



# **National Report**

## **Romanian immigrants in Italy**



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**Presentation of the communities of EU citizens selected in each partner country:** characteristics of the communities (historical approach, number of people, reasons of immigration, etc.), different problems encountered (in employment, education, etc.), ...

As it is widely known, Italy has become a country of immigration only in the late Seventies, after having been a country of emigration since the beginning of the Twentieth century. Only in 1974 the flow of incoming immigrants exceeded the flow of outgoing citizens, and since then the growth of immigrant's population has been quick and steady and the stock of foreign residents has almost doubled every ten years to date. At present, according to the yearly survey carried out by the ISMU foundation, the foreigners in Italy are around 5,3 million, of whom 500,000 not (or not yet) included in the municipal registers and around 550,000 irregular immigrants; regular residents are 4 million and 253,000, at 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2010 (Fondazione ISMU, 2010).

A particular noteworthy feature is that, contrary to northern European countries which demanded workforce from abroad to sustain their economic growth, the phenomenon of immigration in Italy was completely unplanned and followed different paths; most importantly, Italy differentiates itself from other European countries with respect to the origin of immigrations flows, given that countries like Britain, France, and Spain, consistently attracted steady flows from former colonies, while in Italy immigration flows originated from many heterogeneous countries, creating a fragmentation of the foreign communities (Rusconi, 2010). In addition to this, the composition of the immigrant population changed remarkably through time: during the 1990s, the majority of foreign residents came from North Africa (most notably Morocco, Tunisia and Senegal) and from the Philippines (most of who were women employed in domestic works). Then, the collapse of the Soviet Block and former Yugoslavia gave rise to consistent flows of people from eastern and south-eastern European countries that have grown progressively in the 2000s and finally outnumbered the presence of North Africans and Asians (Rusconi, 2010). Albanians and Romanians became the most numerous groups in late 2000s, but also migrants from Ukraine and Moldavia have shown consistent and growing flows toward Italy.

According to the latest data issued by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) in 2010, about half of the foreigners living in Italy (2,086 millions, 49.3% of all immigrants) came from Eastern Europe: half from the new European Union member states and half from non European Union members. In this framework, immigration from Romania has always

been a major issue, both before and after the 2007 European enlargement, when Romania and Bulgaria became EU member States.

Romanian migration to Italy started in the early '90s, and Romanian immigrants have quickly become the largest ethnic community (48.4% of total inflows of foreigners during 1990–2004 and 56.6 % of total inflows of foreigners in 2005; OECD, 2007). At present, according to the yearly statistical report on immigration issued by Caritas, the overall Romanian population residing in Italy reaches 887.763 units at the 31st December 2009, representing 21,0 % of the total foreign population (Caritas, 2010).

At the beginning, immigration from Romania was mostly due to protection needs: during the presidency of Nicolae Ceaușescu, it has been estimated that around 70,000 Romanian left the country to flee from persecutions. In a second stage, after 1994, permanent migration from Romania was strongly reduced, there becoming predominant temporary migration, often motivated by the career opportunities and chances of higher earnings; the out-migration was benefiting from the liberalization of the movement of Romanians within the Schengen area in the recent years, after Romania's EU accession (Pehoiu, Costache, 2010). Then, massive departures of populations towards Spain and Italy have come predominantly from 2003 and continuing into the next period, so that these two countries have now become the largest recipient of temporary emigration from Romania.

Concerning working integration in Italy, it must be said that many Romanian immigrants began their migration experience in entering the country as tourists and finding a first job in the shadow economy; successful integration was closely related to the role of family members and relatives already residing in Italy and providing accommodation and the necessary support and contacts with the job market. In the majority of cases, before EU accession, these people entered Italy as tourists and stayed after their visa expired, waiting for an opportunity to regularize their presence.

Historically, the areas of attraction of Romanian immigrants in the country were represented by the metropolitan areas of Rome, Turin and Milan, the industrial districts of northern Italy, and agricultural areas, with a strong demand for seasonal work (Stocchiero, 2002). Data from the XIV General Census of the Population held in 2001 and concerning a total of about 42,000 Romanian citizens, show that at the time, the main sector of employment was the industrial sector (with 51% of workers from Romania), followed by the services (29%) and trade (15%). Agriculture do not appear at the top of the list only because of the high degree

of seasonal work, which makes that the data are partial and very underestimated in this respect (Bertazzon, 2007).

