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REPORT ON MEETINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP ON IMMIGRANT SUPPORT

ITALY
2023

“Integrative Individual Action Plan”

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1. INFORMATION ON THE POSSIBILITY OF CONDUCTING CAREER COUNSELING IN ITALY, INCLUDING IMMIGRANTS

1.1 Who can provide career guidance, including for immigrants

In Italy, there are several organizations and institutions that can provide career guidance and support, including for immigrants.

- **Public Employment Services:** In Italy, the Public Employment Services provide job placement and career guidance services for both citizens and immigrants. These services are offered by the local offices of the Italian Ministry of Labor and Social Policies (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali) and can provide information on job opportunities, vocational training programs, and career counseling.
- **Integration Centers:** Integration centers, known as "Centri di Accoglienza" or "Centri di Integrazione" in Italian, are government-funded organizations that offer support and guidance to immigrants. They can provide assistance with various aspects of integration, including language courses, cultural orientation, and job placement. These centers often have dedicated staff who can provide career guidance and help immigrants navigate the Italian job market.
- **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** There are several NGOs operating in Italy that focus on supporting immigrants and refugees. These organizations often provide a wide range of services, including language training, legal assistance, and career guidance. Some well-known NGOs in Italy include Caritas, Save the Children, and the Italian Council for Refugees (CIR).
- **Migrant Associations and Networks:** Many migrant associations and networks in Italy aim to support immigrants by providing information, resources, and networking opportunities. These organizations can often offer career guidance tailored to the specific needs of immigrants. Examples of such associations include the Association for Legal Studies on Immigration (ASGI) and the Italian Network for Equality and Integration (RIE).
- **Local Community Centers:** Local community centers, especially those located





in areas with a significant immigrant population, can be valuable resources for career guidance. These centers may offer language courses, employment workshops, and networking events that can help immigrants in their job search and career development.

1.2 How career counseling is currently conducted, including for immigrants

Career counseling in Italy is typically conducted through a combination of public services, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based initiatives. The specific approach may vary depending on the region and the organization providing the counseling.

- **Individual Counseling:** Career counselors may provide one-on-one sessions with immigrants to assess their skills, qualifications, and career aspirations. They help immigrants identify suitable job opportunities, develop a career plan, and provide guidance on job search strategies, resume writing, and interview preparation. These sessions are often personalized to address the unique challenges and needs of immigrants.
- **Workshops and Training Programs:** Career counseling for immigrants in Italy often includes workshops and training programs aimed at enhancing job-related skills. These programs may cover topics such as language proficiency, cultural orientation, vocational training, and job-specific skills development. Workshops and training programs can be organized by government agencies, NGOs, or community centers.
- **Job Placement Services:** Career counseling services in Italy may include job placement assistance. Counselors help immigrants identify job openings, connect with potential employers, and navigate the job application process. They may also provide information on labor market trends, in-demand industries, and opportunities for career advancement.
- **Information and Resources:** Immigrants often require access to information and resources related to employment and career development. Career counselors provide immigrants with information on labor laws, employment rights, professional certifications, and licensing requirements. They may also refer immigrants to relevant resources such as job portals, industry-specific associations, and networking events.
- **Language and Cultural Support:** Language and cultural barriers can significantly impact immigrants' career prospects. Career counseling services in Italy often include



language support programs, including language courses or referrals to language training institutions. Counselors also provide cultural orientation to help immigrants navigate workplace norms, professional etiquette, and intercultural communication.

- **Collaboration with Employers:** Career counselors may establish partnerships and collaborations with local employers to facilitate job placements for immigrants. They may work closely with companies that value diversity and are willing to provide employment opportunities to immigrants. Through these collaborations, counselors can identify job openings, advocate for immigrants, and promote inclusive hiring practices.

