LIME project takes place in the context of Roma Capitale aiming to solve the vulnerability of the current organizational structure and to strengthen the approach of territorial social responsibility.

3.1 Methodology

As shown, the cluster network seems to encourage social cohesion and responsibility of public, private and third sector actors which decide to work together, sharing resources, expertise and risks, for the implementation of multi-dimensional actions^{xxvi}. It is important to explore the reasons why actors form networks, particularly the management of the network, namely if it is part of the strategy to achieve results otherwise unattainable. The pilot action of the MEIC allows analyzing this "illuminating structure of collective action"^{xxvii}, identifying problems and evaluating opportunities and benefit.

Since the urban geography of Roma Capitale and the specific sector of the labour integration policies for TCNs, the present strategic plan used qualitative methodology.

After mapping the economic, political and social actors work in Rome (90 actors), they were divided into four groups, according to the specific areas of social inclusion:

- Housing: 25 organizations
- Education, training and job: 19 organizations
- Culture and sport: 15 organizations
- Institutions and trade unions: 9 and 11 respectively.

Then, focus groups and interviews were scheduled in order to investigate in depth the local social networks. The focus groups involved many third sector actors and some trade union organizations that provide services complementary to integration (legal support, medical assistance, education programme) and are engaged in projects for labour integration of migrants. The issues addressed were: reception systems and education, training and job. The interviews, on the other hand, were conducted with two organizations (*Migrantour* and *Liberi Nantes*) that work with migrants as "bearer of culture and talent".

3.2 Results

The first focus group was about “reception system”. Six associations took part to focus group: *A buon diritto*, *ALI – Accoglienza Libera Integrata*, *Armadilla*, *Casa Scalabrini 634*, *Comunità Sant’Egidio* and *Cooperativa CivicoZero*. These organizations work in the field of reception providing not only housing solutions but also complementary services such as Italian language courses, vocational training courses, job orientation services, legal protection and psychological support.

Focus group’s findings revealed the importance of changing the way in which organizations are present in Rome, promoting the construction of networks that foster relations between the local communities and migrants. Thus, progress needs to be made:

- Undermining the culture of vulnerability that dominates the entire reception system and overcoming the *stigma* of the migrant as the bearer of needs.
- Enhancing the “*migrant heritage*”, namely considering migrants with their human capital as resources for the already existing local heritage.
- Reorganizing networks in “*territorial alliances*” that allow joint actions of actors, who work at different levels in the same or in complementary sectors, in order to reduce the assistance dimension of services, because “*assistance alone does not make integration*”.

The second focus group was about “education, training and job”. Nine organisations of third sector (*A buon diritto*, *Asinitas onlus*, *Casa Scalabrini 634*, *Cooperativa CivicoZero*, *K-Alma Associazione - Falegnameria Sociale*, *Officina 47 - Associazione delle Tutrici e dei Tutori dei MSNA*, *Progetto Diritti*, *Programma Integra*, *Sensacional onlus*) and two trade unions (*CGIL Roma Lazio* e *CNA-World Roma*) took part in.

The “*core of social inclusion*”, by analysed data, is the lack of access to work and consequently to rights. Critical issues identified are:

- An “*overgrown offer of training services*” (language courses and vocational courses) too often conceals the failure of the public administration to intervene in a sector where public resources alone are not enough.
- The “*economic dependence of the organization*” on the funds for the provision of training services brings to a “*race for the call*” and inhibits collaboration among organizations.
- The lack of an ongoing dialogue with institutions, often even among associations themselves, slows down the “*institutional response to needs*” so that informal networks become a rapid solution to unemployment even if they do not guarantee a regular job and the access to the rights of the worker.

The interviews conducted with the local coordinator of *Migrantour* and the president of *Liberi Nantes* confirmed the findings of the focus groups. It is necessary to:

- Overcome the stigmatization of the vulnerable migrant through “*cultural walks*” during which the perception of the local community changes: “*I am no longer the usual Polish caregiver but, in this case, I am an intercultural companion. Therefore, the perception that the person has of herself/himself and the perception that the community has of migrants change*”.
- Promote social occasions, such as sport, that facilitate “*personal reconstruction and friendship and trust in others. Sport has strength and courage in itself and helps to reduce distances because it creates cohesion and solidarity*”.

The fragility of the integration system depends on the perspective through which projects of training and job orientation are developed: it would be necessary to go beyond the boundaries of one's organization and think of the organization itself “*as an actor that works within a network, that is, to have the awareness that its own objectives can be better achieved through stable collaborations. This means being part of a structured horizontal context*”.

Cluster networks would allow to better coordinate the actions of proximity networks and it would activate synergies abandoned because of the shortage of time and the lack of dialogue. Furthermore, they would encourage inclusive practices that involve institutions, economic and social actors and migrants themselves no longer as simple beneficiaries, but as architects of their own human and professional development path.

3.3 Aims

Taking into consideration the general purpose of the project, namely promoting a social network model aimed to integrate TCNs into the labour market, the analyses conducted so far place three specific aims:

1. Planning training courses on the governance of networks (organizational structure and networks management) aimed at providing members with the necessary tools to develop synergies that could foster full integration of migrants into the labour and social context. This training would guarantee the overcoming of organizational boundaries that too often provide *welfarism's services* due to scarce resources.
2. Improving the quality of education and training as a fundamental requirement to create more and better job opportunities.
3. Developing career guidance programmes in the perspective of personal and organizational empowerment that place migrants at the centre not simply as beneficiaries of services but as persons with «human capital that can be strengthened and expanded during the integration process»^{xxviii}.