Although this data show a fairly positive picture with relation to integration in the job market, it must be recalled that the attractive power of the countries of destination has decreased in recent times, due to the economic crisis which mostly hit the construction sector, which has attracted many Romanian emigrant workers. Also, the campaign started against Romanian immigrants in Italy lead many to reconsider the decision to emigrate or to remain in Italy (Pehoiu, Costache, 2010; Torre, 2008).

In fact, in recent times discrimination and social exclusion, often enhanced by the language used in the public discourse, have turned out to be two of the main problems suffered by the Romanian community in Italy. Generally speaking, already after the first consistent inflows from Albania in the early 1990s, the media increasingly started to diffuse news on criminal acts committed by immigrants: according to a research recently conducted by the University of Rome, of a total of 5,684 migration related television news broadcasts observed over the last 20 years, only 26 broadcasts did not treat migration as a crime or security issue (Binotto, Bruno, Lai, 2009). As a consequence immigrants, and in some cases specific nationalities particularly stigmatized by media (first Albanians, then Roma and Romanians), are considered as the main cause of crime and insecurity by public opinion.

Concerning Romanians, this happened in particular since October 2007, when a violent murder of an Italian woman in Rome allegedly committed by a Romanian Rom living in one of the informal camps of the capital has received such a strong echo in the media and in the political debate that it has been turned into a relevant national case. After this event, the government proposed the adoption of several legal instruments aimed at facilitating the removal of EU citizens when they may present a threat to public and national security; even if these instruments have not been put into force eventually, after the so-called "Mailat case" the political debate focused more and more on the "security issue" and the perception of the host country towards Romanian immigrants, be they Romanian ethnics or Roma, became particularly negative, as some in-depth studies pointed out (Popescu, 2008; Sigona, 2008).

As it has been shown, in general terms, Italians consider that there are too many foreigners in their country and following the political discourse which linked immigration and security, they associate immigrants with criminals or clandestine / illegal immigrants (Popescu, 2008). In the case of Romanians, this perception is even worsened by the presence of Roma people, often identified as Romanians Roma even if their compositions is highly variegated. Roma

and Sinti people, settled in informal camps, in small areas with a high concentration of people, have always been perceived as problematic for social security and social order; in Rome, where this population reaches significant numbers (they have been estimated to be 6–8,000 in 2009 – Osservatorio Romano, 2010), along with some interventions aimed at schooling of children and social integration, local authorities, particularly in recent times, backed the clearing up of informal camps, only in some cases organizing alternative structures for these people. Also, in 2007 identification measures in both informal and authorized camps, even through fingerprinting the Roma population, have been applied (EMN, 2008); however, these interventions have not been followed by any concrete measure aimed at managing the distribution of this population or dealing with their living conditions, so that they finally produced nothing but spot control measures which enhanced the stigmatization of the Roma.

Not surprisingly, then, some recent publications still reported high levels of discrimination of Roma and Sinti living in precarious conditions, and even the Committee of Social Rights of the European Council condemned Italy because of discriminations against Roma communities in terms of housing, access to justice and to social and economic life (HRW, 2010).

The growing hostility towards Romanian immigrants has quickly caught the attention of Romanian government and the economic sector, being that along with the growing of the immigration phenomena, economic relations between the two countries have become more and more tight: for example, at 31-12-2006 Italy held the 7th place in the hierarchy of Romanian FDI (Foreign Direct Investment), with 2322 million Euro investments, representing 6.7 % of all national FDI (Popescu, 2008). As it has been underlined by Raduta Matache, Romanian secretary of State for European Affairs, economic ties that bound Romania to Italy and Romania are undoubtedly more intense than with any other European partner (Torre, 2008); so it becomes evident that both countries have a strong interest in finding a common ground in order to avoid the escalation of conflicts concerning Romanian immigrants in Italy, working together to find real solutions for the integration between the two social groups.

**Presentation of their organization:** how are these communities organized? Which are the existing type of associations (formal and non formal)? What is the role of the associations? How many associations? ...

