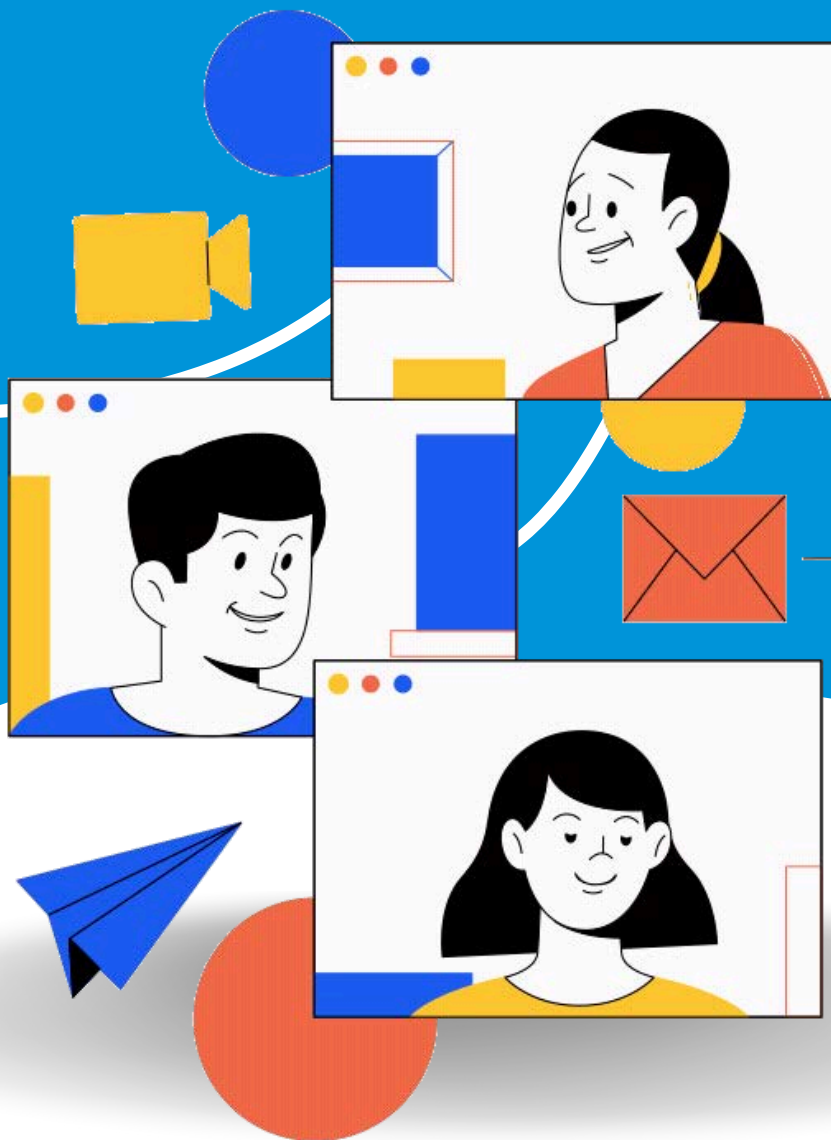




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A GUIDE TO Facilitate Immigrants' Access to the Labor Market



STRATEGIES AND ADVICES FOR OPERATORS

1 Introduction

In an increasingly globalised world, the integration of immigrants into the world of work is a critically important issue for societies worldwide. As immigrant populations continue to increase, ensuring their successful assimilation into the professional sector becomes essential to foster inclusive societies and maximise economic potential. The inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and holders of international protection in the labour market is a remarkable achievement for both the refugees themselves and their host communities. For migrants, access to employment is a key step on the path to economic autonomy and full integration into the host society. On the other hand, for society, their inclusion in the world of work brings innovation, fosters business growth and enriches employee relations, contributing positively to tax revenues and the economic system. However, there are several potential obstacles that may worry employers, such as the complex administrative procedures involved in recruitment, the variety of residence permits and their renewal, language barriers and difficulties in recognising qualifications and skills acquired abroad. Consciously addressing these challenges is essential to foster the development of a business fabric capable of valuing diversity and enhancing business. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in their Joint Plan of Action, highlight the complexity of finding reliable and up-to-date information on this issue. Therefore, one of the objectives of this guide is to provide employment advisers with useful answers to facilitate the recruitment and integration of migrants and asylum seekers, in line with the recommendations provided by these organisations.

1.1 Purpose and Scope of the Guide

This handbook aims to provide comprehensive insights and practical strategies to facilitate the integration of immigrants into the world of work and is addressed to human resources managers, labour counsellors, job centres, employment agencies and Third Sector organisation operators involved in the orientation and job placement of immigrants and refugees. Each chapter, divided into different dimensions, ranging from economic to socio-political and identity-related, addresses key issues and challenges faced by immigrants in navigating the employment landscape in their countries of arrival.

The interconnection between immigration, emigration and labour is a well-established and crucial aspect, as migration policies adopted by governments can have a significant impact on the national economy. Unfortunately, the debate on such policies often tends to be distorted and instrumentalised, leading to a misleading view of the issue.

Work plays a fundamental role in the social and territorial integration of individuals, being an essential means of fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion in the community in which they live. Employment and unemployment indicators, together with data on occupational segregation, are important indicators reflecting the degree of integration of a migrant community. The opportunity to work not only allows people to develop a sense of self-worth and to live independently, but also represents the main legal route for many adult migrants who are neither asylum seekers nor recognised as particularly vulnerable. The importance of labour inclusion is also recognised at European level, as demonstrated by the inclusion of this objective in the European Agenda on Migration and the Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals, launched in 2016 and 2017 respectively. Moreover, the Employers Together for Integration initiative, launched in 2017, testifies to the commitment of the European Union and employers to foster the integration of migrants through work.

1.2 Defining immigrant assimilation in the work context

Contemporary migrations are complex social phenomena that affect "every element, every aspect, every sphere, and every representation of the economic, social, political, cultural arrangement" of a society (Sayad, 1999). For this reason, when discussing the assimilation of immigrants in the workplace, it is necessary to employ analytical and multidisciplinary approaches, using different tools to understand the context in which these phenomena occur and how they interact with it. In this regard, normative contextualization is indispensable, as well as the use of sociological and economic theories that account for migration as a socially situated phenomenon. When talking about the assimilation of immigrants in the professional context, the first important thing is to analyze and understand the definitions that underlie this concept, which is very complex to grasp in its entirety.

Analyzing the meanings underlying the term, from the founding fathers of theories of inclusion and assimilation of immigrants, we certainly find two great authors: Robert E. Park and Milton Gordon. These authors have significantly contributed to understanding the assimilation of immigrants, including their integration into the work context. Their theories have influenced how scholars conceive the assimilation process and have provided a conceptual basis for research on the topic.

Park is considered one of the founding fathers of urban sociology and theories on immigrant assimilation. In his work, he developed concepts such as the life cycle of ethnic communities and the process of "marginalization" through which immigrants gradually integrate into the host society. While he did not provide a specific definition of immigrant assimilation in the professional context, he contributed crucial concepts to understand this process. Park described the concept of "marginality," referring to the initial period in which immigrants are on the margins of the host society and its labor markets, but gradually integrate and assimilate. Additionally, we cannot overlook his theorization on the "life cycle of ethnic communities," emphasizing how these communities go through developmental stages, including the economic integration of their members into the work sectors of the host society.

As for Milton Gordon, one of the main authors of assimilation theories, he does not provide a single, clear definition of the term; rather, he develops the theory of seven stages, which provides a framework for understanding the assimilation process of immigrants as a whole, including the work sphere. Gordon's seven-stage theory of assimilation describes the process through which immigrants assimilate into the host society. These stages include initial contact with the new culture, followed by cultural conflicts and tensions, leading to social and economic marginalization. Subsequently, immigrants begin to adopt the norms of the host society, culminating in complete assimilation and, eventually, mastery of the host culture. Although these authors did not provide clear definitions of the theme, they laid the conceptual foundations for the development of future theories and definitions. Certainly, from the early theorizations, the term assimilation emerges as a multidimensional concept, composed of various indicators and objects of study, which can be divided into at least two major dimensions: the structural aspect, which mainly concerns foreigners' access to institutions such as the labor market, school, healthcare, politics, and residential distribution; and the cultural and identitarian dimension, which refers to the degree of proximity between foreigners and natives in attitudes and value orientations. Defining immigrant assimilation in the workplace is crucial to fully understand the challenges and opportunities related to labor integration. An articulated definition could include the concept of 'work acculturation', referring to the process through which immigrants acquire the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to adapt and succeed in a new work environment. This process not only concerns the mastery of technical skills but also the assimilation of the organizational norms, practices, and values of the host society.