1.3 Scope of support for career counselors for immigrants in Italy

Although the figure of the career counselor in Italy is not officially recognized, the scope of support for people working in the field with immigrants in Italy can vary depending on the resources and funding available to the organizations. Here are some aspects that may fall within the scope of support:

- Assessing skills and qualifications to identify their strengths and areas for development. They may conduct interviews, review resumes, and administer assessments to gain a comprehensive understanding of the individual's background and abilities.
- Career planning and goal setting to help immigrants develop a career plan by discussing their interests, goals, and aspirations. They assist in setting realistic career goals, exploring different career paths, and identifying the necessary steps to achieve those goals. Career counselors may also provide guidance on further education, vocational training, or professional certifications that can enhance employment prospects.
- Job search strategies to support immigrants in developing effective job search strategies. They provide guidance on job search techniques, such as networking, online job portals, and targeted applications. Counselors may assist with resume and cover letter writing, optimizing online profiles, and preparing for interviews. They may also educate immigrants about the local labor market, in-demand industries, and job trends.



- Cultural and workplace integration since often face challenges related to cultural differences and workplace integration. Career counselors provide support by offering cultural orientation, explaining workplace norms and expectations, and addressing specific challenges that immigrants may encounter. They help immigrants understand and adapt to the local work environment, including professional etiquette, communication styles, and teamwork dynamics.
- Vocational training and skill development that align immigrants with their career goals. They provide information on available training courses, certifications, and apprenticeship programs. Counselors may also help immigrants access financial support or scholarships for vocational training.
- Networking and employer connections may facilitate networking opportunities for immigrants by connecting them with industry professionals, mentors, or immigrant alumni networks. They may organize job fairs, networking events, or informational interviews to help immigrants expand their professional network and gain insights into specific industries. Additionally, counselors may establish partnerships with local employers to promote inclusive hiring practices and advocate for job opportunities for immigrants.



2. PORTRAIT OF AN IMMIGRANT IN ITALY

2.1 Who is coming and for what purpose

Stretching into the Central Mediterranean sea, Italy is a natural corridor to enter Europe, receiving yearly thousands of refugees and irregular migrants from Africa and Asia. Many of them are not planning to stay in Italy, aiming instead at reaching other European countries. Therefore, as soon as they can, they try to irregularly cross the border getting into France, Switzerland and Austria.

In 2022, 105,140 migrants reached Italy in total, up from 67,040 in 2021 and 34,154 in 2020. The record number of arrivals in a single year was 181,436 in 2016. Some 13,386 of the migrants in 2022 were registered as unaccompanied minors. Of the arrivals so far this year, the top country of origin is Guinea (1,654), followed by the Ivory Coast (1,511), Pakistan (997), Tunisia (846), Egypt (490) and Bangladesh (447). In 2022, the top country of origin was Egypt (20,542), followed by Tunisia (18,148), Bangladesh (14,982), Syria (8,594) and Afghanistan (7,241). The U.N. refugee agency (UNHCR) said in 2022 51% of migrant sea crossings to Italy departed from Libya, 31% from Tunisia and 15% from Turkey. Tiny numbers left from Lebanon, Algeria and Syria. According to IOM surveys in 2019 and 2020, economic reasons along with persecution and violence seem to be among the most attested push factors, always appearing as the respondents' first two choices.

2.2 Legalization of an immigrant's stay and work in Italy

In 2017, the Italian government adopted the National Integration Plan for Persons Entitled to International Protection which transposed the EU's recast Qualification Directive. The plan, to be funded by EU and national financial resources, set out priorities for 2017-2018, including inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, language training, access to education, labour inclusion and vocational training. The main actors responsible for implementing the foreseen measures are local authorities and local public services, with the support of civil society organisations.

At the national level, responsibility for the governance of integration policies is shared between the interior ministry and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. The latter



entrusts practical activities, such as the managing integration policies, to its General Directorate of Immigration and Integration Policies. The interior ministry represents Italy at the European Integration Network. Within the ministry, the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration deals with issues concerning the protection of civil rights, including those related to immigration, asylum, citizenship, and religion.