The Romanian community in Italy demonstrated to be very proactive and keen to organize itself in different kind of associative contexts, so that the best way to offer a consistent picture of the situation is to concentrate on a local case study: with this aim, in the following part we will focus on the city of Rome, considering its crucial role in the national framework concerning immigration policies. On the one hand, to make this choice, the overall number of foreign citizens residing in the capital and the high incidence of the Romanian population has been taken into account: according to the data issued by the municipal registers, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2009, 320,409 foreigners were residing in Rome; the percentage of foreign residents over the total population is 11,2 per cent, a value that sets Rome among the municipalities with the highest presence of foreign population – (Osservatorio Romano, 2010). In this framework, Romanians represent the first community of foreign residents, with a number of 65,099 people, according to the data available from the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT, 2009). In addition to this, the relatively high number of immigrants associations or associations working for the integration of the Romanian population which have been created throughout the years and developed their activities in the territory of Rome, has also been considered.

According to the Romanian Embassy there are 80 Romanian associations in Italy. Romanians started to create organizations only after 1989, so the Romanian population is not to be considered expert in the field of civil society organization. However, this has not hindered the emergence of some very strong representative figures. In Rome, in particular, associations receive strategic support from the Romanian Tourism Office and from the Academia of Romania.

Primary objectives of Romanian associations in Italy are the promotion of Romanian culture in the country of destination and to consolidate the existing networks with the country of origin – or within people coming from the same region in Romania –: most association are created by people coming from the same family or the same village, and they tend to keep alive some local cultural traditions that may even have disappeared in Romania in the last years, but are presented again in Italy. This happens mostly when some particular folkloric shows are not included in the cultural offer of the Romanian Tourism Office, so people are motivated to organize themselves.

Reflecting the situation at the national level, the Romanian community residing in Rome is composed by people who arrived in Italy alone or following the family network and / or friends, in search of jobs and better living conditions than the ones left in Romania; the majority of men got a working position in the construction sector and women are employed as domestic or care workers, but they are also often employed in shops, hotels and restaurants, health care, social services.

Concerning the civil society, at present, more than 10 associations, between Romanian associations or associations working with the Romanian population have been identified in the territory of Rome, all of them formally constituted, even if from desk information it is not possible to know whether all of them are active and functioning or not. Some of these associations are also part of national or international federations, such as the Romanian League, The international league of Romanian women, or take part to public consultation forums in Italy, such as the Territorial council on immigration of the local Prefecture.

Most of their activities aim at the promotion of Romanian culture in the country of destination, but also at the promotion of civil rights of Romanian population in Italy and in the country of origin, at the cultural and professional training of young people, at the creation of partnerships between Italy and Romania. Often the life of Romanian associations is heavily dependent on the priorities established by the Romanian government which still holds an important share of the funding granted to the associations of the diaspora.

As previously said most of the Romanian associations are involved in the diffusion of the culture of the country of origin or in the organization of entertaining and cultural events dedicated to the Romanian community. Notwithstanding the high number of Romanian associations in Italy, not many of them are really active, and most of them were constituted mainly for economic reasons. Generally speaking, then, it could be assessed that Romanians in Italy are socially and culturally organized. Even the few active associations are normally composed by 3-4 people, often engaged at the same time in other associative contexts, so that at the end the "active" part of the Romanian community is constituted by a restricted elite. The only public events that can stimulate high participation of people are concerts of Romanian artists, but they normally represent moments of pure entertainment. For example the association Vocea Romanilor proposed many initiatives, both aimed at just offering entertainment and at stimulating social and political participation. But it is much more easier to involve the community in entertainment events than to mobilize them for events of public interest.

One of the most significant events is represented by the celebrations for the Romanian national holiday on the 1 of December, when some associations (included Vocea Romanilor) organized a Cinema fest, with the support of the Romanian academy, creating as well some gadgets to be sold, with the aim of collecting funds for children in an orphanage in Romania; then, a conference in the Common House in Rome has been organized, as well as an art exposition (incontrARTI) around the topic of intercultural dialogue and a campaign on blood donation with the Italian volunteers stoop donors association.

The association Spirit Romanesc is engaged in a number of projects and initiatives, e.g. in the field of cultural mediation and promotion of the rights of the child, as well as initiatives aimed at promoting Romanian culture in Italy and fostering development in Romania, even through the organization of cultural and professional exchanges among young people living in both countries.

**Relations of these communities with nationals and other communities: issues of racism and discrimination, ...**

As it has already been mentioned, one of the main problems faced by the Romanian community are social exclusion and stigmatization: as it has been demonstrated, among others, by the more recent statistical report on immigration issued by Caritas, from 2008 to 2010 the accusatory pressure towards the Romanians continued to be very accentuated, despite the statistics always demonstrated a reduced involvement in criminal acts with respect to the generality of immigrants; in turn, the Roma have been, are and probably will continue to be the most discussed community, and still they are frequently accused of abducting children, even if their involvement in such a crime has never been demonstrated (Caritas, 2010).

