

**DIVERSE**

Diversity Improvement as a Viable Enrichment Resource for Society and Economy



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The Competitive Advantage of Diversity

**DIVERSE - Diversity Improvement  
as a Viable Enrichment Resource  
for Society and Economy**  
A Project to “Rejuvenate”  
the European Model of Integration

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# DIVERSE: Theoretical Premises

# The “Unresolved Paradox” of the European Legacy (1)

*The European approach to the government of migrations is traditionally characterized by the “schizophrenic” attempt to keep together two contradictory logics:*

- The “**economicistic**” logic on which the systems of entry (and stay) are regulated, explicitly or implicitly based on the idea of **complementarity** between autochthonous and immigrant labour
- The logic of **solidarity** and **equal opportunities**, consistent with its historical focus on human rights

# The “Unresolved Paradox” of the European Legacy (2)

*The temporary work model, typical of the European experience, contained within itself the reasons for:*

- Legitimizing a differential treatment towards the “*Gastarbeiter*”
- Postponing the problem of the inclusion of non-nationals in the community of citizens...
- ...but also to give up the opportunity to take advantage from their contribution to the long-term economic, social and institutional development of the European society

# The “Unresolved Paradox” of the European Legacy (3)

*But with the passing of time*

- The need to come to grips with the question of the boundaries of the political community has become a matter of urgency, as the latter has lost its congruence with the community of residents (and that of taxpayers)
- Hence the imposing reflection around the question of *citizenship*, the *borders of membership* and the *inclusion/exclusion practices* implemented by European education systems and labor markets

# The “Unresolved Paradox” of the European Legacy (4)

- What emerges is the ineradicable tension between petitions for **inclusion** and **exclusion** that characterizes the relationship among immigration, citizenship, welfare regimes and the main institutions of the European societies
- Even when the socio-political compromise has arrived at more inclusive solutions, immigrants and minorities members are in general **overrepresented in the categories at risk of exclusion**, evidencing “what is not working” in the policies of inclusion and of individual empowerment
- Besides, on account of the demographic weight of people with a migratory background, their experience evokes a strategic question for **the survival of democracy and the development of knowledge economies**

# The “Myopia” of the European Approach to Migration

In the European context, the entry of migrants has been traditionally conceived to face **specific staff or skills shortages** and therefore it has been demand-driven and dependent on a prior job offer

- Giving to the employers the faculty to lay down the rules of the selection and recruitment process, the entries have been led to severe phenomena of **segregation** and **over-qualification** (in some cases also of positive discrimination)
- While appearing useful in the short term, this model could in time result in **social and economic costs for receiving countries**, if not managed with an eye on the future and on its overall sustainability



# The Role of Immigration for a Smart and Inclusive Growth

*Labor demand and shortages need to be properly monitored, but they also need to be “oriented” by means of specific initiatives and policies*

- Acknowledging **the role of human capital** and of the processes of professional development of the workers
- Holding back risk factors that turn migrants into a disadvantaged group, guaranteeing their **long-term employability**
- Considering the migrant as **the typical European citizen** with a composite and versatile biography in which mobility and circularity between different conditions would be the norm
- Stimulating the promotion of companies’ strategies aligned to the perspective of **Diversity Management**, transforming individual differences in an added value for the organizational performance and the local development

# The Role of Immigration for the Common Wellbeing and Cohesion

*A particular attention must be devoted to the process that “transforms” a temporary worker into a citizen, given the right emphasis on citizenship rights and especially on citizenship duties and responsibilities, by:*

- Transmitting the idea that being a citizen of a society should involve a **greater awareness** both of
  - ◆ one’s own **rights** –starting from the right to be treated as equal–,
  - ◆ one’s **duties** –starting from fiscal morality and fare access to welfare–, including that of participating in the social, cultural and political life of the country, by contributing ideas, capabilities and projects
- Promoting a **shift in the common perception** of migrants and of their role in the European landscape

# DIVERSE: Promoting a New Integration Model

*Overcoming the limits of the present one, characterized by:*

- A tendency to collectively represent TCNs' work and economic role **in terms of an asymmetric complementarity with autochthonous labor** –a perception which is fuelled by, and simultaneously favors, immigrant concentration in specific, mainly low qualified, job sectors–
- **An over-emphasis on the economic and working dimension**, conceived as the key one justifying TCN workers' presence in the host countries, and paradoxically inhibiting the development of migrants' potential and their participation in the public life