According to Italian legislation, regions are the key actors in the planning of integration policies, given their legislative and regulatory competence in the fields of social policies, education, labour market, vocational training, health and housing. Within the policy framework set by regional governments, municipalities hold the main responsibilities in terms of defining concrete integration measures and policy implementation. The central responsibility of local authorities and public services at the local level, such as educational institutions and healthcare services, is also reflected within the framework of the National Integration Plan for Persons Entitled to International Protection.

Since 2012, newly arrived immigrants have been obligated to sign the so-called Integration Agreement the moment they obtain their first residence permit. By doing so, they commit to achieving specific integration goals in the following two years. Their success is measured through a credits system assessing sufficient knowledge of the Italian language (at the A2 level), as well as their knowledge of the constitution, civic life and institutions. The programme thus includes:

- language courses
- civic education
- vocational training

The fulfilment of integration goals is required for the renewal of residence permits. Several categories of migrants are, however, exempted from this requirement, either by law (such as victims of trafficking, unaccompanied minors and disabled migrants) or de facto, since their permits cannot be withdrawn (such as the beneficiaries of international or humanitarian protection, family migrants, long-term residents, and the family members of EU citizens).



2.3 A foreigner on the labor market in Italy

The latest results from the European Union (EU) labour force survey show that employed foreign citizens are more likely than nationals to be over-qualified for their job. In 2020, the EU over-qualification rate was 41.4% for non-EU citizens and 32.3% for citizens of other EU Member States. By contrast, the over-qualification rate for nationals stood at 20.8%.

Across the EU Member States, the highest share of over-qualified non-EU citizens was recorded in 2020 in Greece (71.6%), followed by Italy (66.5%), Spain (57.1%) and Cyprus (55.9%). For citizens of other EU Member States, the highest shares of over-qualified workers were also recorded in Italy (47.8%), Cyprus (47.7%) and Spain (47.2%). The share of over-qualified employed national citizens was the highest in Spain (34.5%), Cyprus (30.5%) and Greece (30.4%). Moreover, migrant women have higher unemployment rates than migrant men.

Foreigners in Italy are employed in a wide range of industries and occupations depending on factors such as their skills, qualifications, language proficiency, and the local labor market conditions. Migrants, particularly seasonal workers, constitute a significant portion of the agricultural workforce in Italy and it is estimated that migrants account for around 30-40% or more of the labor force in the agricultural sector. Moreover, migrants, especially those with experience in construction trades, are often employed in Italy's construction sector, in areas such as building construction, renovations, and infrastructure projects.

Italy's tourism industry attracts migrants who work in hotels, restaurants, and other tourism-related establishments. Migrants are estimated to represent a substantial proportion, ranging from 20-30% or more, of the workforce in the hospitality and tourism sector. Furthermore, migrants, particularly women, often find employment as domestic workers in Italy. They work as caregivers, housekeepers, and nannies in private households. Finally, migrants with qualifications and experience in healthcare and social services contribute to the sector's workforce in Italy. However, the percentage of migrants employed in these fields is relatively lower compared to other sectors, likely varying between 5-15% or even less.



3. MEETINGS WITH NGO REPRESENTATIVES

3.1 Information about meeting participants

3.2 Information on the course of meetings

The workshops lasted 3 days (4 hours each) and involved 10 people for each day. They have been conducted combining presentations and discussions. During the discussion, Cosvitec's project manager acted as a moderator. The workshops have been conducted in Italian with live translation into English for the Polish partners.