According to the data issued by the national observatory on racism (UNAR), discrimination in work environments (but not only) affects in particular Africans, Romanians, Chinese, Moroccans, and the Bangladeshis. It is noteworthy, in this respect, that some insurance companies apply more expensive car insurances on the basis of the so-called "ethnic risk" (Caritas, 2010).

The Romanian community is wide and variegated and it is difficult to single out clear patterns concerning its relationships with the nationals. In general, Romanians in Italy see themselves as temporary migrants so they don't really get involved in developing strong links with the country of destination.

Moreover Romanians still maintain stronger links with the country of origin than with the country of destination. They have cultural resistances to the associative model in general, and lack of trust in civil society organizations unless they can see clear advantages in taking part to them. Relations with nationals or other communities, then, are often superficial.

With reference to the relations established with the country of destination, the impact of the prejudice of Italian society towards the Romanians in the growing devotion paid by these people to their culture of origin.

With reference to the Italian society's opinion of the Romanian community, it must be recalled that the episodes of violence of 2007 certainly had a strong negative impact. At that time, it was the Romanian government itself who took action with the aim to turn this

negative perception into a positive one, launching public campaigns and financing the initiatives of Romanian associations in Italy. However, one can still perceive that there is a big problem concerning the language used in the media, considering that no good news involving Romanians are reported, while when an episode of violence happens it is given great echo by the Italian media.

Apart from the media attention, several episodes of discrimination have been reported, mostly on work environments – but we also need to consider the influence of the economic crisis. In general, the fact that Romanians have become “Europeans” contributed to reduce Italian’s negative approach towards them.

Yet Romanians tend to adopt the typical immigrant community’s behaviors, and the access to the EU has not represented a major change for them. This is mostly due to their disillusionment towards the benefits of the accession and the accession process generally considered: many Romanians considered themselves as Europeans many years before the accession (as the so-called “bloody revolution” in Bucharest in 1989 demonstrated), and the long negotiate to be accepted had a negative impact on their will to be “part” of the Union, even if there is no doubt that the accession made life much easier for them with respect to the administrative requirement to be in Italy. However, almost every family in Romania experienced a migration, so they still fell much more like “immigrants” than European citizens.

**Participation of non national EU citizens in the local and EU elections: data+ qualitative analysis (reasons for low or high rate of participation)**

The right to vote for non national EU citizen is intended to be both active, meaning the right to vote for local and European elections, and passive, meaning the right to stand for election.

Romanians are EU citizens since 2007. The entry of Romania within the EU has therefore widely enriched the rights of the Romanian community in Italy.

In 2009 Romanians voted for the European Parliament for the first time. They can participate in three different ways: by voting candidates within their embassies and consulates, by going back home to vote, by voting in their city of residence by choosing Italian candidates. The latter possibility has been regulated by the 93/109/CE directive, which allows for the active and passive electorate of EU citizen who are resident in a member state in which they do not have citizenship to vote for the European Parliament elections. In Italy, in 2009, only the 2% out of the 800.000 Romanians in Italy has opted to do so.

In Rome, out of 122.310 Romanians only 2.597 subscribed the list to vote for the EU elections. In the province of Turin, where there were 85.817 Romanians residents only 2.285 participated and in Milan, out of 40.742 residents only 735 subscribed the lists.

This low participation could be interpreted as a low trust in the possibility to vote for Italian candidates in the EU Parliament. Yet Romanians seem to have had a scarce interest in EU election even in their own country. In general, Romanians both in Italy and in motherland have demonstrated a scarce interest for the first election of their representatives in the European Parliament in the case of voting in Italy for Italian candidates and in the case of voting in Italy for Romanian candidates.

As EU citizens, since 2007, Romanians who are 18 years old and are resident in Italy can participate in the elections of the major and the local council of the city where they have residence and can be elected as members of the local council. In order to do so they have to fill in a form and present it at least 90 days before consultancies take place and to vote they have to subscribe the electoral local list. Even in the case of local elections it can be said that participation of Romanian citizens does not reach a high percentage even though their

number is increasing and the migration phenomenon appears to be more stable than expected.