# DIVERSE:

## Three Broad Domains of Engagement

- Advancing the valorization of TCNs' **formal, non formal and informal skills, knowledges and competences**, with particular reference to those linked to their migratory background
  - Increasing awareness of the advantages provided by **Diversity Management practices** in different kinds of enterprise and organization
  - Supporting **TCNs' role as proactive individuals**, favoring the expression of their potential in both the economic and the civil spheres, with a particular emphasis on their contribution to voluntary non-profit organizations
- *These 3 ambits are conceived as pivotal for strengthening European economic competitiveness and social cohesion, reinforcing the cooperation between different stakeholders and generating shared value for all parties involved*

# DIVERSE: Main Lines of Activity

- Filling **the knowledge gap** about:
  - ◆ The recognition of Third Countries Nationals skills, knowledges and competences
  - ◆ Diversity Management Practices implemented by profit, public and non-profit organizations
  - ◆ Third Countries Nationals civic involvement and participation in voluntary organizations
- Designing and testing of a **provisional multi-stakeholder (participated and transferable) audit scheme for TCNs' SKC assessment**, with particular regard to competences linked to the migratory background
- **Activation of previously assisted TCNs** as providers of public interest services within mainstream voluntary organizations
- Implementation of a rich calendar of **awareness raising initiatives**, addressed to a heterogeneous spectrum of stakeholders

# DIVERSE: Partners Involved

Radboud University (NL)

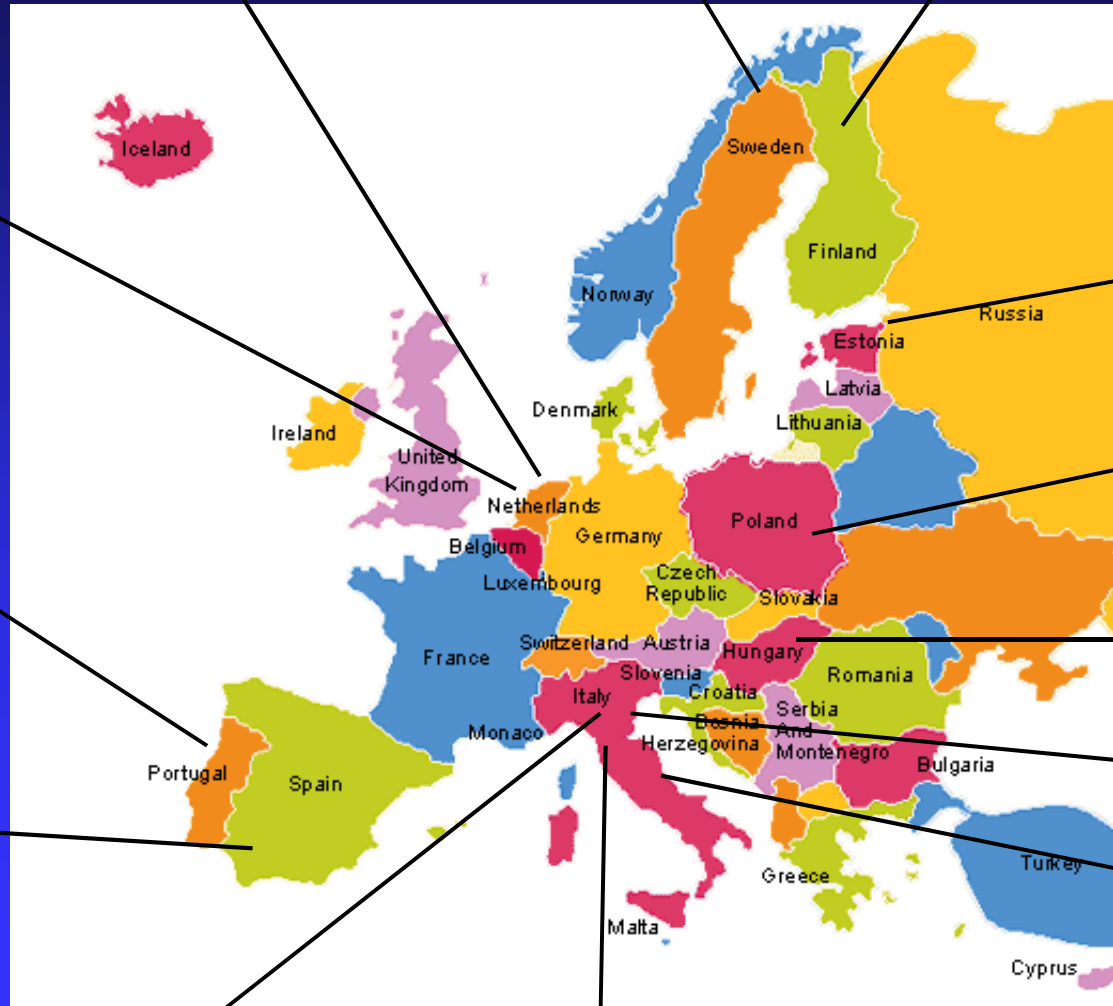
Umea  
University SE)

