



Developing capacities together:
European CSO-university networks for
global learning on migration, security
and sustainable development in an
interdependent world (InterCap)

Activity 1.1.1: Audit on migration, sustainability and development education

National level Report - ICU -Italy

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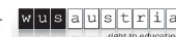
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1. Introduction

1.1 The Rationale behind this report

Italian institutions and education system perceive the need for an effective education on sustainable development for the following main reasons:

- Italy's progress towards a condition of sustainable development is low and the country lags behind on the achievement of the SGDs.
- Since 2011, the country has been challenged by migrants' influx and hosting, considered by public opinion as the main cause of growing insecurity and leading to widespread stereotypes, prejudices, increasing xenophobia.

In this context, it is essential to actively engage all citizens in a common path towards sustainable development (bidding on young generations, as they are citizens of the future and change agents) as well as to spread a databased and informed knowledge on the extent of migrants' influx and its socio-economic impact on the society.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The aim of this report is to present the state-of-the-art analysis carried out by ICU at a national and regional level (Lazio Region) to draw a comprehensive picture of

- Public opinion knowledge and perception on sustainable development, migrations, security and their interlinkages, including the main instruments/mechanisms that influence and shape public opinion;
- Whether national legislation on migration takes into account sustainable development international frameworks and how;
- Existing initiatives and best practices undertaken by national/local governments, the education system and civil society to promote informed knowledge of sustainable development and related topics, with a focus on migration, and gaps to be filled;
- Needs and expectations of education system representatives and civil society organisations (CSOs) on reinforcing their capabilities to effectively educate students on sustainable development matters.

1.3 Available data and resources

Main data and resources used for this report have been found in national level reports published by research centres, journals and CSOs whose work focuses on relevant themes, such as Rome Charter Association, Sustainable Development Association (ASviS), International Affairs review. The identification of projects and best practices focused on regional initiatives undertaken in Lazio region by CSOs.



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1.4 Limitations

The main limitation of this research is the **lack of regional level data** concerning public opinion knowledge / awareness and media representation of sustainable development, migration and security. Information on how development education is conveyed in regional schools is also absent. In addition, there is a lack of national institutional researches about the current state of teaching development education, needs assessments, and links between sustainable development and migration.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Public Opinion Polls

The purpose of this section is to look into national and regional data to find out the position of public opinion on **migration issues**, national security and sustainable development, including the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As highlighted by the surveys reported below, migration is considered by the population among the most worrying issues. Particularly, hosting migrants is deemed one of the major causes of anxiety, as it is perceived as a danger to national security.

For instance, a recent survey (IPSOS and the Center of Contemporary Jewish Documentation 2017) highlights that Italian population has become xenophobic, racist and increasingly intolerant in response to migratory flows that have been affecting our territory in recent years. On one hand, 24% of respondents highlight the need to reject migrants, considering them a threat to national security. On the other hand, 25.4% is in favour of welcoming migrants and refugees, as they take into account the causes (such as wars, violence, famine and natural disasters) that force people to flee their country of origin. The majority of respondents, about 44%, are in favour of reception policies but solely towards a specific category of migrants: the political refugees.

According to the IPSOS-CDEC (2017) survey, 70% of Italians believes that there are too many immigrants in the country, and argues that migratory flows put a strain on Italian public services and the labour market. 43% of respondents consider migrants as responsible for the difficult and unstable situation gripping the Italian labour market, while 41.7% believes that immigrants are ruining Italian traditions and culture.

Furthermore, a survey conducted by Laps (2016) shows that 40% of Italians believes that immigration is a danger to security, and agrees with the statement "around here there are so many foreigners that I do not feel at home". It also reveals how, in light of recent terrorist attacks in Europe, such as the Bataclan attack in November 2015 or the one to the



Christmas market in Berlin in December 2016, Italians feel they are living in a climate of fear and terror. Consequently, respondents (from 27 % to 32 %) justify the use of torture on migrants suspected of terrorism to prevent attacks to the country. It is worth mentioning that only 42% of respondents would oppose to torture on those accused of terrorism.

The results of the survey highlight that xenophobic and anti-immigrant feelings are on the rise.¹ However, they also show that about 27.4% of Italians perceives migration as a positive phenomenon (especially in economic and cultural terms) that contributes to the "deprovincialisation" of the country.

Quite the opposite is shown in the research "Building a possible development: creation of a permanent system of international solidarity and decentralized cooperation for development", conducted by the International Committee for the Development of Peoples (CISP). It demonstrates that the citizens of Lazio Region are not confident nor satisfied with the inclusion practices adopted by the regional government. Their impression is that the Region is not committed to the implementation of policies able to foster international cooperation, stimulate education for global citizenship, intercultural education and the integration of foreign citizens (CISP 2012).