These objectives can be achieved by the implementation of collaborations and shared responsibilities that involve all the actors of the society (public, private, third sector and diaspora communities) in an ongoing dialogue.

4. Italian Cluster Network Guidelines: Roma Capitale

Drawing on the best practices experienced in Roma Capitale^{xxix}, these guidelines aimed to encourage synergies among public and private sectors towards the definition of the Migrants 'Economic Integration Cluster - MEIC.

Following the path of Kickert *et al.* in 1997^{xxx}, the MEIC will be developed in 5 steps:

- i. Network Activation: initiating interaction processes with potential partners interested in developing and testing the MEIC network. This phase may require an analysis of the previous strategies.
- ii. Arranging interaction: definition of rules in order to avoid free-rider's behaviour and "premature pulling out" of partners from the cluster. This may require the signing of a formal agreement, also containing the rules for the resolution of possible conflicts.
- iii. Brokerage: matching problems, solutions and actors.
- iv. Facilitating interaction through procedural activities such as the scheduling of meeting places and times and steady monitoring of dialogue.
- v. Mediation and arbitration: when conflicts exist, the definition of activities allowing the communication channels to remain open and therefore to explore the positions of each member.

Roma Capitale is an interesting field to examine the collaboration that a cluster network can activate. There are many actors work in the sector of the labour integration of TCNs, but as shown before, too often their fragmented actions respond only to individual needs (legal support for the asylum request; participation in language courses Italian, housing reception) missing the overall perspective of socio-economic inclusion.

The LIME project thus not only draws up programmes of education, training and job orientation that will allow 50 beneficiaries to be part in the labour integration process but also it activates the cluster networks through which the key players of Roma Capitale will undertake to develop joint and integrated actions as inclusive as possible.

Since the complex problem of the labour integration of TCNs and the need to manage it through a flexible organizational model (multi-level and multi-sector), it will be possible to improve three types of networks within the Migrants' Economic Integration Cluster:

- Cooperative networks will be developed by informal relationships between the LIME partners (CIES Onlus, CNOS-FAP, Confcooperative Rome) and the organizations that work in similar sectors (Asinitas Onlus, Programma Integra, Sensacional Onlus). Although they are interested in the project, they can only activate informal practices of information and expertise sharing.
- Coordinated networks will be developed between the LIME partners, public institutions (Regione Lazio) and the actors working in the sectors complementary to the labour integration of TCNs (A buon diritto, ALI – Accoglienza Libera Integrata, Casa Scalabrini 634, Comunità di Sant'Egidio, Cooperativa Civico zero, Officina 47). Since the target groups of the project, it will be important to coordinate with organisations providing reception services, legal support, psychological support and cultural mediation in the broadest sense.
- Collaborative networks will be formed among the actors interested in participating in the project (Regione Lazio, Armadilla, CNA World) and they will define not only traineeships but also innovative policies to solve local significant issues.

This strategic action plan will facilitate the cluster management process and will accompany it during all phases of the pilot action that will be carried out in Roma Capitale.

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ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

ⁱⁱⁱ Massey, D.S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A. and Pellegrino, A. (1998) *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium*. Wotton-under-Edge (UK) Clarendon Press.

^{iv} Ambrosini, M. (2011) *Sociologia delle migrazioni*. Bologna: il Mulino.

^v In 2014/2015 one million of refugees and migrants risked their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea and unfortunately over 3'700 of them lost their lives.

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^{vi} European Commission (2015) *European Agenda on Migration*. COM 240 final (p.1)

^{vii} European Commission (2008) *The Concept of Clusters and Cluster Policies and Their Role for Competitiveness and Innovation: Main Statistical Results and Lessons Learned*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

^{viii} Council Directive 2004/83/CE "On minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of the protection granted" (29 April 2004).



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- ^{xx} Mandell M.P. (2010) *Learning the three "R's" of networks*, op. cit.
- ^{xxi} According to Giacomo Becattini, an industrial district is «a socio-territorial entity characterized by the active presence of both a community of people and a population of firms in one naturally and historically bounded area» (p.112). Becattini G. (1989), Riflessioni sul distretto industriale marshalliano come concetto socio-economico. In: *Stato e Mercato*, 65, pp. 111-128.
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- ^{xxii} The analysis of the distribution of the foreign population by country of origin reveals that in 2017 more than half of the foreign residents in Roma Capitale comes from European continent, namely 75% of the foreign population. The most represented countries are: Romania (92'796), the Philippines (42'094), Bangladesh (31'686), China (19'398), and

Ukraine (15'377). Then, Peru, Poland, Egypt, India, Sri Lanka, Moldavia, Ecuador, Albania, Morocco, and Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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^{xxiv} D. Lgs. 18 agosto 2015, n. 142 in materia di “Attuazione della direttiva 2013/33/UE recante norme relative all'accoglienza dei richiedenti protezione internazionale, nonché della direttiva 2013/32/UE, recante procedure comuni ai fini del riconoscimento e della revoca dello status di protezione internazionale”.

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^{xxx} Kickert W.J.M., Klijn E.H., and Koppenjan J.F.M. (1997) *Managing Complex Networks*, op.cit.