University of  
Waasa (FI)

Commission on  
Filippino Migrant  
Workers (NL)

New University of  
Lisbon (PT)

University of  
Huelva (ES)



University of  
Tartu (EE)

University of  
Lods (PL)

Menedek –  
Hungarian  
Association for  
Migrants (HU)

Fondazione  
Ismu (IT)

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Vincenzo de  
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WWELL – Catholic  
University of Milan (IT)

Andolf –  
Varese (IT)

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# DIVERSE: Emerging Findings



# The *diversity* of “Diversity” in the European landscape

- Dutch society, one of the oldest immigration country in the European context, traditionally considered as tolerant of the “other”, has recently seen this perspective succumb to new nationalistic agenda of a “growing minority”
- Swedish society, founded on a positive rhetoric towards diversity and everyone’s equal worth, has recently assisted to the affirmation of an anti-immigrant party, imposing a reflection on immigrant and native employment patterns
- In Estonia, one of the most significant problems is that of Soviet-era immigrants who lost the citizenship in the restored Republic of Estonia, becoming strangers in the country where they were been living for a long time



# The Approach to Labour Migrants (1)

- Entry and work permits continue to be generally issued only if no native or already resident worker is available for the same job, according to the logic of complementarity
- TCN workers are perceived as a possible solution in front of:
  - ◆ population ageing (in almost all countries)
  - ◆ scarce internal mobility (e.g. Sweden)
  - ◆ specific job vacancies/shortages (e.g. Italy), particularly in healthcare sector (e.g. Estonia, Netherlands, Sweden); specific employers' requirements (e.g. Sweden, Poland)
  - ◆ significant flux of out-migration of young and educated workers (e.g. Hungary, Estonia, Poland)
- In some countries the permit to stay is even linked to the original employer, inhibiting occupational and professional mobility
- Insertion models differ significantly passing from one country to another, but discrimination (negative or positive) is everywhere a consequence of the process of social and institutional construction of TCNs' role

## The Approach to Labour Migrants (2)

- Equal opportunities are often considered as the main pillar of DM practices, with a special focus –and eventually some forms of positive discrimination or specific attention– on some categories of workers (e.g. Roma in Hungary, Soviet-era migrants in Estonia, humanitarian migrants in Sweden, Moluccans in the Netherland....)
- Special programs to retain foreign students and/or to attract highly educated migrants are more and more diffused (e.g. Netherlands, Poland, Portugal)
- In the countries experiencing relevant flux of out-migration, the issue of attracting and retaining foreign talents has gained a place in the public debate (e.g. “smart migration policy” in Estonia; Hungary)
- Also in countries which have adopted a liberal migration policy (e.g. Sweden) the possibility of entry continues to be subordinated to a specific employer request

# Impact of SKC recognition

- Give TCNs the opportunity to test their skills against the labour market standards and to adjust to them
- Reduce the risk to be employed in the informal/grey economy; reduce the degree of ethnicization of the labour market, and the related risks of social dumping
- Reduce time needed to become established in the labour market, speed the path to qualified employment
- Contrast the phenomenon of over-qualification; enhance TCNs career and salary mobility
- Retain skilled migrants enhancing their contribution to the financial sustainability of the social protection system

# Impact of DM Practices on Human Resource Management

- Improve the process of recruitment and the capacity to attract talented employees, eventually from all over the world, according to a meritocratic logic
- Improve the capacity of retention and the sense of belonging to the company; increase motivation and need for achievement
- Improve the organizational climate, generate “inclusive organizations”; offer new solutions in terms of work and life balance; reduce absenteeism and burnout syndrome
- Make the workplace more stimulating and attracting for all workers
  - ◆ improving the level of competence/sensitiveness with regard to situations and problems of other people/countries
  - ◆ enriching the process of collective learning
- Display the attention to specific (disadvantageous) categories (e.g. refugees, Roma), coherently with the policies of corporate social responsibility
- Offer to the employees the chance of international careers