The "X Report on Social Security and Insecurity in Italy and in Europe" (2017) suggests that, after the management of migratory flows and the alleged risks related to migrant integration, Italians are mostly concerned about environmental problems strictly connected to sustainable development. In particular, the Report shows that Italians feel frequently worried for "the destruction of the environment and nature" (58%), "pollution" (55%), "globalisation" (39%) and "being a victim of natural disasters" (38%). The fear of natural disasters has undergone a significant increase over 2017, due to the tragedies that hit Central Italy in recent years – namely, the Amatrice earthquake in August 2016, the Rigopiano avalanche in January 2017, or the Livorno floods in September 2017.

Additionally, the vast majority of Italians (85%) affirms to be in favour of policies towards sustainable development, and young generations are by far the largest number. On one side, 71% of young people between 15-24 and 72% of adults between 35-44 years of age consider environmental protection policies as a priority, even at the cost of a lower economic growth. On the other side, only 58% of people over 65 are in favour of sustainable development policies. Nevertheless, there is a shared belief that a paradigmatic change should be deferred to individual actions. Indeed, more than 80% of respondents believe in the need to introduce restrictive changes to our comfortable lifestyle (AsviS 2017).

The above data points out the existence of a correlation between migratory phenomenon, associated risks and change in geopolitical space. Indeed, people feel their social, cultural, political and economic spaces are threatened by the arrival of migrants and, being

¹ Read more at: <http://www.affarinternazionali.it/2017/10/paure-cambiano-italiani-immigrazione/>



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incapable of handling relationships both at personal and community level, react with an hostile attitude of fear and alienation. However, this belief does is not based on an in-depth understanding of the migration phenomenon and of its complexity. Therefore, there is a need to spread a databased and informed understanding on the extent of migrants' influx, the dynamics of sustainable development and their implications for the society.

2.2 Media Response

This section analyses the role played by media in conveying news and contents on migration flows, refugee crisis, sustainable development and climate change. An article published by the national newspaper *La Repubblica* (2017) points out that over 2017 news related to migratory flows, crime and security have been witnessed a dramatic increase, both in the press and in the evening news information, with about 44 % of headlines dedicated to landings and rescue at sea and 16 % of newspaper' headlines dedicated to crime and security.

According to the organisation *Carta di Roma*, the main topics in 2017 media agenda (NGOs and the rescue at sea, *lus soli*, and dreadful crimes involving migrants) mainly reflect a **concerned and problematic narrative of migration phenomenon and its socio-economic implications**. Too often media coverage emphasises violent acts committed by migrants, framing them as dangerous for the community and inclined to illegality. Such a stereotype and prejudice-based narrative feeds and strengthens feelings of fear and resentment towards migrants in general. Migrants are frequently described as burdens for the society, as people draining resources and jeopardising the civil coexistence. The attention mainly draws on the alleged negative impact and disadvantages resulting from welcoming migrants in our country. The language used is often characterized by alarmist, catastrophic and apocalyptic tones.

Meanwhile, a narrative of positive cases of integration, or of migrant contribution to the society is absent.² Actually, studies on the relationship between media and migration, such as the one by E. Calvanese (2013), highlight that a positive narrative of the migratory phenomenon is not very much present, if totally absent. When presenting facts or events concerning migrants, media disregard the motivations that pushed people to abandon their family, home and country of origin. Media convey images and news related to crime, scarcity of resources and difficulties faced by host countries rather than encouraging narratives to understand and integrate migrants. Calvanese also shows that media are unwilling to bring stories of integration/ redemption to the audience attention and deepen its cultural horizons, which instead could contribute to stimulate new insights, mutual understanding and socio-cultural integration.

² Read more at: <https://www.cartadiroma.org/editoriale/prima-serata-notizie-flussi-migratori-criminalita/>



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According to the V Report by Carta di Roma (2018), migrations are depicted by media as a danger directly threatening national security and citizens safety. It is rare to see migration and migrants presented as an opportunity to foster growth and development in hosting countries and their citizens.

As far as sustainable development is concerned, this theme is mainly (if not almost only) depicted through the lens of climate change and environmental sustainability, disregarding the conspicuous and diversified topics included in the SDGs. In this regard, the dissemination of news on climate change suffers the same problems as the migration phenomenon. Catastrophist and alarmist narratives characterise news related to these topics. Emotional implications jeopardise the reality and invalidate the public's understanding.³ M. Inglisa (2007), professor of Sociology of Communication at the University of Pavia, explains this based on the fact that **the general public has no attraction to news linked to climate change and sustainable development**. This information requires technical skills to be understood and is difficult to be properly read by the public.

Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a link between, on one side, the negative narrative of migration and the limited or absent information on the broad range of topics related to sustainable development and, on the other side, the prevailing public attitudes that identify migration flows as the main cause of insecurity.

2.3 Research and project production

This section draws on: evidence from remarkable international and national researches⁴ exploring the links between migration and sustainable development; main initiatives promoting sustainable development at national level.