In 2009 Rumanians had the chance to vote also in some administrative election but the participation was quite scarce: only 438 Rumanians subscribed the lists in Cremona (out of 3.311 of the resident), 407 in Bologna (out of 5.047 of the resident), 283 in Florence (out of 5.846 of the resident). 773 in Padua (out of 7.165 of the resident). Part of this could be due to the youth of the community migration, more interested in the Rumanian politics rather than the Italian -hosting- politics. It can be stated that many immigrants in fact confirm the wish to go back to their home country and this could justify their scarce interested in political life in Italy. At the same time the latter is further opposed by low tolerance and hostility attitudes that in the past few years against migrants in Italy. (Tarantino, 2010)

The participatory trend does not seem to have changed much for the 2011 administrative elections. According to the Caritas/Migrantes Dossier 2010 in Italy there are almost 4.9 million foreigners. Out of them 1.2 million are neo Eu citizens and 887.000 are Romanians (21%). Despite non Italian Eu citizen represent 2% of the population, only 37.000 people subscribed the list to vote in Italian cities during the last administrative elections in 2011. Out of them 24.000 were Romanians.

Lombardy is the first region in terms of foreigners resident with 983.000 people. 128.00 are Romanians. In Milan out of 407.000 foreigners 22.000 people are Eu citizens (therefore have the right to vote) and 12.000 are Romanians. Out of the 22.000 Eu citizens who reside in Milan only 3700 subscribed the lists and voted in the past 2011 administrative elections and only 754 were Romanians.

In Turin, where the Rumanian community is more consistent, participation has been higher with almost 2.663 people who subscribed the lists.

Political participation is low in general, but in local context where the presence of Romanians is very strong they are more and more getting involved in the political scene, either by presenting themselves as candidates in local elections or by getting involved in the activities or Romanian parties that recently opened some sort of branches in Italy. In Rome, participation is particularly strong in some areas where the concentration of Romanians is high (Casilina, Boccea, Prima Porta, and in general in the XXVII, XV and X districts).

Political participation is always less than expected, mostly when we compare it with the participation to some entertainment events. Romanians have an utilitarian approach with political issues, and they often give their vote to the candidate who seem to have more to offer in terms of immediate benefits. The Romanian candidates that have participated to the elections, until now, were not expressed by the community – they have been selected by Italian parties, or just showed up because of their influence on the local Romanian community in terms of “number” of votes, mostly thanks to personal or professional networks, not to their leading skills or on the basis of a political proposal. Romanians people are much more interested in politics in Romania than in Romanian representatives in Italy. The result is that a good portion of Romanians residing in Italy does not participate in local elections even when good information campaigns around the elections are conducted (e.g. in the last European elections, when letters reminding EU citizens residing in Rome to go to the municipality offices in order to renew their electoral certificates were sent to all concerned citizens). On the other side, when they participate, they often vote for Italian candidates.

A complete different scenario appears with reference to the elections in Romania: in the last electoral session, the votes of the diaspora nearly overturned the results of national elections. Nonetheless, a law allowing Romanians of the diaspora to vote in national elections does not exist at the time being, and for this reason a strong debate on concerning how to implement a system to guarantee that Romanians residing abroad can vote in national elections is now carried on. The parliament issued a recommendation for the adoption of a system of absentee voting, but reportedly the political minority is opposing the adoption of such a law as the citizens residing abroad were decisive in determining its defeat in the last elections.

There are a few causes that can explain the low participation of Romanians in elections: first of all in the past few years election's participation in Romania has dropped of almost 50% since 1990 and therefore a negative trend in participation seem to have characterized the entire population.

Secondly the majority of Romanian residents came with a recent migration wave (85–10 years) and people are therefore still very much linked to their culture back home. In the past few years immigration in Italy has been characterized by its non-transitional aspect, differently from what was thought it to be when the phenomenon increased.

Their strong links with the country of origin must also be considered. Political life is highly influenced by the event occurring in Romania. For example, recently, Bucharest government

set up a governmental body for the relations with the diaspora. But this process came along with a paradoxical organization, as the community leaders who candidate as representatives of the diaspora in Bucarest have been chosen among Romanians who had strong links with Italy, not among the “Italian” Romanians who had strong links with the country of origin.