Furthermore, assimilation in the professional context can also be seen as a process of professional identity construction. Immigrants may have to balance their cultural identity of origin with the expectations and norms of the host work context, finding a balance that allows them to feel included and valued in the workplace.

Theories of integration and social adaptation, such as those proposed by Berry (1997), can offer a useful conceptual framework to understand the different levels of adaptation of immigrants in the professional context. These theories distinguish between assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization, highlighting the different strategies that individuals adopt when confronting a new culture and social environment. Each chapter of this manual will explore the different dimensions of immigrants' integration into the world of work, offering theoretical insights, practical strategies, and recommendations to promote professional success and social inclusion. From managing labor market challenges to implementing language and cultural training programs, the aim is to provide human resources managers, labor counselors, job centers, employment agencies, and Third Sector organization workers with the necessary tools to foster effective and sustainable labor integration.

2 Economic dimension

The debate on the integration of foreign workers into the labour market is the focus of political attention in many institutions and local administrations. It is evident that immigrants have become an essential part of the local population and economy. Consequently, the long-term integration of these individuals requires constant, rather than sporadic, attention. It is striking to note the discrepancy between the importance of the phenomenon and the way it has been addressed so far. The labour integration of immigrants has mainly taken place spontaneously and quietly, with little involvement of institutions and labour market actors. This has allowed informal networks, particularly those of compatriots, to strongly influence the employment fate of newcomers. Although they have helped immigrants find available jobs, these networks have also contributed to reinforcing the phenomena of labour market segmentation and ethnic-based specialisation.

The precariousness of many foreign workers can be attributed to several interacting factors, creating an environment of employment uncertainty. This situation not only affects employment, but also the overall experience of unemployment.

The mismatch that often exists between the skills possessed and the job opportunities available contributes to employment insecurity, preventing professional growth and creating a cycle of precariousness.

Moreover, informal job placement mechanisms, based on ethnicity rather than skills, limit the recognition of skills acquired both in Italy and abroad. This creates additional difficulties for educated foreign workers in the legal recognition of their degrees and qualifications. Ultimately, a vicious circle occurs in which job insecurity, lack of opportunities for professional growth and limited recognition of skills contribute to keeping immigrants in unstable employment positions. In response, they constantly seek employment alternatives in the hope of improving their professional situation or, at least, their pay.

As mentioned, many factors contribute to this situation. Language barriers, discrimination in the workplace and non-recognition of qualifications acquired abroad are just some of the most common obstacles. As Gary Becker's theory of human capital, set out in his 1964 book 'Investment in Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education', points out, individuals invest in training and education to increase their prospects of future income. However, if their skills are not recognised in the new work environment, this investment risks being in vain. According to his theory, human capital plays a crucial role in analysing income disparities between people from different historical periods, geographical regions or professions. Becker attributed these differences to various levels of physical capital, technological knowledge and skills. Education was seen as a process of accumulating knowledge, skills and abilities, which, once applied in work, increased productivity. Becker identified human capital as the quality of work performance, which can be improved through education. This included the knowledge, skills and competences that individuals acquired by investing in education, treating them as a type of investment. According to Becker, the choice to continue education after compulsory education was based on a rational calculation of expected future costs and benefits. If the potential increase in income outweighed the costs of education, the individual would choose to continue his or her studies; otherwise, he or she would discontinue education. In summary, Becker's model suggested that the decision to invest in education was based on a rational analysis of costs and benefits.

Among the global challenges to immigrants' integration into the labour market is, first and foremost, the lack of adequate language skills in the host country's

language skills in the host country's language, which reduces the chances of finding a job by about 50 per cent. To overcome this obstacle, it is crucial to promote learning the language of the destination country, already at an early stage of the integration process.

Moreover, discrimination in the workplace is unfortunately still a widespread phenomenon, with negative consequences for immigrants' job opportunities and well-being. A report by the International Labour Organisation[1] highlights that immigrants are twice as likely to be victims of discrimination as native workers. Countering this phenomenon requires a joint effort by governments, organisations and citizens, through awareness-raising campaigns, the introduction of stricter anti-discrimination laws and the promotion of a culture of respect and inclusion.

The non-recognition of foreign qualifications represents a paradox: on the one hand, destination countries need skills and skilled labour; on the other hand, qualifications acquired abroad are often not recognised, forcing immigrants to retrain or accept under-qualified jobs. According to World Bank[2] studies, this phenomenon affects about 40% of skilled immigrants. To overcome this critical issue, it is necessary to simplify the procedures for recognising foreign qualifications and to promote cooperation between the education and training systems of different countries.

The absence of a solid social network in the new country can hinder job search and job integration. Support networks and social connections facilitate access to information, job opportunities and support services. In this sense, integration policies aimed at strengthening immigrants' social networks can be very effective[3].

Access to credit and financial services can be limited for immigrants, especially for those in an irregular situation. This hampers business start-ups or self-employment, limiting opportunities for employment and economic integration. Micro-credit programmes and measures to support immigrant entrepreneurship can help overcome this obstacle[4].

[1] <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/lang--en/index.htm>.

[2] <https://databank.worldbank.org/databases/migration>.

[3] <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>.

[4] <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Search>.

The Specific Case of Italy

In Italy, an ageing population and labour shortages in some key sectors represent an opportunity for the labour integration of immigrants. Indeed, the contribution of immigrants to the Italian economy is significant: in 2022, they generated an added value of about 120 billion euros. However, strong criticalities remain:

- Ageing population and labour shortages: Immigration can help bridge the demographic gap and meet the demand for labour in strategic sectors such as agriculture, healthcare and construction.
- High unemployment rate among immigrants: Despite their contribution to the economy, immigrants in Italy often face higher unemployment rates than the native population.
- Occupational segregation: Immigrants tend to be concentrated in manual, precarious and underpaid jobs, with difficulties in gaining access to more skilled positions.
- Wage inequality: For the same skills and qualifications, immigrants often earn less than native workers.
- Labour exploitation: Immigrants, particularly those in an irregular situation, may be more exposed to exploitation and undeclared work.

Unemployment among Europeans and non-Europeans in Europe has been the subject of careful analysis by Eurostat, revealing significant disparities in employment levels across demographic groups. In 2019, while European foreigners recorded unemployment rates comparable to those of native-born citizens, this was not the case for the non-EU population, which reported a rate of 8.6 per cent, 8.6 percentage points higher than for natives. This gap is also reflected in Italy, where unemployment is particularly pronounced among foreigners. Between 2017 and 2020, the proportion of working-age individuals without employment was highest among foreigners resident in the country.

In Italy, an in-depth analysis of the data revealed that foreign communities show significant variations in unemployment rates. For example, the Nigerian, Tunisian and Ghanaian communities reported some of the highest unemployment rates, while Bangladeshi, Filipino and Chinese citizens reported lower rates. Furthermore, there are significant gender differences, as evidenced by the high proportion of unemployed women among Egyptian women compared to Filipino women.

Analysing labour market participation, it emerges that foreign communities show a variety of levels of inactivity, with a particular prominence for Pakistani women, while the proportion of inactive women among Peruvian women is significantly lower.

The occupational distribution reflects a strong concentration of foreign

workers in executive roles, with a limited presence in managerial positions. Moreover, the share of foreign workers with secondary education is higher than among natives, while the percentage of university graduates is significantly lower among foreigners than among the Italian population. These findings underline the importance of targeted policies to address inequalities in the labour market and in access to education for foreign communities in order to promote an inclusive and sustainable economy.

2.1 Employment and the Assimilation Process

Employment, intrinsically linked to the assimilation process of immigrants within host societies, constitutes a crucial step in their economic and social integration. However, numerous studies have highlighted the challenges and difficulties that immigrants face in finding employment appropriate to their skills and qualifications.

David Card's research emphasised that immigration can have positive effects on the employment and wages of native workers, as immigrants' skills can be complementary to those of natives, creating opportunities for collaboration and economic growth. However, the employment assimilation process can be hindered by several factors.