Regarding international researches and studies, amongst them it is worth mentioning the OECD Development Centre's 'Perspectives on Global Development 2017: International Migration in a Shifting World.' It points out the existence of a relationship between global economic development and an increase in migration, describing international migration as "shifting wealth", as human capital mobility improves people quality of life and benefits societies at large. It also identifies transnationalism as one of the key elements triggering prosperity in societies of origin and destination. On this basis, it elaborates recommendations for the introduction of a new policy framework able to face challenges of migration and make it a positive driving force of development and growth. The proposed approach calls for: embedding the development dimension in national policies; promoting policy and institutional coherence; sharing responsibilities and strengthening international cooperation.⁵ In more concrete terms, on one hand, origin countries should: reduce

³ Read more at: <http://www.greenman.it/2009/09/scuola-e-comunicazione-sviluppo-sostenibile/>

⁴ Such studies were selected for their role in influencing the principles driving the international cooperation.

⁵ Read more at: <http://www.oecd.org/dev/perspectives-on-global-development-22224475.htm>



remittance costs, while promoting their re-investment; promote initiatives to support public development and protect the most vulnerable. The long-term objective should be to encourage migrants to return to their countries and contribute to local economic growth. On the other hand, destination countries should take action to improve the labour market structure, stabilise financial market volatility and uncertainty, as well as strengthen social integration. In this direction, policy coordination and coherence at different levels (local, national and international) is also desirable. Furthermore, destination countries should design policies contributing to the achievement of the 17 SDGs (OECD 2017).

At national level, the current law on international development cooperation (Law n°125/2014) recalls the international and European standards and practices and acknowledges the positive economic impact of migrants on both origin and destination countries. Hence, it commits to protect their human rights, to financially sustain and integrate them into society.

Concerning relevant national studies, the report *'Migration and international development cooperation. Analysis and insights'* (Link 2007⁶, 2014) draws the attention on Diasporas. It highlights that while integrating in receiving countries, migrants maintain strong connections in countries of origin. Such a phenomenon is particularly clear when it comes to its economic dimension. By sending remittances and sharing the acquired know-how, migrants contribute to the development of their home countries. In addition, migrants are development actors of destination countries (Link 2007 2014). In this regard, a study conducted by MIUR and VIS⁷ outlines that migrants social security contributions and taxes are essential to finance pensions (7 billions EUR) provided by the National Institute for Social Security to 620.000 Italian citizens. The fact that migrants labour market integration is becoming a national priority is recalled also by the VII Annual Report *'Foreigners in the Italian labour market'* by the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Particularly, the Report highlights complexities due to the presence of multiple and diverse migrants communities, characterised by sectorial specialisations and different level of female labour participation. In 2016, foreigners workers represented 10.5 % of the employed workforce (in 2007, only 6.3 %) - up to around 17 % for some economic sectors, such as agriculture and construction. Learning the local language, having academic and professional qualifications recognised, and receiving trainings are crucial aspects of the economic, social, cultural and political integration of migrants. According to the Report, **including migrants in the labour market is the key for an effective integration into destination societies** and positively impact the European economy overall.

Moving from the research field to on-field initiatives, at national level they mainly deal with the promotion of sustainable development and are mostly carried out by NGOs and CSOs.

⁶ LINK 2007 - Cooperation Network was established to promote collaboration and coordination among some Italian NGOs. Members include: CESVI, CISP, COOPI, COSV, MEDICI CON L'AFRICA-CUAMM, GVC, ICU, INTERSOS, LVIA.

⁷ Read more at: <http://www.ionondiscrimino.it/>



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As pointed out by an ASviS research⁸, in Italy NGOs play an essential role in calling for policies that respect and contribute to the achievement of the 17 SDGs. Indeed, by addressing a wide public, NGOs are able to raise awareness, outreach and take action at different levels: local, national and international. Furthermore, NGOs have the competence to ask corporates and governments to be more sustainable and commit to such goals.

In this regard, one of the most recent initiative is "**Agent 0011**", promoted by ActionAid and funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation. It involves students from ten schools of different Italian regions (including Lazio) with the aim to raise their awareness and mobilise the civil society on the SDGs and the 2030 UN Agenda. The project focuses on four thematic areas covered by the 17 UN objectives: Rights & Equality, Goods & Resources, Wellness & Health, Environment & Territories. During the school year 2017/2018, the classes will have to partner with a network of local NGOs to develop concrete ideas to make cities more sustainable. For this purpose, a dedicated portal has been created. It is constantly updated with the contents produced by the students (texts, photo collections, educational pills, interactive games, research, proposals, testimonies of people from the South of the world).

Another popular initiative is the **Festival of Sustainable Development** organized by ASviS, which is a week-long and eventful festival (workshops, seminars, conferences, shows) aiming at raising general public awareness on the 17 objectives of the Agenda 2030.⁹

This brief review shows that the need to analyse migration and sustainable development jointly and to identify links and cause-effect relationships between them is taken into account at international level. Far from it, at national level both researches and on-field initiatives tend to keep these two concept separated, analysing migrants socio-economic impact disregarding sustainable development dynamics, or promoting a sustainable development where there is no reference to migration. Hence, there is a room to bring value to national studies and initiatives proposing a more comprehensive and integrated approach, that always considers and works on both phenomena and their relationships simultaneously.

2.4 Case studies of good practices

The present section outlines the best practices identified in Lazio Region to promote sustainable development education. They were identified among projects sponsored by both the regional government and the civil society - which takes action and participates spontaneously.