However, this is not the only contradiction of the attitude demonstrated by the Romanian government towards the diaspora: on the one side, in fact, it started to co-finance initiatives and projects held by Romanian citizens living abroad, creating a dedicated fund for the diaspora in 2007. The main objective was to give support to actions who could help ameliorate the image of Romania abroad, particularly after the episodes of violence involving Romanians which have been at the centre of the media debate in Italy for many months in 2007. The procedure to follow to get the funding makes it necessary to have a Romanian partner association, so that it can also represent an incentive to co-development activities.

Thirdly, due to corruption and bad government that have been quite strong in Romania in the past few years, the Romanians have become less and less interested in politics.

Last but not least the scarce information about the right to vote has had an impact on the participation of those who have the right to vote but are not informed enough; even the letters sent by the cabinet of the mayor of Rome to remember the deadline to subscribe to the electoral registers before the last European elections seemed not to reach the objective of enhancing participation.

## Presentation of the **results of the focus groups and lunch debates**

The first focus group was held in Rome on the 14th of June 2011 of at the Palazzo della Cooperazione.

Among the participant there were representatives both from the Romanian community and associations and the Italian world of social cooperatives.

Anna Stanescu is the president of a social cooperative inspired by a little group of women from the Romanian community, but among its associates there are women from several nationalities; Federica Mazzarelli represents CIFE, an association working for the promotion of European integration, and she is involved in a research project about immigrants entrepreneurship; Dana Mihalache is the president "Spirit Romanesc", a Romanian association which holds its activities in Italy – especially in Rome – and partly in Romania, with the aim of promoting Romanian culture in Italy and facilitate the relationships between the two countries. Among the projects they realized, there is the creation of a folkloric dance group, the promotion of courses of Romanian language in some schools in Rome, and several projects aimed at the promotion of intercultural activities, women entrepreneurship, defense of the rights of the children etc. Flavia Piperno is a researcher at the International Policy studies centre (Cespi) which has been working on co-development issues since 2005, when circular migration from Romania to Italy gave way to the exchange of social capital between the two countries. Mr. Signoretti, on the other side, is the president of a Consortium of social cooperatives dealing with immigration issues in the territory of Rome, and it counts among its employees several interpreters from Romania. Then it was the turn of Bruno Amoroso, from the research centre "Federico Caffé", which has been cooperating with Romania on training issues and the area of the economic remittances. Miruna Cajvaneanu is a journalist, and she has been following the issue of the Romanian population participation to local and European elections since 2007. Mr. Muntean is the secretary of the Romanian identity party, and has been one of the founding members of the party since 2006. The party is committed in the promotion of civic awareness of Romanian community, and in the enhancing of the political participation, which is deemed to be low because of a widespread utilitarian conception of the political issue in the Romanian community. Mr. Firenze is responsible for the area of employment policies in the Consortium Connecting People, which deals with immigration issues. He underlined the importance of the inclusion in the labor

market of immigrants and marginalized people in order to enhance their civic and political participation.

During the focus group several issues, such as relations between the Romanian diaspora, relationships with the Italian society, factors of inclusion–exclusion, participation to the socio–political life of the country of destination, the role of the associations and representatives of the Romanian community, the role of entrepreneurs from Romania and political, social, economic ties with Romania were discussed.

The debate focused on the attraction factors of Italy as a country of immigration.

First of all it has been observed that immigration has changed: with respect to the first phase of the “mass” immigration from Romania (influenced by cultural proximity and political factors and badly managed due to the weak administrative control on the entrance of irregular migrants before EU accession), immigration is now more selected and focused. There has also been a decrease in the numbers of people arriving from Romania in recent years (from 1 million to 980.000 in the last year).

It should be noted that, since 2007, circular migration has raised even more, so that official numbers may not always reflect reality. Circular migration and the geographical proximity are two of the main limits to the integration process regarding the Romanian community, as many people turn out to spend their entire lives in Italy while thinking their presence is temporary and therefore their plans and investments are all directed to Romania and not to the country of destination. Many people then live in a sort of permanent limbo, which creates a high degree of insecurity and enhances the possibilities to enter the “lack” or “gray” labor market (one example is the high rate of birth of Romanian enterprises, most of which are composed by only one person and they have been created only to regularize the position of a single employee).