Language barriers represent one of the main obstacles, limiting immigrants' access to specific job sectors and reducing career opportunities. Furthermore, discrimination in the workplace, based on ethnic or cultural prejudices, may negatively affect immigrants' chances of integration and professional advancement. Another critical aspect concerns the recognition of foreign qualifications, which is often not adequately valued or valued in host countries. This can lead to the under-employment of immigrants, resulting in the under-utilisation of their skills and a negative impact on their economic and social integration. Indeed, one of the most widespread phenomena in the field of labour integration, especially of immigrants, is that of overqualification. This is the phenomenon whereby a person seeks or accepts a job that requires less technical or academic preparation than they possess. These are usually less prestigious and lower paid jobs than those to which, in theory, the candidate could aspire. This phenomenon is particularly widespread among immigrants. In fact, with particular reference to the Italian context, according

to an ISTAT report, overqualification is more frequent among foreigners than among natives for a number of reasons. First of all, because they find themselves having to seek employment in a country whose language they, in many cases, do not know sufficiently. Often, their professional skills are not fully usable in the country of arrival, or their qualifications are not recognised. Lack of useful social relations to find employment also plays an important role, as does lack of knowledge of the local labour market. Given these elements, it is clear that the phenomenon of overqualification should be transitory, linked to the integration process itself. In reality, however, this is rarely the case and foreigners, in Italy as in the rest of the EU, maintain a long-term disadvantaged employment situation compared to native citizens.

Targeted policies and programmes are essential to address these challenges and to facilitate more effective employment assimilation of immigrants. These may include measures to improve access to language and vocational education, promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and implement more transparent and efficient procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications.

Ultimately, overcoming barriers to employment and facilitating the economic integration process of immigrants not only directly benefits the individuals involved, but also contributes to building more inclusive and resilient societies.

2.2 Professional Activation of Immigrants

The professional activation of immigrants is a key pillar to facilitate their entry and success in the labour market. Peter Doeringer and Michael Piore's labour market theory, known as the 'segmented theory' or 'dualist theory' of the labour market, was developed in the 1970s to explain the inequalities and structural differences that exist within labour markets. This theory emphasises the importance of the existence of social networks and informal connections in the process of finding and accessing work. Vocational training programmes, language courses and job orientation emerge as crucial tools to enhance immigrants' employment prospects and foster their full economic integration. However, the design and implementation of such programmes require a thorough understanding of the specific needs and challenges that immigrants face within the labour market. Moreover, close cooperation between public institutions, non-governmental organisations and private companies is

to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of such initiatives, providing integrated and targeted support to immigrants on their path to employment and economic autonomy.

2.3 Skills Change and Professional Integration

Skills change represents a crucial aspect of immigrants' professional integration in receiving countries. Studies by Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut have focused on the concept of 'reconversion' of skills, highlighting immigrants' ability to adapt their knowledge and qualifications to the local labour market context. Such adaptation may require significant efforts in terms of additional training, learning new technologies and adapting to the specific working practices of the host country. It is therefore essential to ensure that immigrants have access to targeted vocational training programmes and lifelong learning opportunities, in order to foster an effective professional integration process and enable them to acquire the necessary skills to compete and thrive in the local labour market.

2.4 Vocational Education for Immigrants

Vocational education plays a major role in the economic integration of immigrants within host societies. The 'second generation' theory, proposed by Richard Alba and Victor Nee, offers an in-depth look at the process of intergenerational transmission of human and social capital between immigrants and the next generation of their families. This theoretical approach emphasises the importance of investing in the educational resources of immigrants and their descendants in order to promote better long-term economic integration.

The design and implementation of vocational training and education programmes specifically tailored to the needs of immigrants are key to improving their employment prospects and facilitating their integration into key sectors of the local economy. Such programmes should be developed with careful consideration of immigrants' skills and prior experience, as well as local labour market demands and trends. This is the only way to maximise the potential for professional success of immigrants and subsequent generations.

2.5 Supporting Immigrants in Adapting to the Work Environment

Immigrants' adaptation to the work environment is a crucial step in their professional success and general well-being. Studies conducted by Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham have highlighted the fundamental role of social networks and community organisations in the integration of immigrants into work contexts. Mentoring programmes, career counselling services and assistance in finding accommodation are just some of the initiatives that can contribute to creating an inclusive and welcoming work environment for immigrants.

Furthermore, it is essential to foster a corporate culture that values and respects diversity, recognising and valuing the different experiences and perspectives of immigrants. This not only fosters a more productive and stimulating work environment for all employees, but also helps to create stronger and more collaborative bonds within the team.

In conclusion, the economic integration of immigrants into the labour market is not only a matter of access to employment opportunities, but requires a holistic approach that also includes targeted vocational education and continuous support during the labour market adaptation process. Only through synergetic collaboration between public institutions, non-governmental organisations, private companies and local communities can effective policies and programmes be developed that foster sustainable economic integration and contribute to long-term economic growth and social welfare.

3 Cultural Dimension

The integration of immigrants into the labour market is a crucial issue within migration and social inclusion studies. However, beyond purely economic considerations, it is also crucial to examine the cultural dimension of this process. This chapter aims to investigate how cultural elements influence immigrants' access to employment, career progression and economic participation in host societies.

To understand this complex dynamic, we will use an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on theories and perspectives from different academic disciplines. In particular, we will explore Milton Gordon's assimilation theory, which analyses the process by which immigrants integrate cultural elements of the host society into their identity and everyday practice.

This perspective will allow us to examine how immigrants negotiate and reinterpret cultural values, norms and practices in the workplace, thus influencing their professional success.

In addition, we will examine the implications of cultural diversity theory, which emphasises the importance of recognising and valuing cultural differences between individuals and promoting an inclusive work environment that respects diversity. This perspective will allow us to explore how corporate policies and human resource management practices can be modified to accommodate and take full advantage of the richness of diverse cultural perspectives present in multi-ethnic workplaces.

Finally, adopting Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, we will highlight the role of cultural and symbolic resources in determining individuals' employment opportunities and outcomes. Through this theoretical lens, we will explore how immigrants employ their cultural, linguistic and social resources to navigate the labour market and achieve professional success, despite the challenges and discrimination they may face. Indeed, cultural capital theory is useful in understanding how social inequalities are perpetuated through the transmission and accumulation of cultural resources. The concept of cultural capital refers to the wealth of cultural knowledge, skills, practices and beliefs that an individual possesses and which is acquired through formal and informal education, family interaction, participation in social groups and other cultural experiences. Bourdieu identifies three main forms of cultural capital:

- Embedded cultural capital, which refers to the knowledge, skills and dispositions internalised by individuals through socialisation and learning experiences. For example, language, eating habits, artistic preferences are all examples of embedded cultural capital;
- Objectified cultural capital, which refers to material cultural objects that can be possessed or used by individuals to enhance their prestige or social status. For example, books, works of art, musical instruments are all examples of objectified cultural capital;
- institutionalised cultural capital, which refers to qualifications, academic degrees or other forms of formal recognition of cultural competences and knowledge, such as university degrees and vocational training certificates.

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital is not evenly distributed in society, but is closely linked to the social context and economic resources available to a person. People who possess large amounts of cultural capital tend to have

more opportunities and advantages in society, such as access to quality education, prestigious occupations and influential social relationships. Conversely, those with less cultural capital may be at a social disadvantage and have limited access to resources and opportunities. In sum, this chapter aims to offer an in-depth analysis of the cultural dimension of immigrants' integration into the labour market, integrating theories and perspectives from different disciplines for a more comprehensive and articulate understanding of this complex and dynamic phenomenon.

3.1 Language Skills in the Workplace

Language skills play a crucial role in the professional integration of immigrants in the work contexts of host societies. This idea is supported by several sociological theories that highlight the importance of effective communication and mastery of the host country's language to foster integration and success in the workplace.

Assimilation theories, such as those proposed by Milton Gordon, suggest that immigrants tend to integrate into the host society through progressive adaptation to the values, norms and institutions of this society. In this context, mastering the host country's language is seen as a crucial step towards social and professional integration, as it facilitates access to job opportunities and improves prospects for social mobility. On the other hand, theories of cultural diversity, such as those put forward by John Berry, emphasise the importance of maintaining and enhancing one's culture of origin while interacting with the dominant culture. However, even in this context, a good command of the host country's language is considered essential to facilitate communication and intercultural relations in the workplace. Immigrants with strong language skills are able to communicate more effectively with colleagues, superiors and clients, facilitating collaboration and the coordination of work activities. Moreover, good language skills help immigrants to better understand the implicit cultural norms of the work context and to adapt more quickly to the organisational culture. Conversely, a lack of adequate language skills may constitute a significant obstacle, limiting opportunities for professional advancement and active participation in organisational dynamics. Difficulties in communicating effectively can lead to misunderstandings, social isolation and poor integration into the work environment. Therefore, it is crucial to promote targeted language training programmes that help immigrants develop the language skills needed to fully integrate into the work environment and take full advantage of opportunities for professional growth.

These programmes should be designed not only to improve basic language skills, but also to provide a deeper understanding of the host country's culture and social norms, thus contributing to greater inclusion and social cohesion in the workplace.