The workshops were structured as follow:

1. Presentation of the project: assumptions, purpose, etc. - WIR
2. Presentation of the situation of migrants in Poland - WIR
3. Presentation of the situation of migrants in Italy - COSVITEC
4. Group in-depth interview - COSVITEC
5. Individual survey on professional work and tools used at work
6. Discussion

3.3 Conclusions and recommendations from the meetings

Below is a list of the topics most discussed by stakeholders during the workshops:

- There is no professional figure recognized as career counselor in Italy and the consequence is that very often people without appropriate skills end up playing this role.
- It is essential to reach the Italian A2 language level for immigrants in order to receive a residence permit. The real problem is for those who are illiterate even in their own language, this complicates the learning process quite a bit, also because classes are often made up of immigrants with different levels of knowledge of Italian.
- Peer to peer mentoring could be a very useful tool to facilitate the integration of migrants both professionally and in the social context.
- Institutions do not give support to organizations and often the guidelines are confusing and difficult to implement.
- Very often immigrants, especially the ROM community, show a lot of distrust of the organizations that deal with their integration.
- Immigrants' academic degrees earned in their home countries are not always



comparable to Italian degrees and recognized. This issue makes it much more difficult for the immigrant to pursue a career based on his or her prior experience.

- In the construction and agriculture sectors, it is difficult to find labor, especially young people, and companies used to turn mainly to the informal network but now their relationship with organizations involved in acting as a bridge between migrants and the labor market has increased. However, the training courses developed by these organizations struggle to find participants and many of them drop out of the course before its end because the practical work is physically wearing. In addition, these organizations complain of a lack of support from institutions and a lack of public funds.
- Very often it happens that certain foreign nationalities end up entering the labor market sector where most people of the same nationality are employed.
- Many employers are reluctant to cooperate with organizations that deal with labor integration of migrants because they are then forced to enter into a regular contract with foreigners. In fact, in Italy, and especially in the Neapolitan context, many companies are wont to hire undocumented workers in such a way as to pay them less and have no contractual responsibilities.
- In the local context, both employment agencies and NGOs often do not make an adequate assessment of the migrant's skills. In addition to having an overview of the hard skills of the job-seeking migrant so as to direct him or her to the most physiological career path for his or her abilities, it would be important that an analysis also be made of the soft skills in order to understand what socio-cultural integration difficulties the migrant may face and what skills he or she can improve in this regard.
- Often, organizations that deal with the labor integration of migrants do not really take into account the skills they really possess and assign them and jobs and/or training courses that are distant from their knowledge and skills. Consequently, it is essential that these organizations use an individual approach and really try to understand the attitudinal and work characteristics of each migrant. Moreover, by following this system, participants are not motivated to attend the course and their content.
- Most workshop participants believe that the initial support given to migrants for language teaching and social integration is even more essential than the transmission of practical knowledge for work.
- Teaching in compulsory schools attended by foreign minors have no special courses



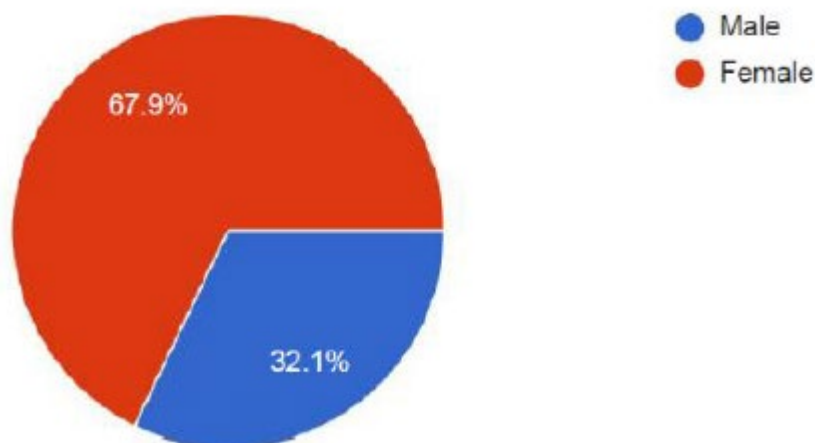
and/or tools to facilitate their integration with other students.

- There are not enough employment agencies and they are not efficient enough. In addition, they are often far from the places where migrants live, so logistics become an additional isolating factor for them.
- In the Neapolitan context, there are few large companies, and therefore organizations involved in the labor integration of migrants constantly have to enter into agreements with small companies that have few vacancies, however.
- Employment agencies very often require professionals with a low skill level, and therefore paradoxically individuals with prior work experience and/or academic degrees have more difficulty finding employment through them.
- It would be important to establish a place where businesses and job seekers, especially migrants, can meet in such a way as to create a direct relationship between them without intermediaries.