⁸ Read more at: <http://asvis.it/goal17/notizie/296-2662/la-mobilitazione-delle-ong-per-gli-sdgs-e-in-atto-ma-gli-ostacoli-non-mancano>

⁹ Find out more at: <http://festivalsvilupposostenibile.it/2017/il-festival/>



Both the regional government and local civil society acknowledge the urgent need to raise public awareness and engagement on highly interconnected issues: the respect of the environment, the protection of fundamental human rights, the recognition and enhancement of diversities, and the pursuit of economic, social and environmental justice. Hence, they undertook **outreach, training and dissemination initiatives primarily targeted at children and young people** (the future of sustainability), but also at other stakeholders specifically engaged in the field of migration.

These initiatives are based on the assumption that to fully achieve the 17 SDGs, every citizen should be aware of the need to adapt to major challenges faced by contemporary societies - increasingly moving towards globalisation, multicultural exchange, and sustainable living. In this respect, international development cooperation plays a crucial role, as it is called upon to create a fertile environment to fight the injustices afflicting the most vulnerable people in the world.

One of the main initiatives for children and adolescents is **'Let's get to know each other: 6 steps for an united world'**, a project co-promoted by AMU Onlus (Action for a United World) and Teens4Unity (international movement of young people) with the support of Lazio Regional School Office of the Ministry of Education. Its purpose is to boost the number of awareness and training courses on the concept of global citizenship and other related topics. Starting from the belief that only a true and conscious knowledge of the other allows its understanding and acceptance, the project organises conferences, activities and courses in synergy with secondary and upper secondary school students for **thriving local positive examples and practices of active and accountable citizenship**. Teachers and educators participating in the project need to attend a training course (frontal lessons, workshops, and on-the-ground experience) in order to guide students in developing their sense of judgment/ability to reflect, which in turn will make them contribute to good civic practices¹⁰.

Additionally, the **contest 'I don't discriminate...I try to discern'**, co-organised by the Ministry of Education and VIS for the school year 2017/2018, targets secondary and upper secondary school students. By fostering a welcome and solidarity culture, it helps prevent and counter any form of discrimination and stigma. Through stories, videos, and images, the project allows students to retrace migrant journey and explore fears, hopes, obstacles and violence experienced by migrants¹¹. The project uses also an Internet-based quiz to test knowledge on migration issues, with the ultimate goal of dispelling myths and providing correct and reliable information upon which teachers and students can debate and reflect.¹² Among the initiatives targeting adults, **'RETES Lazio: against the discrimination of foreign citizens'**, was implemented and coordinated by Lazio Region between September 2013 and June 2014. The project aims to prevent, counter, and raise public awareness on ethnic and racial discriminatory phenomena, increasingly perceived as normal and socially

¹⁰ Read more at: <https://bastaconoscerci.wordpress.com/progetto-di-educazione-alla-cittadinanza-globale/>

¹¹ Read more at: <http://www.volint.it/vis/concorso-miur-20172018-io-non-discriminocerca-di-discernere>

¹² Read more at: <http://www.ionondiscrimino.it/>



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accepted. In this sense, the research pinpoints how every single discriminatory act - albeit void or unaware of any racial and xenophobic motivation - results in social marginalisation, non-recognition of fundamental rights, and the consequent exclusion of migrants from the provision of basic services. By analysing discrimination episodes across different sectors (education, employment, and health), the RETES final report illustrates a set of good practices suitable for other local actors interacting with migrants. Namely: an increase in sensitisation and training activities for the staff employed in public facilities, with the aim to reduce and prevent cases of stigmatisation and discrimination; implementation of information campaigns specifically targeting refugees and migrants, in order to inform them about their own rights and opportunities and, therefore, empower them. Lastly, it identifies highly problematic and unsettled matters that need to be addressed, such as the right to housing assistance for refugees and asylum-seekers.¹³

Another project directed at adults is ***'I don't discriminate! Knowledge of migration and integration together with migrants'***, promoted by the Institute for Peace, Development and Innovation (IPSIA). It is intended to raise awareness on migration and global citizenship in the cities of Rome, Milan and Catania, with the aim of **fostering mutual understanding as well as dismantling unfair stereotypes and prejudices**. Thanks to the support of local entities and non-profit organisations, IPSIA organises training and sensitisation courses for actors that regularly interact with migrants: lawyers, journalists, public officers and employees, teachers and professors, coaches and referees, social workers, students and migrant associations¹⁴.

From the good practices depicted above, it emerges that regional level initiatives often focus on discrimination and integration challenges that the community has to face daily. Compared to the national initiatives presented in Section 2.3, the migration component is of primary importance but it is still dealt with no reference to the whole sustainable development framework. Importantly, at regional level there is also a closer cooperation between local authorities and civil society, which could be the starting point of a possible, future scale-up of a national level cooperation.