In the focus group the three stages that have characterized immigration from Romania have been illustrated: before 2001, only a few needy people were leaving the country, because of the administrative limitations to the immigration. Then, in 2001, the need for a visa to enter Italy was abolished, and the real mass migration started; finally, after 2007 there has been a growth of circular migration because of the access to the European free movement area. A sharp contrast between immigrants from different “generations” has also been stressed out by the participants to the focus group: while for the first wave it was more difficult to enter, but easier to find a way to live in Italy (generally, high numbers of men were employed in the

building sector and women in the care services), for those who came after there were less administrative difficulties but also less possibilities to succeed.

During the focus group it also emerged that, due to factors related to migration processes, economic and most of all social and political participation are quite low. Romanian people seem not used to organize themselves in associations or social enterprises. This could be associated to a cultural refusal for collective structures in reaction to the communist regime, and they are highly individualistic people. Even the remittances are mostly used to finance consumption needs in the country of origin, such as building a house, or for other kinds of private needs. However, there is another cause to the general disillusionment of the Romanian community, which is due to the hostility demonstrated by Italian authorities since the beginning of the immigration process.

It is very important, when dealing with immigrants, to consider the obstacles to integration stemming from the different migratory lines, which affect in particular young people “forced” to follow their parents. This is proved by the facts: social cooperators find it difficult to involve young Romanians and their families in the projects aimed at the promotion of intercultural dialogue, as they generally appear to be estranged and indifferent. The only public events in which it is easy to involve all the community are parties and concerts, but only if the access is free.

If social and cultural participation are low, political participation is even smaller – around 1%. The fact that in the last elections some Romanian candidates have been presented in some local communities has to be explained by the importance of the single candidate as a collector of votes from the Romanian community rather than the emergence of real community leaders. In addition to this it has been considered that the political experience of the Romanian party has not been adequately promoted among the community, and that this is one of the reasons of its isolation, although this issue did not find all the participants in agreement. It was also added that the Romanian government tends to strengthen the ties between the diaspora and social and political situation in Romania, so contributing to enhance the lack of long-term planning in the country of destination and keeping control over the Romanian community abroad.

**Presentation of good practices from representative associations (from any origin) to empower the people they represent and encourage them to take part in the democratic life of the host country and/or of the EU**

According to Accademy, civic participation is influenced by the Political Opportunity Structure, strictly linked to the migration policies, social and political rights of the immigrants and the public debate.

Participation cannot be considered apart from structures and organizations that represent the rights of the single person. In the case of immigrants these are associations based on multi ethnic values even though there are also transversal ones (like gender immigrants association). From literature it appears that there is a virtuous circle between immigrants' integration policies, settlement of a structured associative movement and subsequently reinforcement of relational and social capital networks of individuals which are basic elements of participation to civil duties. (Mantovan, 2007)

During the focus group that took place in Rome, Anna Stanescu presented a project for the social aggregation of young Romanians run by the Cooperative, and showed some of the results already achieved. One of the main difficulties in the start-up stage, was to gain confidence and interest from the beneficiaries, due to all the above-mentioned problems; eventually, the hurdle has been overcome thanks to the intermediation of a priest which was held in great esteem by the youngster and their families in the local area where the project took place. The main issue to enhance the social and political participation, then, is about gaining confidence from the Romanian community.

In some cases, integration process finds very peculiar ways: in fact, one of the most influential Romanians associations, based in Turin, recently promoted initiatives aimed at demonstrating the "devotion" of Romanian population towards the Italian one, for example by launching a blood donation campaign involving the Romanian community in Italy. This is partly due to cultural factors, considering that during the Communist regime blood donation was an ordinary activity, and this costume has been rediscovered to demonstrate that Italians and Romanians residing in Italy share the same future.

However, this kind of initiatives also demonstrate the strong differences existing between the field of actions and the objectives pursued by the different Romanian associations, suggesting once again that there is a problem of lack of coordination between them. The

only attempt to create a coordination body is represented by a federation of Romanian associations called Italian Romanians association, but it collects only the smallest associations and it is not very influent and representative.

Something that had a bigger impact at the beginning of its activity, instead, is the Romanian party. Although they presented their candidates only in a few territories in the last elections, they represent an uncommon initiative and they still exercise their influence as a political lobby, by giving voice to the instances of the Romanian community before Italian political parties.

There are also specific initiatives that aim at stimulating the political participation. One Romanian association, supported by the Church and by the Italian radical party, called a conference to push the Romanians to subscribe to the electoral registers, and asked the municipality of Rome to send to all European citizens a letter to explain the procedures to vote, and to remind them to proceed with the subscription before the elections.

