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#### **D.T1.5.4 - PP6 Research paper Abstract on Local Integration Policies**

The transition from 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries is marked by a strong resurgence of large-scale and long-range migratory flows, which have been proposed on the geopolitical scene with size, rapidity and pervasiveness never recorded in mankind history. The *dimensions* of the phenomenon find their origin first of all in the "explosive" demography that marked the last century, a time in which a general increase in income (while remaining so unbalanced in its distribution) has generated significant effects on the health conditions and mortality of the population that broke the "Malthusian" constraints to growth.

The *intensity* of the processes, on the other hand, is a clear manifestation of the new conditions that the evolution of technologies has brought both in the transmission of information and in the mobility of people itself. The underlying causes of these processes, which demography and technology have made possible on such a large scale and so quickly, can be linked to two main orders of factors, one economic and the other institutional.

The first and main factor is represented by the range of inequalities in income distribution on a global scale generated by the capitalist development risen in the eighteenth century in Europe.

The second (but no less decisive) factor is represented by the overcoming (dramatic in its manifestation and, to a large extent, even more dramatic in its consequences) of the structure of powers and political and institutional balances produced as a result of the vertical fall of the system of planned economy that had supported the geopolitical bloc led by the Soviet Union.

Europe has found itself at the center of this global process of resumption of long-range migration that has hit it heavily by taking it on two fronts.

A first front, somehow *internal*, concerns the flows coming from Eastern Europe (states of Central and Eastern Europe, former continental Soviet republics and the Caucasus) and from the Balkan Peninsula (also in relation to the long conflict that followed the parallel disintegration of the Yugoslav Republic) involving mainly female population employed in care work, low-skilled workers in the agricultural and agricultural and construction sectors.

A second front, *Mediterranean*, has instead manifested itself above all with Africa, partly following post-colonial relations of countries such as France and – on a smaller scale – Italy, pouring the climate and economic crisis of sub-Saharan agriculture into flows that through the North African states have poured onto the northern shore of the Mediterranean.

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This is the context in which *Arrival Regions* was launched, aiming to foster the integration of citizens from non-European countries into rural areas. *Arrival Regions* supports and promotes the development of social innovation practices that make the integration process in rural areas a



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success story, enhancing the skills of local actors and supporting the social inclusion of non-European citizens.

Within the framework of the *Arrival Regions* Project, the research conducted by Uncem Piemonte addressed the integration policies of these citizens in the rural and mountain contexts of Italy, with a particular focus on the Italian North West (Western Alpine Arc and Northern Apennines).

The research accompanied a *desk* action of critical evaluation of the primary sources and the available bibliography with a field research that involved a *panel* of Mayors of small mountain municipalities in three regions of the North-West: Piedmont, Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna.

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In a panorama of strongly characterized structural conditions, such as the one we tried to reconstruct with the quantitative tools of geo-statistical analysis, the approach developed by UNCEM research has also tried to grasp the qualitative characteristics of the presence of non-European citizens in the Italian mountains, bringing them to light through a path of in-depth interviews addressed to a *panel* of mayors of small mountain municipalities in the Northwest.

From this approach, based on the consolidated experience of work in the field of migration in mountain areas gained by Maria Molinari, who led this path, we can identify some elements that outline the picture of immigration in minor contexts and that seem useful to effectively characterize the reference framework in which the research has been placed.

Some elements that characterize immigration and that can bring about positive changes in small Italian municipalities are:

- the crucial role of immigration in containing depopulation, although gradually there is a downward trend in the birth rate even among foreign families with a longer presence in Italy;
- the consequent and immediate impact on the territories in terms of maintaining public services (*primarily* the school);
- the recovery and use of disused or vacant dwellings;
- employment in job vacant sectors and the management of entire economic sectors (typical productions, personal care, forestry, livestock breeding, construction, agriculture), thus increasing the presence on the territories and decreasing environmental risks (fires, hydrogeological instability resulting from the lack of care of the territory and the landscape);
- the possibility of contact and knowledge of new worlds and cultures, projecting small and medium-sized municipalities into an international dimension.

The territories in turn offer the new inhabitants characteristics (different from those present in larger urban centers) which, at least and on some aspects, make them interesting and attractive:

- the presence of affordable housing;
- the possibility of direct encounter with the inhabitants, made of a mostly informal socialization given by a daily and intergenerational attendance, characteristic of small municipalities; this



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aspect also includes the closeness and direct involvement of local authorities in the relationship with migrants and the strategic presence of key people, important for strengthening community relations; the opportunity to establish innovative relationships, weave networks of cohesion and social inclusion;

- the presence of a value, linked to the natural and cultural heritage given by the relationship with the environment, which has proved to be an important attractor of new presences, both Italian and foreign, especially during the pandemic; here there is a high potential for building a good quality of life, thanks to landscape and environmental endowments and micro agriculture; the presence of distinctive qualities converted into competitive advantages. The existence of numerous empty spaces potentially to be purchased, maintained and cared for, thus transforming the territories into areas suitable for development.

The picture that the interviews outline, certainly incomplete and only briefly summarized here, highlights how, many of the difficulties that jeopardize the possibilities of establishing *new inhabitants* in mountain villages, stem from a national legislation that many mayors interviewed consider inadequate to manage a flow, today structural even in the municipalities of the internal areas. This inadequacy emerges clearly, in particular in medium-small contexts, where mayors are often the direct protagonists in solving problems, and often suffer the consequences personally. Small mountain municipalities can be a place of social innovation and take on a pioneering role in this direction. Some experiments, which however concerned only reception projects, already exist.

They concern those municipalities that have not passively suffered the so-called "emergency" events, but instead found a way to look at the event as an opportunity to leverage, for the benefit of their territories and people. We need to take one step further. Recognize the ten-year presences that live in the countries as available resources and think about the passing of the baton as a gain, not a loss. For all parties involved.



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