2.5 Migration policies and sustainable development

National migration and integration policy is regulated by the **Legislative Decree n. 286/1998**, known as "Testo Unico Immigrazione", [Decreto legislativo, testo coordinato, 25/07/1998 n° 286, G.U. 18/08/1998], which sets-out the principles and procedures governing **migrants and asylum seekers' entry, residence** (including socio-economic rights and labour market integration) and **return**.

The Decree was drafted and adopted by the Ministry of the Interior 18 years earlier than the current international framework on sustainable development. It contains **no reference/ link**

¹³Read more at: <https://www.cies.it/retes>

¹⁴ Read more at: <http://www.ipsia-acli.it/it/progetti/in-corso/item/393-io-non-discrimino.html>



with international legal frameworks/ initiative on current or previous sustainable development and no consideration on the causes of migration.

Nevertheless, the Decree implicitly:

- acknowledges the right to humanitarian protection to **environmental refugees**, escaping their country of origin for reasons related to climate change, linking migration to climate change;
- takes into account **migration impact on national social cohesion**.

As far as concerns environmental refugees, the Decree states that a residence permit cannot be denied or withdrawn if *serious humanitarian reasons* persists. The Decree does not provide a precise definition of “humanitarian reasons”, thus it has been subject to broad interpretations by the administrative and case-law practices. Accordingly, humanitarian reasons include the existence of vulnerability/ risky conditions related to the individual (e.g. health, human rights guardianship) or to his/ her country of origin, such as widespread violence, political instability, natural disaster and other **environmental problems**. On this basis, the Territorial Commissions (responsible for evaluating asylum requests) have granted the humanitarian protection to people running away from South-East Asia countries hit by tsunami or from Nepal after 2015 earthquake (ASGI 2017). Furthermore, national jurisprudence is geared towards overcoming the concept of natural disasters as exceptional occurrences, embracing also those environmental phenomena having progressive, slower evolutions (e.g. desertification, draught, land and water grabbing, widespread lack of necessary resources to ensure local population subsistence).

With respect to the impact of migration on social cohesion, the Decree identifies a set of measures to facilitate immigrants’ social and cultural integration in our society while respecting and safeguarding their background and cultural diversity. In this regard, article 42 “Social integration measures” claims for national/ local authorities and civil society organisations to undertake initiatives to promote and spread knowledge of cultural, social and religious expressions of immigrants residing in Italy, to organise information campaigns and trainings to raise awareness on the causes of migration, the importance of peaceful coexistence and the prevention of discriminatory or racist behaviours.

Concerning the links of national legislation with the Agenda 2030 and sustainable development, these are found in the recently adopted **National Sustainable Development Strategy** (December 2017). It provides a long-term path for the adoption of a new socio-economic model, which is based on circular economy principles, on low-CO2 emissions, is resilient to climate change and other global changes at the origin of local crisis (e.g. loss of biodiversity). Importantly, the Strategy emphasises the relevance of **fighting and eliminating inequalities**, as they hinder the accomplishment of a sustainable, inclusive and equitable development at national level. Thus, the Strategy acknowledges and intends to build upon the links between migration and sustainable development.



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Particularly, the fifth pillar “Partnership¹⁵”, devoted to international cooperation for development, includes **Migration and Development** among its areas of intervention. This aims at promoting immigrants’ role as key development players and their professional/entrepreneurial skills in relation to countries of origin.

In addition, the fourth pillar “Peace” is devoted to the implementation of policies for social protection and poverty reduction, which include initiatives for the integration and non-discrimination of immigrants and asylum seekers and claims for well-planned and well-managed migration policies.

Finally, migration is embraced among those topics to be better explored and understood, for whom the Strategy claims for a more complete information framework. This latter shall guarantee the availability of necessary data and knowledge which are essential for the elaboration and evaluation of future sustainable development policies.

The different approach between the Legislative Decree n. 286/1998 and the National Strategy for Sustainable Development arises from their different historic moment, background and purposes.

The national migration policy is rooted in the late 1980s, when the first legislation was adopted (law no. 943/1986) to face the *emergency* of immigrants arriving in Italy¹⁶ and were focused on **labour market integration** above all. In the 1990s, more comprehensive legislations entered into force: “Matterlli law” in 1990, that firstly introduced social measures for migrants’ integration; “Turco-Napolitano law” in 1998; the Legislative Decree n. 286/1998. Afterwards, migration policies have been updated to face changes in international scenario related to security and terrorism. This is particularly evident in the latest law no. 46/2017, which integrates the Decree n. 286/1998 with rules for terrorism prevention, the identification and ejection of illegal foreign citizens.

With respect to the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, it has been developed after a first assessments of Italy progress towards the achievement of the SDGs carried out in 2016 and 2017. They highlighted that, although some progress, **Italy falls short of a condition of sustainable development** and lags behind on the adoption of strategies to lead the country towards future sustainability. Hence, the Strategy was born with the purpose to shape a feasible path to follow to enhance progress towards sustainability in general and the SDGs in particular.

In Italy, there is a general lack of institutional communication or storytelling on:

- SDGs and other international frameworks related to sustainable development;

¹⁵ The Italian National Strategy for Sustainable Development is structured around five pillars, representing main areas of intervention. These are: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, Partnership.