## Identification of the needs and of what has to be improved: recommendations

Governments should develop and activate initiatives to sustain political participation of immigrant's minorities. Immigrant populations/groups should always be taken into account when elaborating policies. Political participation should be considered a priority (Sigona, 2006).

It could be a good start to identify some representatives of the community not among the associations' leaders, but among the interpreters in local services for employment, as they represent some reference figures which can interact with the people day by day. The contact with the community, then, will need to be as intercultural as possible, and take advantage of the links with informal union centers, persons of confidence, interpreters etc., and this could be a good start for projects aiming at raising awareness on the importance of social and political participation, along with the promotion of social enterprises which can offer real services and space for social and economic growth in a collective and multicultural environment.

It is important to promote the creation of political organizations that can foster political participation, with the aim of both giving voice to the Romanian community in the political arena and lower the influence of the Romanian government in the political life of the diaspora in Italy. However, one of the first attempts in this sense, the creation of the Romanian party, has not been successful because it has been promoted in a moment of tense relationships between Romanian associations, and without properly involving the representatives of the different faces of the Romanian community.

There is a large portion of Romanians of the diaspora lacking political representation in Italy. As they are still much more interested on the political life of the country of origin rather than on the political arena in Italy, however, new solutions to get them involved should be found, either through the already existing Italian parties or through specific Romanian parties.

There is a strong need to express a unique voice coming from the Romanian community in the political arena, to avoid utilitarianism and the influence of the Romanian government in the political life of the diaspora in Italy. In parallel with this, activities aimed at the diffusion of the Romanian culture in Italy are to be encouraged to strengthen the relations between Italians and Romanians and improve the integration process.

It is clear now that the community action in the field of the free movement of persons does not correspond to an equal development of the political debate at European level. Most of all, concerning immigration issues, in spite of the growing phenomenon in which interconnections between territories and worldwide management policies become stronger, in the European area the national approach (and sometimes even the local one) still results the dominant one. Facing times in which everything moves under the mark of globalization, it is mandatory for the EU to overcome this limited vision because the Union represents an attraction pole for those who are outside its area. The building of European integration, and of European citizenship as well, must be based on Europe as a whole and not on a group of single nations, nor regions or local communities. It must be based on the so-called “acquis communautaire” which consists in the participation to the Community rights and duties that Europeans gradually obtained during the last sixty years, and that more than everything is a point of difference of the “European model” in the world.

Integration policies towards communities of foreigners residing in a member State, then, shall be based on a European strategy, that, in accordance to the subsidiarity principle, would manage on a local ground integration and intercultural issues, on a national level flows and settlements’ planning, and at the same time it would maintain the political direction of migration accordingly to the supranational spirit, including the respect of basic human rights. Even the enhancement of European integration and political participation, then, is to be settled among the objectives of the European cooperation, and on the thorough understanding of the importance of the “acquis communautaire” both by the national authorities of the receiving state and from the community of foreigners.

In order to create an ever-closer Union, then, it is necessary to stimulate a common, integrated, and long term management of the free movement of persons, which will be the only possible answer to fragmentation and exclusion, mostly concerning the “new” EU citizens: hardening on opposing ideological positions creates situation of exclusion which, instead giving security, make the contrary happen.

## List of partners associations

### –Romanian associations in Rome:

Associazione socio-culturale “ Spirit românesc (Spirito romeno)” Filiale di Roma

Associazione Arci "Villaggio Romeno"

ARI (Associazione dei Romeni in Italia)

Associazione Italo-Romena Universo 2000

Associazione Sempre Insieme

Associazione Culturale Roma-nia

Associazione Italia –Romania “Uniti per contare di più”

Associazione Popica Onlus

Associazione socio-culturale Banat

Associazione socio-culturale “Tricolorul”

Centro multiculturale Risvolti

IRFI Onlus Associazione Italia Romania Futuro Insieme (Asociația Italia România Viitorul Împreună)

### –Institutions:

Comune di Roma

Provincia di Roma

### –Stakeholders

Caritas

CeSpi – Centro Studi di politica internazionale

Centro Italiano di Formazione Europea

Fieri

IOM – International Organisation for Migration

Trade Unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL)

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- *ISTAT*
- *Claudia Mantovan, “Immigrazione e cittadinanza. Auto organizzazione e partecipazione dei migranti in Italia”, Milano Franco Angeli, 2007*