3.2 Cultural differences and professional adaptation

Cultural differences play a key role in the professional adaptation of immigrants in multicultural workplaces. This concept is reflected in cultural diversity theory, which emphasises the importance of recognising and respecting the different cultural perspectives present in the work environment to promote a climate of collaboration and inclusion. Cultural diversity theory is based on the idea that cultural diversity within an organisation can lead to a variety of benefits, including increased creativity, innovation and problem-solving skills. Theorists such as Geert Hofstede and Edward Hall have contributed to this perspective by analysing cultural differences through the identification of cultural dimensions such as the concept of time, conflict management and the concept of personal space. However, cultural differences can also generate tensions and misunderstandings in the workplace, especially in contexts characterised by divergent work norms and practices. This can lead to interpersonal conflicts, poor communication and difficulties in achieving common goals. For immigrants, this can be particularly difficult, as they have to navigate through the complex dynamics of the work environment while adapting to new cultural norms. Immigrants must therefore be able to adapt their behaviour and expectations according to the prevailing cultural norms in the organisation. This requires flexibility, open-mindedness and intercultural learning skills. Theories such as Milton Bennett's intercultural competence provide a framework for understanding this adaptation process, suggesting that individuals go through a series of stages, from cultural ignorance to intercultural awareness and competence. Support from colleagues and superiors is crucial in this adaptation process. Cultural awareness and diversity management programmes can help facilitate the integration of immigrants into the work environment by promoting mutual understanding, effective communication and building positive relationships between colleagues of different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, inclusive leadership and the promotion of an organisational culture that is open to diversity can contribute to creating a harmonious and inclusive work environment in which all individuals feel valued and respected.

3.3 Language courses and their importance for professional integration

Language courses are a fundamental means of facilitating the professional integration of immigrants in host countries. Assimilation theory emphasises the importance of acquiring host-country language skills as part of the cultural and social assimilation process. Language courses offer immigrants the opportunity to develop the language skills needed to communicate effectively in the workplace, improving their ability to collaborate with colleagues, understand instructions and perform tasks successfully. In addition, language courses can contribute to improving immigrants' confidence and self-esteem, enabling them to feel more secure in their working environment and successfully deal with the language challenges they may encounter. Therefore, investing in targeted language training programmes is essential to promote the professional integration of immigrants and ensure that they can take full advantage of opportunities for growth and development in the labour market of host societies.

4 Socio-political dimension

This chapter aims to take a close look at the complex interplay between socio-political factors and the integration of immigrants into the world of work, exploring theories, policies and social dynamics that influence this process. According to T. Alexander Aleinikoff and Douglas Klusmeyer, emphasising the need to ensure equal economic and political participation opportunities for immigrants and their families is crucial for an inclusive and equal society. This approach is based on theories and perspectives that examine citizenship policies, civil rights and access to employment for immigrants in host societies. One of the main theoretical references in this context is John Rawls' social justice theory, which emphasises the importance of a fair and inclusive environment in which all individuals have access to the same opportunities for personal and professional fulfilment. This also extends to immigrants and their families, who should enjoy the same rights and opportunities guaranteed to native citizens. Citizenship policies, which regulate access to citizenship and associated rights, play a key role in influencing the integration of immigrants into host societies. Theories of citizenship, such as those advanced by T. H. Marshall, explore how citizenship is related to economic and political participation, as well as access to social rights. Thus, inclusive and non-discriminatory policies can foster the economic integration of immigrants,

allowing them access to decent employment and professional development opportunities. Furthermore, civil rights policies play a crucial role in ensuring that immigrants are not subjected to discrimination or inequality in the employment context. Theories such as human and minority rights, promoted by authors such as Amartya Sen and Iris Marion Young, highlight the importance of protecting fundamental rights and combating structural inequalities that may limit immigrants' access to work and employment opportunities. In sum, the analysis of citizenship and civil rights policies provides a key perspective on how immigrants can fully integrate into the labour markets of host societies. Ensuring equal opportunities for economic and political participation is essential to promote an inclusive and just society in which all individuals, regardless of their origin, can fully contribute to and benefit from the opportunities offered by community life.

Finally, we will explore the role of public policies in addressing socio-political challenges related to the integration of immigrants into the labour market. We will analyse policies such as the protection of immigrant workers' rights, access to social and health care, and social inclusion and anti-discrimination measures. Through this lens, we will examine how public policies can positively influence the integration of immigrants into the labour market and promote a more equal, inclusive and supportive society.

In recent years, the global nature of migration has become widely recognised, requiring integrated policies that overcome the fragmentation of responses to immigrant workers' integration and inclusion needs. The close connection between the economic and social, cultural and administrative dimensions of foreign workers requires a holistic approach, with coherent policies and operational coordination. Therefore, the development of labour and employment policies in the migrant context must take place within overall social integration policies, entrusted mainly to local authorities. These actors are now in charge not only of welfare policies, but also of promoting the economic and employment development of the territory. A key step towards inclusion is the extension of ordinary policy measures to immigrants, eliminating discrimination and ensuring their equal access to housing, health, educational and social services. In addition, specific interventions are needed to address the special needs of immigrants and remove obstacles to full access to services.

The awareness that immigrants are a stable part of society calls for a new intervention logic, less temporary and more structured, which favours

continuity and stability of integrated actions in the medium to long term. This requires strategic and operational coordination between public and private actors on the territory. As far as specific labour interventions for immigrant workers are concerned, it is necessary to address occupational segregation, dependence on informal networks, legal and contractual precariousness, as well as the devaluation of professional skills and job de-skilling. In sum, this chapter aims to offer an in-depth analysis of the socio-political dimension of immigrant labour market integration, exploring the complex interactions between political, social and economic factors that shape this crucial phenomenon for social cohesion and the well-being of modern societies.

4.1 Social Interactions and the Employment Success of Immigrants

Social interactions play a crucial role in the employment success of immigrants in host countries. According to George Herbert Mead's social interaction theory, relationships and interactions with other members of society influence individuals' identity formation and behaviour. Therefore, social support and networks of relationships can foster the professional integration of immigrants by providing opportunities for mentoring, advice and emotional support during job search and retention. At the same time, social barriers, such as discrimination and isolation, may hinder immigrants' employment success by limiting their opportunities for job access and professional advancement. Therefore, it is crucial to promote policies and programmes that foster an inclusive and welcoming working environment, where immigrants can feel valued and supported in their career path.

4.2 Policy Actions to Support Professional Integration:

Policy actions play a crucial role in fostering the professional integration of immigrants in the labour market context. These policies not only aim to ensure equal access to employment opportunities for all citizens, regardless of their ethnic or national origin, but also to remove structural barriers and counteract forms of discrimination in the world of work.

Social inclusion policies are a key pillar in this context. They focus on removing barriers that prevent immigrants from accessing employment opportunities due to prejudice or discrimination based on their ethnic or national origin. These policies include legislative measures to combat discrimination in the

workplace, as well as awareness-raising and training programmes to promote an inclusive and diversity-friendly organisational culture.

In parallel, vocational training policies play an equally crucial role in preparing immigrants for the local labour market. These policies include language and cultural training programmes, as well as specific vocational training courses for key sectors of the local economy. Furthermore, it is important to promote the transferability of skills acquired abroad and to recognise educational and professional qualifications obtained abroad to facilitate immigrants' labour integration.

At the same time, labour insertion policies play a crucial role in facilitating immigrants' access to the labour market and encouraging their continued employment. These policies include career guidance programmes, job placement services and incentives for companies that hire immigrant workers. Furthermore, it is essential to ensure the protection of immigrants' labour rights and to provide them with support and assistance in the event of any difficulties in the workplace.

Finally, it is crucial that policies supporting the professional integration of immigrants are designed and implemented in an inclusive manner, actively involving immigrants and their communities in the decision-making process. This will ensure that policies respond to immigrants' real professional needs and aspirations, thus helping to promote greater social cohesion and harmonious coexistence in the host society.

4.3 The Role of Public Institutions in the Assimilation Process

Public institutions play a crucial role in facilitating the assimilation process of immigrants in host countries. According to Douglas North's theory of institutionalism, institutions have a significant impact on the behaviour and interactions of individuals within a society. Therefore, it is the task of public institutions to create a regulatory and institutional environment that fosters the integration and inclusion of immigrants into the labour market and society as a whole.

To promote the assimilation of immigrants, public institutions must adopt targeted policies and programmes that address the specific challenges immigrants may face during the integration process. These may include reception policies that facilitate immigrants' access to essential services, such as housing, health care and education, as well as measures to foster linguistic and cultural integration.

In addition, public institutions need to invest in vocational training and job orientation for immigrants, providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully enter the local labour market. These programmes may include language courses, specific vocational training for key sectors of the local economy and job placement services that help immigrants find and retain employment appropriate to their skills and aspirations.