¹⁶ Previously, Italy was a country of emigration rather than a country of immigration. Thus, there was not a structured policy to govern immigrants flows and their socio-economic integration.



- the real, knowledge and data-based extent of migration phenomena, its causes and impacts for our society.

These themes are often investigated and debated among insiders only, without reaching out to the general public. Consequently, media communication takes over as the main information channel and is the most potent instrument in shaping public opinion. As illustrated in paragraph 2.2, media communication is dominated by a negative storytelling of migration and integration a stereotyped image of migrants, always presented as a risk/problem to solve or as a vulnerable group to be protected. Most of times, news highlight violent episodes and disregard positive examples or success stories of migrants' integration, thus leading to the spreading of prejudices and stereotypes among public opinion, especially the youngest, and to a general lack of informed, conscious knowledge.

Although in an initial stage, the Italian Sustainable Development Strategy case could provide an example of how national policies could integrate both migration and sustainable development, address them simultaneously and build upon their relationships not only when it comes to guarantee humans rights (as in the case of environmental refugees) but also to create a positive impact and bring benefits to the community.

2.6 Migration policies and international commitments

National development cooperation projects are linked to the **Agenda 2030** as the multi-annual Programming Documents of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) put the Agenda 2030 and sustainable development at the art of cooperation development initiatives promoted by the AICS and realised through projects implemented by CSOs. The national framework for development cooperation also identifies a clear link between migration and sustainable development and emphasizes migrants' contribution to development.

The new national law for international development cooperation (Law no. 125/2014) acknowledges and promotes the **positive role that migrants and migration policies can play for sustainable development**. One of the objectives of Italian international cooperation is to promote new migration policies that are shared with countries of origin, rely upon migrants' communities as instruments to convey local development, are inspired by international and EU laws on human rights guardianship.

Importantly, the law includes **diaspora** and other immigrants' associations keeping close relationships with countries of origin among the **key actors of international development cooperation** and hence emphasizes their contribution to socio-economic growth.

Additionally, the new **Programming Document 2017 – 2019 of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)** integrates "Migration and Development" among fields of intervention and recalls the SDGs' target 10.7 "well managed migration policies" as a



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long-term objective. The Document claims for policies deal with migration in the long term, instead of approaching the phenomenon as an emergency, and that consider migration as an opportunity for economic growth and social development. It also highlights the need to foster migrants' know-how as a tool for development for host and origin countries.

However, whereas the link and cause-effect relationship between migration and sustainable development are well identified and taken into account only in high level strategies or documents, it remains still blurry or hidden in main laws that directly govern the immigration and integration processes.



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3. Field Research

3.1 Introduction

The focus groups aimed to define perception and interest levels regarding migration and sustainable development issues among civil society and education stakeholders. To this end, the focus groups involved education sector representatives (teachers, trainers, university representatives, and local associations) and experts on migration and sustainable development (researchers, representatives of public institutions, national and international agencies). Participants included both men and women, in the age range of 35 to 60 years. A methodology based on debate and active exchange of opinions and ideas was adopted.

3.2 Awareness about international migration and sustainable development

One of the focus groups objectives was to investigate the level of awareness among public opinion as well as the level of expertise among representatives of the education sector on sustainable development and related issues. In general, the discussion showed that **the 17 SDGs were little publicised and, therefore, poorly assimilated by the general public.** Notably, the general public is unaware of both the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs formulation process by the international governance.

With regard to the education sector, **only 5-10 % of teachers are aware of the SDGs**, of the international regulations (i.e. the Paris Agreement, Habitat III, etc.) and of the national and international initiatives planned for their implementation. A real **lack of awareness on the concept of "sustainable development"** is observed, despite an extensive debate promoted at a national level by the Ministry of Education. One of the main obstacles is the deficit of structured initiatives to convey such concept within and through the education system. Therefore, sustainable development mainly remains a theme for the experts in the subject, which, however, tend to focus on the goals (one or few) that fall within their field of competence.

In this context, **including the SDGs in school programs is a way to bring these issues to the attention of students, their families, and to promote information and awareness among public opinion.** The eight "*Key competences for learning*" defined by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU in 2006 - considered essential for training future citizen and, therefore, taken by the Italian school system as reference -¹⁷

¹⁷ Read more at: <http://www.icpagnacco.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Dalle-competenze-chiave-europee-alle-discipline.pdf>



could represent the framework and the starting point to introduce the SDGs in school programs. For instance, the 17 goals could fall back into the 6th competence "Social and Civic Awareness".

The lack of attention towards SDGs in schools is also due to the fact that teachers often prefer to focus on more *urgent* themes such as bullying, cyberbullying, and children's learning problems. Moreover, sustainability is often linked to peace education. However, this concept should be extended, passing to education for global citizenship, to a cosmopolitan humanity. It is also important to familiarise students with cultural and linguistic diversity, in order to foster mutual understanding and encourage a more responsible attitude towards diversity.