3.4 Information and meeting materials

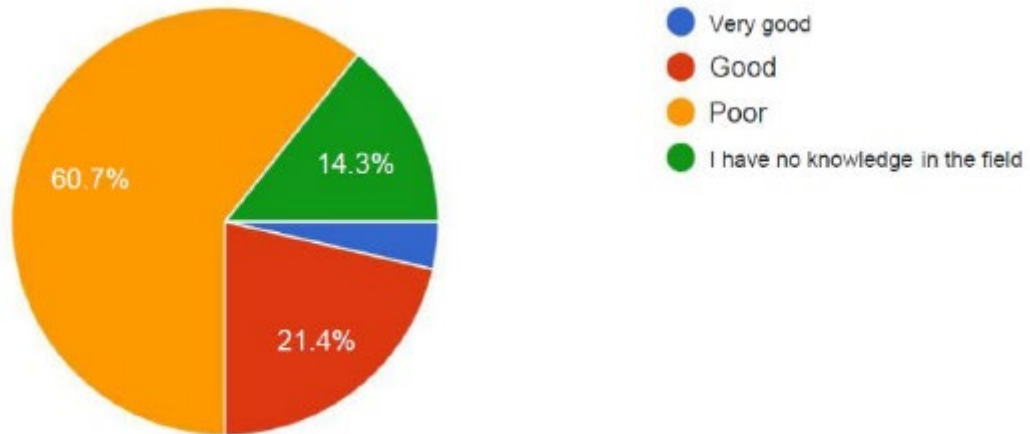
During the workshop, stakeholders filled out the form in which they were asked to give their impressions of the effectiveness of the migrant integration system in the Italian socio-cultural and labor context. The survey involved the 30 stakeholders and its results are given below:

1. Gender:

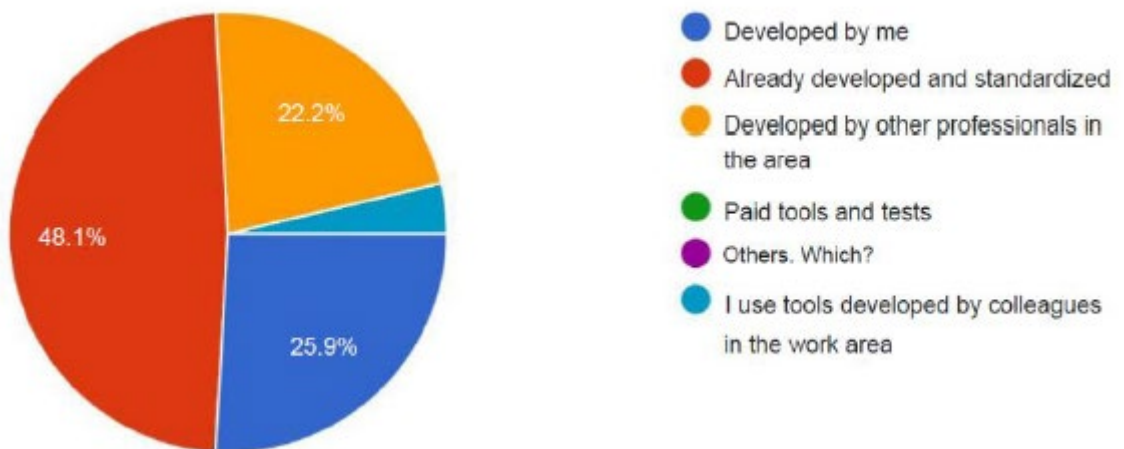




2. How do you evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of career counseling for migrants at local level?

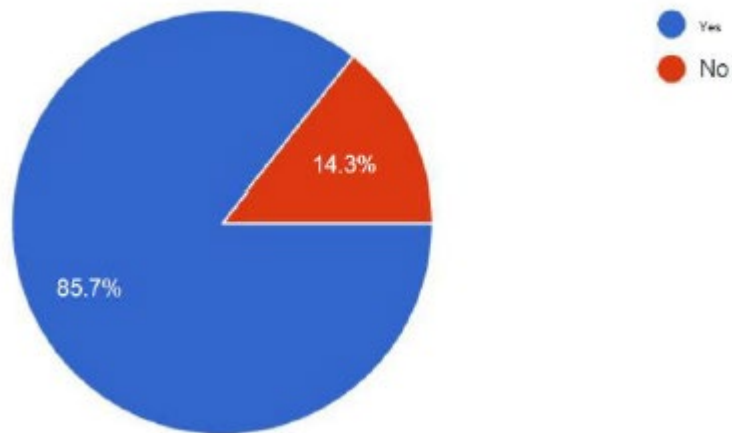


3. In my work, as far as professional activation is concerned, I use tools and solutions that are:





4. Do you use digital tools in your professional work?

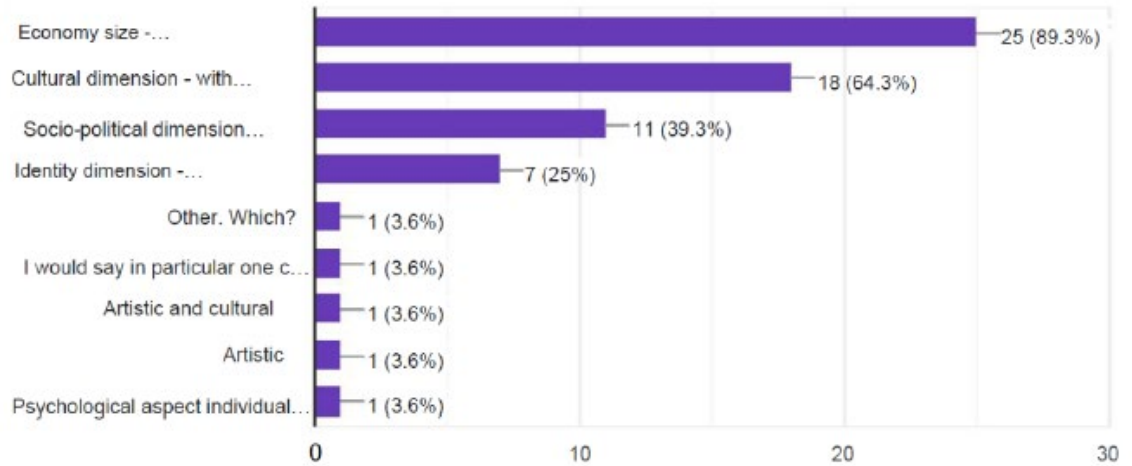


5. Is it appropriate to intervene in the context of the professional activation of migrants?

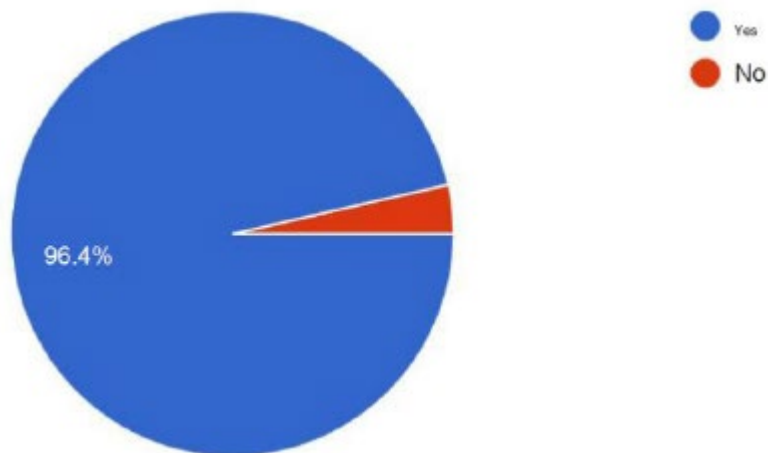




6. What are the areas to be included in the development of the Integrative Individual Action Plan?



7. Would you like to be directly involved in the development of the Integrative Individual Action Plan?