It is also important that public institutions take measures to ensure fairness and transparency in the selection and promotion processes at work, in order to prevent discrimination and facilitate immigrants' access to equal employment opportunities. This may include policies to monitor and counter workplace discrimination, as well as the implementation of affirmative action measures to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Finally, public institutions should work in partnership with the private sector, civil society organisations, and local communities to ensure an integrated and coordinated approach to the integration of immigrants into the labour market and society as a whole. This may include the creation of public-private partnerships for the development of training and labour market integration programmes, as well as the organisation of community events and initiatives that foster the cultural exchange and social integration of immigrants.

In Italy, the complex interaction between socio-political factors and the integration of immigrants into the labour market is of particular relevance. According to recent data from the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), unemployment among immigrants was higher than among Italian citizens in 2020, at around 12 per cent, compared to 9 per cent for the native population. This disparity highlights the challenges still present in the labour insertion process of immigrants in the Italian context. Furthermore, ISTAT observed that unemployment tends to increase with the length of stay in the country, suggesting the presence of additional barriers for immigrants in the Italian labour market.

Italian public policies have attempted to address these challenges through a number of measures and programmes. For example, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies has implemented vocational training programmes for immigrants to improve their skills and increase employment opportunities. However, there are still significant challenges related to access to social and health services, as well as discrimination in the workplace.

Effectively addressing these challenges requires a continuous commitment by Italian public institutions, in partnership with the private sector, civil society organisations and local communities. It is essential that policies are designed and implemented in an inclusive manner, taking into account the cultural specificities and needs of immigrants in the national context. Only through an integrated and coordinated approach will it be possible to promote a fairer, more inclusive and inclusive labour market in Italy, thus contributing to social cohesion and the well-being of society as a whole.

5 Dimension of Identity

In the context of professional assimilation of immigrants, the dimension of identity plays a fundamental role. According to the social identity theory by Tajfel and Turner (1979), group identity emerges through the perception of belonging and interaction among members of the same group. Therefore, it is essential to create an inclusive and welcoming work environment that fosters a strong sense of community. Baker (2018) emphasizes that a work environment where employees feel part of a cohesive community promotes psychological well-being and productivity. Practical suggestions to promote a sense of community in the workplace include organizing social activities, involving employees in company decisions, and creating spaces for sharing common interests and hobbies. In the following chapters, we will seek to provide useful advice to practitioners and offer insights to consider this important concept in the process of immigrant assimilation into the work context of the host country.

5.1 Sense of Community in the Workplace

The concept of a sense of community in the workplace is crucial for all workers. Literature on the subject shows how organizational belongingness correlates with work engagement, performance, and job satisfaction. More recently, research has highlighted the role that belongingness plays at a personal level as a protective factor against stress. Identifying with a higher entity, such as an organization or group, satisfies fundamental human needs for belongingness and security. From these premises, it becomes evident that when working with migrants, this concept becomes crucial in understanding and promoting immigrants' assimilation in the professional context.

According to Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory, group identity develops through the perception of belonging and interaction among

members of the same group. This implies that when employees feel part of a cohesive community in the workplace, they are more likely to identify with the organization and actively engage in their work. In the context of welcoming and including immigrants, creating a work environment that fosters a strong sense of community becomes even more crucial. A study conducted by Ellemers et al. (2012) highlighted that a sense of organizational belongingness can help reduce feelings of alienation and isolation among immigrants in the workplace, thus facilitating their integration process.

Baker (2018) emphasizes that an inclusive and welcoming work environment, where employees feel part of a cohesive community, promotes psychological well-being and productivity. This concept is supported by research conducted by Haslam et al. (2014), which has shown that a sense of community in the workplace is positively correlated with job satisfaction and organizational performance.

But how do we create a sense of belonging in the workplace to promote the integration of immigrants? Certainly, there are several factors that influence the sense of belonging, such as physical and geographical proximity, similarity among colleagues in terms of ideas, feelings, interests, beliefs, values, lifestyles, or needs, identification with other group members or with the group's purposes, the ability to share diversity and consider it as added value, the belief that unity is strength, the ability to integrate one's own diversity with that of others, valuing complementarity, and considering the group as much more than the sum of its individual members. Lastly, treating each member of the organization as a person and making them feel valued is crucial.

Among the actions and activities that could be implemented in a work context to enhance immigrants' sense of belonging are:

1. Offering professional growth opportunities to immigrants, such as career development programs and investments in linguistic and professional training. Ensure that every individual feels valued and supported in their professional journey, regardless of their origin.
2. Meeting the psychological needs of immigrants: Ensure that immigrants feel respected and appreciated in their work environment, providing opportunities for self-realization and personal achievement. Promote an inclusive work environment that meets the psychological needs of esteem, belonging, and personal fulfillment.
3. Effective communication: Maintain open and transparent communication

with immigrants, providing clear and accessible information about company policies, career opportunities, and available support services.

4. Team building: Organize team-building activities that foster interaction and cohesion among immigrants and their colleagues, such as cultural events, multicultural company dinners, or sports activities. Allocate spaces dedicated to aggregation where immigrants can socialize and connect with their colleagues.

5. Promoting individual and organizational well-being: Create a work climate conducive to the well-being of immigrants, offering psychological support, counseling services, and assistance programs to address any challenges related to adaptation and integration into the work environment.

6. Fostering belonging to the company group: Promote a sense of belonging to the team and the organization, encouraging immigrants to actively participate in company life and assume leadership roles and responsibilities. Ensure that immigrants feel an integral part of the company group, and that their opinions and contributions are valued and respected.

In summary, promoting a strong sense of community in the workplace not only enhances employees' psychological well-being and productivity but is also fundamental for the effective assimilation of immigrants in the professional context. Investing in creating an inclusive and welcoming work environment can lead to numerous benefits for both immigrants and the organization as a whole.

5.2 National and career identification of immigrants

National identity, a kaleidoscope of belonging, pride, and challenges, intertwines inseparably with the professional journey of immigrants. On one hand, attachment to one's homeland can provide immigrants with a sense of belonging, pride, and resilience in the face of difficulties. On the other hand, being perceived as "foreign" or "different" can lead to discrimination, prejudice, and obstacles to career advancement. As emphasized by Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory, the group to which one belongs shapes behaviour and professional aspirations. Immigrants, oscillating between identification with their home country and that of their adopted country, find themselves navigating a sea of expectations and self-definitions.

Berry (1997), exploring the impact of national identity on migratory adaptation, highlights the importance of balance: valuing one's roots without forsaking the opportunities offered by the new reality.

This delicate balance requires adaptation strategies and intercultural intelligence.

Furthermore, we must not overlook the various challenges immigrants may encounter in the new context of arrival, which, when combined with personal feelings of disorientation and difficulty upon arrival in the new country, become daunting obstacles. Consider the labels given by stereotypes and prejudices associated with their nationality or ethnic origin. Prejudices can influence hiring, promotion, and remuneration decisions, limiting their career opportunities and making integration into the new country's work environment more challenging. Adding to this the lack of proficiency in the local language, linguistic barriers, and discrimination stemming from stereotypes, there is a need to devise effective strategies, which become compasses to navigate and confront these challenges and obstacles.

Bauman (2001) discussed the concept of "sense of community," emphasizing that building social ties and creating a support network are essential for individual and collective well-being. In the context of immigrants, maintaining a connection with their cultural heritage can be crucial in fostering a sense of belonging and identity. As Bauman himself suggests, a good strategy to address this issue and implement corporate initiatives in various workplaces is to foster relationships with colleagues, mentors, and other professionals in one's field while simultaneously recognizing and valuing the cultural background of individual members as a strength and added value to the company. A pivotal role in this process is played by operators who guide and support individuals toward a more inclusive path. Operators in the field can take various actions to support immigrants in maintaining a connection with their cultural heritage and expanding their network as they integrate into the host society. For example, they could organize cultural events and festivities celebrating immigrants' traditions and diversity, promote the creation of support groups or cultural associations where immigrants can share their experiences and keep alive the connection with their cultural heritage. Additionally, offering courses in the mother tongue and culture can be extremely helpful in allowing immigrants to maintain and develop their linguistic and cultural competencies, often seen as primary obstacles to inclusion in the community and the job market. These initiatives not only foster a sense of belonging and identity for immigrants but can also contribute to better integration into the host society. By recognizing the challenges and opportunities associated with national identity, both immigrants and employers can work together to create a more inclusive and supportive work environment conducive to the professional success of all.

5.3 Cultural identity support and professional integration

In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, the appreciation of cultural diversity and support for the professional integration of individuals from migrant backgrounds represent crucial challenges for contemporary societies. Promoting inclusive work environments that respect cultural identities is essential for both individual and collective well-being, as well as for the growth and innovation of businesses.