3.3 Link between migration and sustainable development

The complex link between migration and sustainable development is not addressed in detail neither by the media, nor by the education system. In general, public debate is not based on official data and analysis - which take into account motivations of migration and policies governing migration flows and migrants' integration.

Media tend to emphasise the emotional content of migrants' stories, to under-represent the diasporas, and to overlook the positive stories of integration and development involving immigrants.

As for the education system, **migratory issues receive scant attention in school programs**: they are addressed as a minor subject starting from middle school. Furthermore, a protective attitude towards students was observed in the Italian schools. Indeed, young people are generally kept away from sensitive topics (e.g. ethnic, cultural, religious diversity) - which, in turn, negatively affect their critical thinking.

The main obstacle is that teachers themselves are not informed / aware / competent and tend to pass on a perception-based rhetoric to young people. During the focus groups, it was suggested to create mixed classes, in order to enable Italian and foreign children to directly interact, as well as to learn to deal with cultural and linguistic diversities. Such an approach should be able to contribute to change public perception and develop greater mutual understanding.

In line with recommendations from Section 3.2, students as well as teachers shall be trained and informed to develop an in-depth understanding of sensitive issues they have to deal with as contemporary citizens.



3.4 Insecurity

In regards to the feeling of insecurity, a strong **link with fear and misinformation on migrants' influx was revealed**. By underlining the most negative aspects of integration, such as describing migrants as invaders, media play an essential role in fuelling the sense of fear. On the other hand, media do not dwell on the positive impact of immigration on the country. Newspapers, for instance, do not show how migrants help increase the GDP, and contribute to the national pensions' system (although they will not be able to access these resources). Therefore, there is a need to contrast this trend, introducing and spreading a data-based picture and a positive narrative of migration in order to allow public opinion to have a more comprehensive and true understanding of the phenomenon and its implications.

3.5 Main factors that shape public opinion and instruments to shape public discourse

Media and political discourse are amongst the prominent factors shaping the public opinion on migration and sustainable development. Politicians are empowered to make citizens reflect and decide over specific issues. In turn, the political discourse is amplified by both traditional (newspapers, radio and tv) and digital media. **A crucial role in influencing public opinion is played by local press**, which actively disseminates information and stories of migrants. Local politicians often exploit local news that negatively frame migrants, amplifying thereby the negative rhetoric around immigration. On the contrary, if local press focused on positive stories of integration, this could encourage good practices at a grassroots level.

Moreover, media always frame immigrants as a problem, or as vulnerable people living in poor and problematic contexts. Media tend to spread superficial information by using false data to leverage the emotional dimension, and without distinguishing among the different categories identified by national and international regulations/laws on the matter (refugee, clandestine, migrant, irregular migrant).

Another crucial factor influencing the public perception is represented by the **cultural and socio-economic background**. In fact, children absorb parents' beliefs and ideas, which in many cases are based on stereotypes. Moreover, according to a survey carried out by the National Research Council (CNR)¹⁸, children coming from families with low socio-economic status are more likely to be influenced by the stereotypes and prejudices brought by the parents. Vice versa such stereotypes are absent in families with high socioeconomic status or with migratory background.

¹⁸ The survey were carried out on teachers and pupils of middle schools and the first two years of high school.



3.6 Gaps of information and instruments to fill the gaps

The **education system** is considered a **primary actor** in creating awareness and informed knowledge on sustainable development and migrations and filling current gaps. These themes should be addressed starting from primary school to promote a critical and in-depth understanding.

Informal and peer-to-peer education represents a remarkable tool that contribute to counter misinformation and stereotypes. Indeed, it allows to convey reliable information and directly engage young people in activities aiming to foster understanding between cultures and, thus, eliminate prejudices and hostilities.

The **use of non-formal education approaches in formal contexts**, such as schools, could facilitate the (re)introduction of modules to develop active citizenship - intended as respect, inclusion, and fight against discrimination. A good example is *'Promoting integration policies through sport'*, a programme promoted in 2014 by the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) and the Ministry of Education. By distributing information toolkit to teachers and students, the campaign was intended to sensitise and educate people on the great value of sports in counteracting discrimination and intolerance.

Another suggestion is to incorporate few hours of non-formal education per week in school curricula. However, nowadays such activities still have a limited impact on the general public, since they are mainly carried out by independent associations and actors of the civil society.

3.7 The role of education systems

Education system and teachers play a crucial role in informing and encouraging critical awareness on sustainable development, as well as in shaping public opinion.

Teachers must be considered important vehicle of culture and change agent. In this respect, **structural measures are required to educate the school system as a whole** (professors as well as school managerial and administrative staff) **on sustainable development issues**. It would be also suitable to introduce both university courses and post-graduate training programs on sustainability and related topics. Such trainings should include frontal lessons and workshops, in which future teachers have the opportunity to learn how to fund and coordinate a school project.