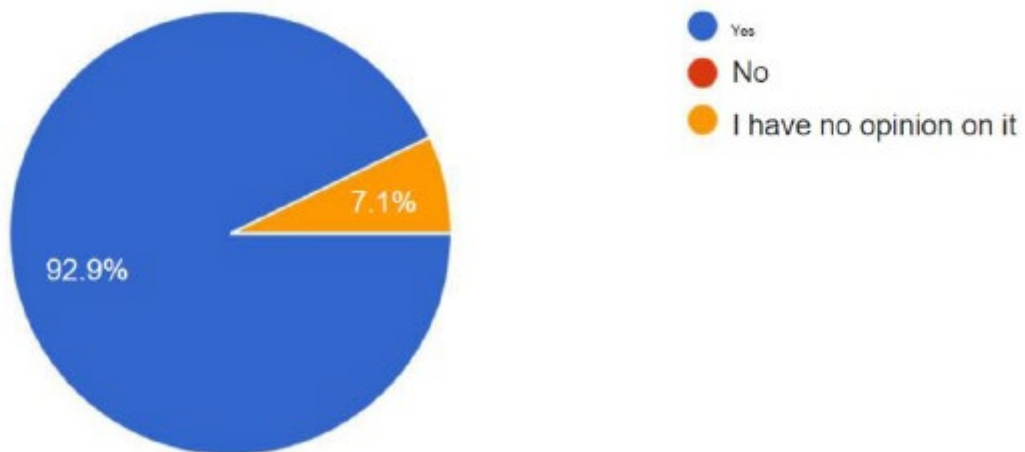




8. *In your opinion, is it important to network and exchange experiences between those who work in the field of professional activation of migrants?*

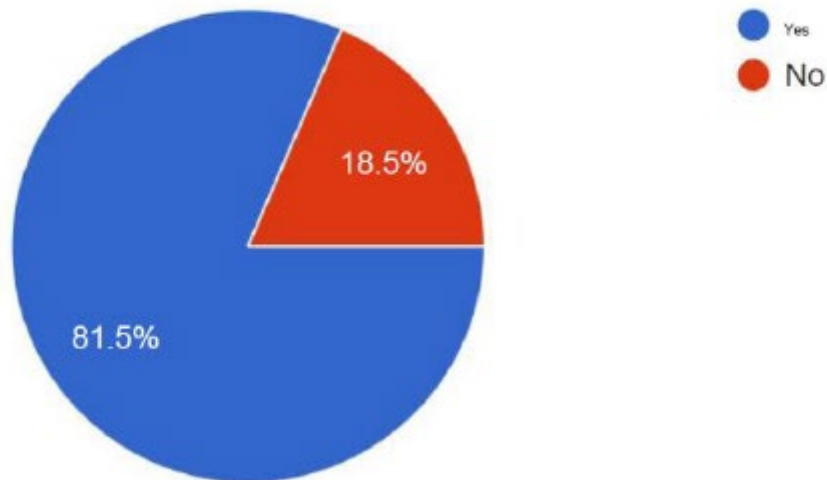


9. *Is it important to act in this sector at an international level?*





10. Would you be interested in testing the tools of the Integrative Individual Action Plan through one-on-one meetings?



4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TOOL SUPPORTING IMMIGRANTS

4.1 Substantive scope and recommendations

The following is a list of recommendations from stakeholders on features to be developed in the digital tool to foster the socio-cultural and labor integration of migrants:

- Often organizations working with migrants do not know the other organizations working in the ne territory, but more importantly, they are not aware of their activities and the outputs produced, so sometimes the activities overlap and they cannot keep track of the successes and failures they have experienced. Knowledge should be shared so that other projects implemented in the area can be used as a starting point. The tool could have a section containing a list of organizations working with migrants and the initiatives and projects they implement in the area so that the outputs they create can be reused for future initiatives. The section should contain the outputs created by the projects with a link to the corresponding web pages.
- A major gap in the Italian reception system is access to information and services that could greatly facilitate the integration of migrants into both the socio-cultural and



labor contexts of the host country. The digital tool should therefore be a virtual space where foreign citizens can be provided with all the information they need to facilitate their access to services and their path to integration. Through the tool, the range of services offered by the public-private network engaged in integration activities should also be usable, through a georeferenced representation of the areas of intervention. This tool would lead to greater autonomy of the migrant who through the digital tool would learn about the services available for their integration and their rights. A very useful example for tool development is "migrawiki.it," a digital platform created by Cooperativa Shannara under Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

- CV writing very often is a passive process. The video resume is a viable alternative because it makes the individual active in the process of finding a job and is also an innovative tool that can be viewed positively by the employer. In fact, creating a video curriculum means working together in narrative terms on reframing one's identity and representing one's journey. Indeed, self-presentation implies reflection on one's life project. The difficulty of identity reconstruction in their lives passes through different dimensions of meaning and space, between distant cultures and foreign languages. Migrants have often a wealth of skills and experience, acquired in their countries of origin, that remain invisible to the labor market. This happens because they lack the means and resources to enhance and communicate this background. They are bearers of skills and knowledge that enrich the socioeconomic fabric of our country, and the recognition of these work experiences is the first step for proper social and labor insertion. Entering the labor market requires continuous experimentation with innovative and functional tools during the orientation process. The video curriculum enables increased learning of digital skills, awareness and self-assessment skills. It is a tool that allows shared experimentation with spaces for discussion and storytelling, empowers boys and girls in the job search process

4.2 Scope of adapting the tool to the immigrant's profil

Adapting tools to the specific profiles and needs of the user is crucial. As individuals navigate the complexities of settling in a new country, they encounter a myriad of challenges that extend beyond mere language barriers. Often, for example, they have not received an



education in their country of origin or, conversely, they have university degrees that are not recognized by the legislation of the country of arrival. In most cases, sociocultural differences run so deep that they generate shocks. Counselors should take into account a number of specific factors related to the experience of individuals or families, but this is often not possible. Adapting the tool to the immigrant's profile means having the opportunity to:

- Provide legal and informational support: the tools should offer comprehensive information on immigration laws, legalization procedures, and work permits in different languages, to ensure that users fully grasp their rights and responsibilities.
- Provide language adaptation: it is essential that the tools can be used in different languages and, above all, that the interface and instructions are simple, clear and understandable, since they must be suitable for everyone.
- Provide cultural support: in the formulation of tests and surveys to assess users' skills should also be included cultural questions. Indeed, very often there are deep cultural differences between the country of origin and the country of arrival, and it is essential to take these differences into consideration in order to be able to give appropriate support related to the individual's values, traditions, aspirations.
- Identify the right opportunities for education and training: customizing and adapting tools to the immigrant's profile means being able to offer access to courses, workshops, classes and job opportunities that truly align with the user's skills and needs.
- Knowledge sharing: in most cases, NGOs, associations, psychologists and other professional figures who work with migrants don't know about each other and about the projects they are implementing. The tools can be used to share information, knowledge and best practices, alongside a comprehensive list of organizations working with migrants. In this way, both immigrants and organizations will know about interesting and useful projects.
- Provide support for family and social aspects: the tools can provide assistance in finding support for families, information on social services, information on services for children (for example, information on schools).
- Provide psychological support: migration is always a trauma, since it involves a radical change in the life of an individual or family. One flees conflict, poverty, discrimination,



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lack of economic opportunity, emotional and existential trauma. Whatever the motivation, it is important to be able to give users psychological support services.

- Provide users training: organizing trainings to teach users who lack digital skills how to use the tools will ensure the inclusion of everyone, who will have the same opportunities to benefit from using the tools as those who are familiar with technology.