The traditional model of integration based on assimilation, which requires immigrants to abandon their cultural identity to assimilate into the dominant culture, is increasingly being questioned. This approach risks marginalizing individuals, hindering their full potential, and creating barriers to social and economic integration. In contrast to this model, a new paradigm of inclusive integration is proposed, which values cultural diversity and promotes mutual respect. In this model, immigrants are not required to relinquish their identity but are encouraged to maintain and share their culture with the host society. Let's clarify the foundational terms. Cultural identity represents a fundamental element of an individual's identity. It encompasses language, religion, traditions, values, and beliefs that define a person and their sense of belonging to a community. For immigrants, cultural identity can be a source of strength and resilience, helping them navigate the challenges of integration into a new country. Supporting the cultural identity of immigrants not only promotes their individual well-being but can also bring significant benefits to the workplace and society as a whole.

When immigrants feel valued and respected for their culture, they are more motivated, productive, and creative. Additionally, cultural diversity can lead to new ideas, innovative solutions, and a better understanding of global markets. It's important to remember that the professional integration of immigrants is a complex process that requires active support from organizations and colleagues. Supporting the cultural identity of immigrants not only facilitates their professional integration but can also foster greater creativity and innovation in the workplace. According to the theory of multiculturalism, promoting cultural diversity in the workplace can lead to greater creativity and innovation (Schneider & Northcraft, 1999). This means that valuing the diverse cultural perspectives of immigrants not only enriches the work environment but can also lead to more innovative and adaptable solutions for evolving global markets. To support the cultural identity of immigrants in the workplace, it is important to promote inclusive company policies and intercultural training programs. These programs can help colleagues understand and appreciate the diverse cultures represented in the company, creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.

Additionally, offering immigrants opportunities to share their culture and traditions with colleagues can contribute to creating a more inclusive and welcoming work environment. For example, organizing cultural events such as traditional festivals or themed dinners can facilitate the exchange of experiences and the building of closer bonds among team members. From an empathetic perspective, it is important to recognize that immigrants may face unique challenges in their process of professional integration. Feeling valued and respected in their professional environment can have a significant impact on their motivation and job satisfaction.

It can be affirmed that supporting the cultural identity of immigrants not only contributes to their professional integration but can also lead to greater creativity and innovation in the workplace. Investing in inclusive company policies and intercultural training programs is therefore not only an act of empathy but also an opportunity to promote a richer company culture that is adaptable to the challenges of today's global world.

5.4 The Role of Psychological Support in Professional Integration

Psychological support during the process of professional integration plays a fundamental role in facilitating the effective assimilation of immigrants. According to Lazarus and Folkman's coping theory (1984), coping strategies, which are the mechanisms people use to manage stress and challenges, significantly influence individuals' perception of stress and their capacity to adapt. In this regard, providing individualized psychological counseling is an essential step in helping immigrants overcome difficulties related to cultural and professional adaptation (Pedersen, 2017). Analyzing the initiatives and specific services offered in Italy and Poland reveals that both countries employ multidisciplinary approaches, involving various centers, institutions, and organizations in service delivery. In Italy, key organizations and institutions offering psychological support services to immigrants include:

- **Reception and Integration Centers (CAI):** CAIs offer orientation, training, and psychological support services for immigrants, assisting them in job placement and social integration.
- **Public Health Services:** Public health services provide individual and group psychological counseling to immigrants, with particular attention to trauma and difficulties related to cultural adaptation.
- **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** Several NGOs operate in Italy to provide psychological support to immigrants, often with specific focuses on certain categories of people, such as women, minors, or victims of trafficking.

Similarly, in Poland, psychological support for immigrants is provided by a network of organizations and institutions, including:

- **Foreigners' Integration Centers (Centra Integracji Cudzoziemców):** These centers offer orientation, training, and psychological support services for immigrants, aiding in job placement and social integration.
- **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** Various NGOs in Poland provide psychological support to immigrants, often focusing on specific categories of people, such as women, minors, or victims of discrimination.
- **Public Health Services:** Public health services in Poland offer individual and group psychological counseling to immigrants, with particular attention to trauma and difficulties related to cultural adaptation.

As mentioned earlier, integrating different theoretical approaches can further enrich the understanding of how psychological support can facilitate immigrants' professional integration. For example, resilience theory suggests that providing individuals with psychological, social, and material resources can help them overcome challenges and adapt to new contexts (Masten, 2001). In this sense, psychological counseling can be seen as a tool to develop these resources and enhance immigrants' resilience during the process of professional integration.

As highlighted in the guide, the organizational context plays a fundamental role in the effective implementation of psychological support for immigrants. Therefore, considering the organizational context is crucial for fully understanding how psychological support can be effectively implemented. Organizing psychological support programs in the workplace presents an opportunity to create a healthier and more supportive work environment. These programs may include individual or group counseling sessions, coping strategy workshops, and the promotion of a corporate culture that values the psychological well-being of immigrant employees. In Italy and Poland, several initiatives have been initiated to promote a more inclusive work environment and foster the psychological well-being of immigrant employees. For instance, in Italy, Law No. 244 of 2007 requires companies with more than 15 employees to develop a plan to combat discrimination, which often includes measures for psychological support for immigrants. In Poland, the government has launched various initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace, including employee training on intercultural sensitivity and the provision of psychological support services for immigrants. Another important factor is the training of colleagues and hierarchical superiors on the importance of psychological support, as this can contribute to creating a climate of understanding and support within the organization. Through awareness and education, stigma associated with seeking

psychological help can be reduced, fostering an environment where immigrants feel encouraged to seek support when needed. In conclusion, psychological support during immigrants' professional integration is essential for promoting positive adaptation and full participation in the work context. By integrating diverse theoretical perspectives and promoting an organizational environment that values psychological well-being, a more inclusive and sustainable context can be created for all employees, regardless of their background.

Additional Information: It's important to note that access to psychological support for immigrants can be hindered by various barriers, including:

- Limited knowledge of available services: Many immigrants are unaware of the psychological support services offered in their host country.
- Stigma associated with seeking psychological help: In some cultures, seeking psychological help is still seen as a sign of weakness.
- Language difficulties: Lack of language skills can hinder communication with mental health professionals.

To overcome these barriers, it's important to:

- Promote awareness and information about available psychological support services.
- Combat stigma associated with seeking psychological help through awareness campaigns and training.
- Offer psychological support services in multiple languages to ensure access for all immigrants.

It can be affirmed that psychological support is a fundamental component of immigrants' professional integration. Investing in effective and accessible psychological support services is an investment in the future of the host country and in building a more inclusive and supportive society.

6 Tools and Strategies for Professional Advisors:

Professional advisors play a crucial role in assisting immigrants in their journey toward professional integration. It's important that the integration process includes three fundamental dimensions:

1. **Structural Dimension:** This refers to the ability to lead a dignified life with one's family, including having a job, a place to live, and access to public services. Key elements of this dimension include:

- Access to Employment: Supporting immigrants in finding suitable employment that matches their skills, facilitating their integration into the local job market.
- Housing: Guiding immigrants in finding safe and accessible housing, ensuring adequate living conditions.
- Access to Public Services: Informing and assisting immigrants in accessing essential public services such as healthcare, education, and social security.
- Relational Sphere: This refers to the ability to establish good relationships within the social context, including being accepted, avoiding discrimination, and being able to enter social and neighborhood networks that also include the native population. To foster positive growth in the relational sphere, actions should aim to:

-Promote Social Interaction: Encourage immigrants to participate in social and cultural activities, facilitating interaction with the local population and the building of social and neighborhood networks.

-Combat Discrimination: Raise awareness among the local population about multiculturalism and interculturality, fighting prejudices and discrimination against immigrants.

-Facilitate Social Inclusion: Promote initiatives to facilitate immigrants' integration into the local community, creating an atmosphere of welcome and mutual respect.

- Personal Dimension: This relates to acquiring the necessary skills to fully integrate into the receiving society, such as adequate language skills and the motivation to take the necessary steps to participate fully in the social life of the host context. Given the complexity and individuality of this dimension, it's important to undertake actions such as those discussed in previous chapters, including:

-Skills Assessment: Assess immigrants' skills and qualifications, identifying their strengths and training gaps.

-Language Courses: Offer free or affordable language courses to improve immigrants' language skills, facilitating their communication and integration into social and work contexts.

-Professional Training: Provide training and professional development courses to align immigrants' skills with the needs of the local job market.

-Job Orientation: Guide immigrants in choosing the most suitable career path based on their skills and aspirations, helping them define realistic career goals.

-Job Interview Preparation: Equip immigrants with the skills and tools needed to successfully handle job interviews, improving their presentation and communication skills.