Furthermore, universities along with other educational institutions should raise critical awareness and, hence, teach students to act responsibly towards the environment and the forthcoming generations. It is precisely with this in mind that the **role of education system as a sustainability-maker** should be acknowledged. Accordingly, schools must serve as a place where sustainability is learned, promoted and concretely practiced. The formal



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education system should encourage young generations to take action for the concrete achievements of the SDGs not only through raising their awareness but also by showing concrete practices of sustainable lifestyle and consumption patterns.¹⁹ In this sense, the selection of appropriate information tools is crucial, since it helps embed an abstract notion of sustainable development in the concrete everyday life.

At a national level, universities are already taking actions in this direction. SDGs are covered and tackled increasingly by universities, as they try to fulfil their ‘third mission’, meaning that they tried to open themselves up to the world, share their know-how, foster dialogue and joint initiatives with external stakeholders. For this purpose, Italian universities created the **Network of Universities for Development (RUS)** that promotes sustainable practices (i.e. proper waste management, responsible water and electricity consumption), and projects that concretely show how to contribute to achieve the SDGs. **Universities are thereby becoming sustainable ‘living labs’**. Worth-mentioning examples are represented by the University of Turin, University Ca’ Foscari (Venice), the University of Milan, Scuola Normale Superiore (Pisa), and the Human Rights Center of the University of Padua - which are taking action by enriching their curricula with Degree and Master level courses on migrations and sustainable development.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The literature and field research carried out highlighted the need to **reinforce the role of the education** system in providing a critical and data-based awareness and understanding of sustainable development, related issues such as migration, and the relevant international/ national frameworks.

Education system representatives and experts in the fields of sustainable development, acknowledge that **teachers** play a crucial role in informing and encouraging critical awareness as well as in shaping young public opinion. Nevertheless, they have poor competences and needs appropriate instruments to convey an informed knowledge of sustainable development and related topics to students.

Hence, it is necessary to increase **teachers’ awareness and knowledge on sustainable development** and related topics as well as on international frameworks, to strengthen their **sense of responsibility** towards students’ knowledge and personal development as active citizens. Indeed, teachers tend to bring sustainable development topics (e.g. climate change, green energy, poverty eradication, etc.) in their classes only in exceptional, contingent cases, such as national disasters with high media resonance. Another important

¹⁹ For instance through a responsible use of water, electricity and non-polluting detergents; but also activities aiming to integrate new students.



gap to be filled-in is the provision of **teaching instruments**, in order to put in practice national initiatives such as the National Plan on Sustainable Development Education. In this context, the following general and specific recommendations have been elaborated to improve Sustainable Development Education at national level.

4.1 Recommendations for all stakeholders

*Recommendations for **all stakeholders** involved in Sustainable Development Education:*

- To increase **joint and networking initiatives** among concerned stakeholders (national, regional, local authorities, education institutions, NGOs) and facilitate **exchange of knowledge and good practices** among organisations engaged in same themes/ fields in different areas of the national territory.
- To give value and build upon **interdisciplinary experiences**, including exchanges and volunteering.
- To involve **families** and **territorial communities** in initiatives aiming at students' sensitization on sustainable development.

4.2 Recommendations for NGOs

*National and local level recommendations for **NGOs**:* To increase **cooperation with formal education system** to share knowledge and best practices related to non-formal and peer-to-peer education methodologies and instruments, fostering synergies between formal and non-formal education.

4.3 Recommendations for governmental institutions

*National and local level recommendations for **governmental institutions**:*

- To introduce **institutional programmes** aimed at fostering **knowledge and contacts with other countries and cultures**, especially countries of origin “most represented” by immigrants residing in Italy.
- To invest more in the school system to **reinforce education quality**, specifically: to provide teachers with training opportunities on topical issues related to sustainable development, migration and security; to formalise teachers' trainings on Sustainable Development and the SDGs, making sure they acquire necessary knowledge and skills to convey these themes to their students.
- To formalise the inclusion of topics related to sustainable development in educational courses on offer.

4.4 Recommendations for educational institutions

*National and local level recommendations for **educational institutions**:*



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- To **open school systems to CSOs, associations and experts** engaged in sustainable development initiatives and build upon methodologies and techniques used in the non-formal education sector.
- To promote initiatives based on **team working** among students with different origins and backgrounds, the development of **skills and aptitudes related to active citizenship**.
- To reinforce the **inter-disciplinarity among subjects**, emphasise the cultural and historical dimensions of topics related to sustainable development, spread data-based information and knowledge among students.
- (At secondary school and university level) To develop **partnerships/ networks with foreign schools/ universities** to provide an international dimension to Sustainable Development Education, fostering debates and ideas exchange across borders and enabling students to experiment the global dimension and links of development.
- To make more clear the links between frameworks related to sustainable development and to school education and possible synergies among them. For instance, the **EU Key competences for life-long learning** include “Social and civic competences” defined as the “ability to participate effectively and constructively in one’s social and working life and engage in **active and democratic participation**, especially in **increasingly diverse societies**. This might be somehow related or provide room for synergies with Sustainable Development Education, or contribute to achieving targets set by SDGs 10 “Reduced inequalities within and among countries” and 16 “Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies”.
- To start-up **long-term projects** (rather than two or three-years projects), that emphasize the single individual, that strengthen his/ her competences and active role as informed and aware citizen.



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