These services are designed to help immigrants understand the local job market, identify career opportunities, and develop the skills necessary for success. Additionally, professional advisors provide information about useful online resources for job search, such as job posting websites, professional networking platforms, and government portals dedicated to employment. Through these tools, immigrants can explore job opportunities, create professional profiles, and connect with potential employers. To maximize the benefits of the services offered by career advisors, immigrants can participate in free workshops, informational seminars, and personalized coaching services. These opportunities allow them to acquire key skills, enhance their presentation abilities, and expand their professional network.

6.1 Individualized Approach to Career Counseling for Immigrants

An individualized approach to professional counseling is essential for facilitating the professional assimilation of immigrants. This approach takes into account the individual's past work and personal experiences, linguistic and cultural competencies, and specific professional aspirations, creating a personalized portfolio that includes a skills assessment, analysis of the individual's work and personal history, clear definition of strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations, and an evaluation to understand which areas need improvement to ensure successful integration into the labor market and the receiving context (Zunker, 2012). Through a deep understanding of each immigrant's needs and goals, counselors can develop customized strategies to support their professional success (Walsh & Heppner, 2006). Effective communication with professional counselors is crucial to maximize the benefits of the individualized approach (Baker, 2018). Immigrants should be open about their experiences, skills, and ambitions so that counselors can provide targeted and relevant support (Zunker, 2012). Generally, the indispensable phases of these pathways are:

- **Assessment:** The first phase involves assessing the immigrant's skills, work experiences, and professional aspirations.
- **Goal setting:** Together with the immigrant, the counselor defines the professional goals to be achieved.
- **Development of an action plan:** The counselor develops a personalized action plan to help the immigrant achieve their goals.
- **Monitoring and support:** The counselor monitors the immigrant's progress and provides ongoing support during the professional integration process.

Examples of personalized strategies include tailor-made career planning,

targeted training opportunities search, and support in transitioning to new professional sectors (Walsh & Heppner, 2006). These strategies are designed to meet each individual's unique needs and maximize their chances of success in the local labor market (Zunker, 2012).

6.2 Tools to Support the Assimilation Process

Immigrants can avail themselves of a series of tools and resources to support their assimilation and integration into the labor market. These include:

1. Language training and citizenship education:

- Learning the language of the host country is the first step in the integration process: Inadequate language skills can restrict access to information, limit the use of services, hinder the expression of needs, and make it difficult to connect with the social context and feel part of the local community. In addition, language skills are a basic requirement for enrolling in training courses or entering the workforce.

Initiatives that have been reported as successful in relation to language training aim to:

- Improve the range, delivery, and accessibility of existing services.
- Use innovative or more effective teaching methodologies.

2. Language and cultural mediation:

- Plays an essential role in the integration of immigrants into the workforce.
- This service acts as a bridge between the different languages and cultures present in the workplace, facilitating effective communication, promoting mutual understanding, and helping to create an inclusive work environment.
- It also helps to resolve conflicts, provides support and orientation to immigrants in their first days of work, and contributes to a climate of respect and collaboration among all employees, regardless of their cultural or linguistic background.

3. Information and access to local services:

- Knowledge of the services available in the area (healthcare, registry offices, school system for minors and adult education courses, but also banks and post offices, shopping centers, places of cultural interest, etc.) is the strategic link for regaining the autonomy of individuals who have just arrived in a new context.

To support immigrants in this process, work inclusion professionals can adopt the following strategies:

- Provide detailed information: Offer immigrants comprehensive and up-to-

- date information on the local services available in their area of residence. This may include information on how to access healthcare, education, social assistance, and other services.
- Orientation and assistance in access: Help immigrants understand the process of accessing public services, providing practical support and guidance. This could include assistance with filling out forms, making appointments, and navigating government websites.
- Collaborate with local agencies: Establish collaborative relationships with local agencies and organizations that provide services to immigrants to facilitate smooth and seamless access. This collaboration can foster more effective coordination and a better response to the needs of immigrants.
- Personalize support: Tailor the support offered to immigrants based on their specific needs and level of understanding of the local language and culture. This may require a personalized approach to ensure that immigrants can fully utilize the available services.
- Provide updates and ongoing support: Keep immigrants informed about developments and changes in local services, and offer ongoing support over time to ensure that they can access the services they need for their well-being and integration into the host society.

4. Online resources:

- Language and culture courses, training webinars, and practical guides on cultural adaptation are valuable for immigrants who want to acquire language and cultural skills and better understand the local work context. These resources offer flexibility and accessibility, allowing immigrants to learn independently and adapt their learning to their own needs and schedules.
- Government websites such as the Immigration Portal provide useful information on bureaucratic procedures, immigrant rights, and available resources.
- Support groups and online communities on social platforms can connect immigrants with others in the same situation and provide support and practical information.

5. Involvement in professional associations, networking groups, and socio-cultural activities:

- Offers immigrants the opportunity to make contacts in their field of interest and find job opportunities.
- Through active participation in events and networking activities, immigrants can expand their professional network, access hidden career opportunities, and find mentors and supporters in their professional journey.

Activities reported include:

- Art therapy and music therapy workshops for therapeutic purposes.
- Involvement in local festivals or events.
- Sports competitions and volunteer days.
- Meetings in schools and gastronomic events with the preparation of typical dishes.
- Some involve the active participation of migrants in the entire organizational phase, while others promote the involvement of more territorial bodies and direct confrontation with the resident population.
- By using these tools and resources, immigrants can increase their chances of successfully integrating into the host society and achieving their full potential.

6.3 Case Studies: Practical Examples of Effective Strategies

Based on the tools for the integration and assimilation of immigrants in the workplace, below we analyse and highlight some international case studies where the aforementioned strategies have been strategically used and integrated for the integration and assimilation of immigrants.

Case Study Italy: "Prima-Vera Campania: Towards Workforce Integration of Foreign Citizens in Campania".

Based on the tools for the integration and assimilation of immigrants in the workplace, below we analyse and highlight some international case studies where the aforementioned strategies have been strategically used and integrated for the integration and assimilation of immigrants.

The project "Prima-Vera Campania: Towards Workforce Integration of Foreign Citizens in Campania" aims to increase the number of TCNs - Third-Country Nationals - involved in the labor policies offered by the services of the Campania Region through the activation of specific training paths, workshops, job demand/supply interventions, skills assessments, thanks to important cultural partners in order to achieve specific objectives such as increasing and/or improving employment opportunities and integration of the involved actors.

The project targets citizens regularly present in the Italian territory, including:

- Individuals aged 18 to 33, from third countries including Albania, Bangladesh, Ivory Coast, Eritrea, Ghana, India, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Somalia, Ukraine.

- Asylum seekers/holders of international or humanitarian protection hosted in reception centers scattered throughout the territory.
- Women in conditions of social marginalization or other vulnerabilities.
- Unaccompanied foreign minors / newly adults.
- Operators dealing with labor policies, immigration, and material and immaterial cultural goods.

The project aims to:

- Increase the number of foreign citizens - regularly present in the regional territory - informed and involved in the field of active labor policies, also through linguistic mediation services.
- Facilitate access to job opportunities, through the activation of specific training paths, workshops, job matching, skills assessments, internships with cultural partners.
- Increase and/or improve employment opportunities.
- Encourage integration and counteract discrimination, promoting the socio-economic contribution of immigrants.
- Enhance the skills of operators in an intercultural perspective.

The primary tools used in the project were training, individual support and guidance, linguistic and cultural mediation, information on active labor policies, training, and experimentation of job demand/supply interventions.

This case study highlights the importance of involving a wide range of actors and resources to successfully promote the integration of immigrants into the labor market. The project, which relies on 14 local cultural subjects/institutions and public employment services, such as Employment Centers, demonstrates how the adoption of innovative and multi-level strategies is crucial. By using primary tools defined in the literature, the aim is to ensure effective assimilation of immigrants into the host country's workforce. Furthermore, by involving a wide range of social actors from both the public and private sectors, the aim is to ensure the success of projects and actions, promoting an inclusive and collaborative approach that takes into account the needs and perspectives of all parties involved.

Case Study Poland: "Migrant Info Point" (MIP) Program

The Migrant Info Point program is an initiative managed by the Polish Foundation for International Cooperation (PFBCI) aimed at providing practical and informational support to immigrants in Poland, including those seeking employment. The program utilizes a range of online and offline tools to facilitate migrants' access to the information and resources necessary for integration into the Polish labour market.

- Provide practical and informational support to immigrants in Poland, including those seeking employment.
- Facilitate migrants' access to the information and resources necessary for integration into the Polish labor market.
- Target Audience:
 - Immigrants seeking employment in Poland.
 - Polish employers interested in hiring qualified immigrants.
- Program Activities:
 - Online Platform: Management of a dedicated website providing practical guides, informative resources, and useful links to help immigrants understand the legal requirements for working in Poland, job searching, and accessing public services.
 - Seminars and Workshops: Organization of events in various Polish cities to provide immigrants with detailed information on topics such as job searching, resume preparation, workers' rights, and tax regulations. Offering opportunities to meet industry experts and create professional networks.
 - Individual Assistance: Provision of personalized counselling and assistance to immigrants in need of specific support in job searching, document completion, or resolution of administrative issues related to immigration and employment.

The "Migrant Info Point" (MIP) Program in Poland emerges as a positive case study in the field of immigrant workforce integration. Its effectiveness stems from the combination of clear objectives, well-defined targets, and targeted activities, which have translated into tangible results. Through the use of digital tools and practical initiatives, MIP has succeeded in providing significant support to immigrants seeking employment, facilitating their access to the resources and information necessary to integrate into the Polish labour market. Active participant involvement and the provision of individual assistance have contributed to creating a conducive environment for immigrant assimilation and integration. Therefore, the success of MIP underscores the importance of well-structured programs focused on the specific needs of immigrants, demonstrating that with the right approach, positive and sustainable workforce integration can be achieved.

7 Summary and Recommendations

7.1 Key Findings

In the preceding chapters, we have extensively analyzed the various dimensions involved in the integration process of immigrants into the labor market, highlighting a series of challenges and critical issues that these individuals face in their assimilation journey in the host country. From factors influencing employment to obstacles related to the recognition of foreign qualifications, we have examined the complex dynamics determining the success or failure of immigrants' labor and economic integration. The analysis has revealed that it is essential to consider not only the challenges related to employment and qualification recognition but also the dimension of identity and psychological support. Below, we provide recommendations for practitioners, professionals in the field, and anyone interested in improving the practices and pathways of immigrants in the host country.

7.2 Recommendations for Career Counselors and Institutions Supporting Immigrant Assimilation

Based on the results obtained from the analysis of immigrants' economic situation in Chapter 2, we can outline a series of recommendations for career counselors and institutions operating in the field of immigration:

Linguistic and Professional Training: It is important to promote access to linguistic and professional training programs from the early stages of the integration process to enhance immigrants' skills and increase their employment prospects. Language courses are fundamental for facilitating immigrants' professional integration in host countries, as discussed in Chapter 3 and further explored in Chapter 6. Many countries offer such services, including Italy and Poland. Assimilation theory underscores the importance of acquiring language skills from the host country as part of the cultural and social assimilation process. Language courses provide immigrants with the opportunity to develop necessary language skills to communicate effectively in the workplace, enhancing their ability to collaborate with colleagues, understand instructions, and successfully perform their duties. Additionally, language courses can improve immigrants' confidence and self-esteem, enabling them to feel more secure in their work environment and effectively

tackle linguistic challenges they may encounter. Therefore, investing in targeted linguistic training programs is essential to promote immigrants' professional integration and ensure they can fully exploit growth and development opportunities in the host societies' labor markets.

Promotion of Diversity and Inclusion: Promoting diversity and inclusion is crucial to ensure a fair, respectful, and productive work environment. Actively engaging companies and employers in adopting policies and practices that foster diversity and inclusion in the workplace is essential to counteract phenomena of discrimination and occupational segregation. This approach is innovative as it emphasizes the importance of creating a work environment that reflects the diversity of the surrounding society. By recognizing and valuing differences in backgrounds, cultures, and experiences, companies can enhance their ability to attract diverse talents and stimulate innovation. Furthermore, promoting an atmosphere of acceptance and mutual respect fosters cohesion among employees and increases job satisfaction. The formality of this approach is evident in its structure and professional language, aimed at conveying a clear and persuasive message to corporate stakeholders and decision-makers. The clear and precise formulation of proposed policies and practices underscores the importance of considering diversity and inclusion as central elements of the company's strategy, rather than mere additional options.

Recognition of Foreign Qualifications: Supporting the simplification of procedures for recognizing foreign qualifications and promoting collaboration between competent authorities and educational institutions to ensure a fair assessment of immigrants' skills. As seen earlier, it is crucial for host countries to employ simplified procedures and promote multi-level collaboration between competent authorities and educational institutions. This is essential to ensure a fair assessment of immigrants' skills, allowing them to fully leverage their qualifications and training. This approach not only facilitates immigrants' access to the labor market but also helps meet the talent needs of host societies and fully harness the potential of human resources from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, a transparent and effective process of qualification recognition can reduce inequalities and promote greater social cohesion, fostering an inclusive and diversity-respecting work environment.

Psychological and Social Support: Offering psychological and social support services to immigrants to help them overcome emotional and relational obstacles that may affect their economic and social integration process. Providing such services contributes to immigrants' emotional and relational well-being and may also facilitate a faster and more complete economic and social integration into the host society. Investing in these services reflects a concrete commitment to addressing the challenges of immigration and promoting an inclusive and supportive environment for all community members. Key aspects to consider in designing individual pathways include:

- **Analysis of Specific Needs:** Before implementing services, conducting a detailed analysis of immigrants' psychological and social needs is essential. This may involve assessing the emotional and relational challenges immigrants face during the integration process, such as social isolation, cultural stress, lack of family support, discrimination, and job search-related anxiety.
- **Accessibility and Availability of Services:** Ensuring that psychological and social support services are accessible and available to immigrants, both in terms of geographical location and opening hours, is fundamental. This may involve opening support centers in communities with a large immigrant presence or integrating counseling services into public facilities and workplaces.
- **Culturally Sensitive Approaches:** Providers of psychological and social support must be sensitive to immigrants' cultural and linguistic differences. This requires appropriate cultural and linguistic skills, as well as a thorough understanding of the migration context and the specific challenges immigrants face in the integration process.
- **Offering Personalized Services:** Each immigrant may have unique needs and challenges, so support services should be personalized to address their specific requirements. This may include individual counseling, group therapy, family support, mentoring, and legal counseling, among others.

Psychological support should be complemented by actions that promote immigrants' empowerment. In addition to providing direct support, it is important to promote immigrants' empowerment by helping them develop internal resources and self-management skills to address challenges and achieve their integration goals. This involves going beyond the mere provision of direct support; it also entails providing tools and resources that enable immigrants to develop greater autonomy and capacity to manage the challenges they encounter in the integration process. This approach aims to empower individuals' internal resources, allowing them to gain confidence in their abilities and actively pursue their integration and professional development goals. Immigrants' empowerment can be promoted through a range of targeted interventions, including training programs aimed at enhancing their skills and knowledge, education on rights and opportunities available in the workplace, career guidance to help them identify appropriate career paths, and encouragement to actively participate in the local community. This approach not only provides immigrants with practical tools to address daily challenges but also contributes to promoting a sense of autonomy and belonging, which is essential for satisfactory integration into

the host society's professional and social context.

Collaboration and Coordination Network: To optimize the impact of services provided to immigrants, establishing an effective network of collaboration and coordination involving government agencies, nonprofit organizations, social services, mental health centers, educational institutes, and businesses is vital. This synergistic approach ensures an integrated and coherent response to immigrants' diverse needs, avoiding overlaps or gaps in the services offered. Such a network creates an environment where the resources and skills of each entity can be maximized, promoting greater efficiency in assisting immigrants and facilitating their integration into the host society.

In conclusion, the detailed analysis of the various dimensions influencing immigrants' integration process into the labor market highlights the complexity of this process and the multiple challenges immigrants face during their assimilation journey. From factors influencing employment to obstacles related to the recognition of foreign qualifications, from identity dynamics to the need for psychological and social support, there is a need to address these issues in an integrated and multidimensional manner.

7.3 Perspectives for the Development of Work with Immigrants in the Professional Context

Looking towards the future of immigrants' labor development, it is important to consider the following perspectives:

Investments in Education and Continuous Training: Promoting investments in education and continuous training to provide immigrants with the necessary skills to adapt to changes in the labor market and access more qualified and stable career opportunities.

Public-Private Partnerships: Encouraging the creation of public-private partnerships to develop programs and initiatives that facilitate immigrants' labor market insertion and promote collaboration between the public sector, private sector, and civil society organizations.

Active Inclusion Policies: Implementing active inclusion policies that encourage immigrants to fully participate in the labor market and social life by offering economic support, training, and personalized services.

In conclusion, effectively addressing the challenges of immigrants' economic integration requires collective commitment and foresight. Through targeted

policies, strategic investments, and open and inclusive dialogue, we can create more resilient and prosperous societies where every individual has the opportunity to contribute to their own and collective well-being.

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