# Impact of DM Practices on the Organizational Performance

- Improve the process of brainstorming and of problem solving, looking at questions from different perspectives
- Increase team's performances and creativity thanks to TCNs experience of bridging cultures
- Support the process of knowledge transfer through the exchange of experiences acquired in different contexts; enrich the offer (e.g. in academic institutions)
- Enlarge the basin of potential clients and users, at local and international level; improve the capacity to meet specific needs expressed by the ethnic and immigrant communities (e.g. in healthcare organizations or in the financial sector)
- Enhance the brand/company image; permit to obtain awards and rewards
- Sustain the process of company's internationalisation; open the possibility to externalise/delocalize some activities in the sending countries

# Impacts of DM Practices on the Local Development

- Enrich the process of human capital development and training
- Attract talented migrants and eventually highly salaried workers
- Enhance the urban symbolic economy; create social capital
- Enhance the process of internationalisation of European economy, thanks to the availability of professionals with intercultural skills and international exposure, able to build bridges across cultural differences
- Help to attract investments from abroad
- Constitute a primary vehicle for the full realization of citizenship rights in multi-ethnic societies, contributing to current processes of social integration and cohesion in the territories involved

# Impact of Civic and Volunteer Involvement on TCNs' Wellbeing and Empowerment

- Improve competences in local language, customs, habits and way of life
- Usefully spend time when lacking a “real” job; find a job or a better job; gain professional recognition
- Be politically active (particularly in the home country affairs); lobby in host country for migrants' rights
- Maintain ethnic, cultural, national and religious identity; support the newcomers; gain a sense of community
- Give back to the host country what has been received, according to the logic of reciprocity; feel more appreciated in society; demonstrate how one's presence is useful for the common wellbeing
- Overcome isolation, share time and experiences with autochthonous people



# Impact of Civic and Volunteer Involvement on Social Cohesion

- Mediate cultural values, promote the dialogue between cultures, improve the linguistic and cultural skills of other volunteers
- Increase associations' expertise and expand their offer; enrich problem solving process
- Fund raising for both the host and the origin country
- Promote international contacts and cooperation with the sending countries
- Permit to apply the logic of individual activation and to include those who are temporarily excluded from the labor market



# SKC Recognition: Challenges to Face (1)

- Absence/marginality of the issue in the public agenda (with some few exceptions, such as Sweden); lack of sensitiveness for the competences connected with the migratory background
- Lack of harmonized and accessible information regarding TCNs' access to the procedure of recognition; the reasons for successful/unsuccessful applications; the occupational career and the monetary impact of the recognition
- Scarce visibility/accessibility of services and institutions in charge with the technical assistance; in some countries total absence of this kind of services
- Lack of preparation of the personnel in charge; lack of information on the educational systems of low-ranked countries; lack of EU general rules about the recognition of professional qualifications acquired outside the Union
- Legal barriers impeding the entrance of TCNs in the public sector and in other regulated professions; legal restrictions with regard to required professional qualifications

## SKC Recognition: Challenges to Face (2)

- Complexity and costs of the procedure (particularly for the translation of titles and documents)
- Discouragement, low motivation and propensity, by TCNs, to apply for recognition, particularly when having a temporary stay permit; language barriers which inhibit/slow the process
- Low institutionalization of the innovative practices implemented by the civil society
- Scarce cooperation among the various stakeholders; scarce integration among the institutions involved in the recognition of formal and informal/non formal learning
- In some countries, absolute lack of regulations concerning competences acquired in a informal/non formal way

# DM Practices: Challenges to Face

- Prevailing of the idea of complementarity, which feed stereotypes concerning TCNs' role
- Attention is mainly directed to the discrimination issue at societal level, shadowing the perspective of valorising diversity at organizational level
- The same DM practices are dominated by other kinds of “diversity” (women, disabled, ethnic minorities...), and suffer from resource cuts due to the current crises
- Low awareness of organizational advantages produced by DM practices
- Prevalence of informal practices, rarely codified in formal statements; insufficient visibility of the practices within the internal and external communication
- Low involvement of the public organizations which have a limited freedom to adopt DM practices
- Perceptions of a positive discrimination favouring TCNs (multicultural approach vs. colour-blind approach)
- Low investments in the assessment/evaluation of DM practices' impact

# Civic and Volunteer Involvement: Challenges to Face

- Low presence of TCNs in mainstream voluntary organizations; lack of data about citizenship of volunteers; scarce involvement of TCNs organizations in the activity of mainstream “umbrella” organizations
- Language barriers, lack of specific social networks that would inform TCNs
- Priority to paid work and savings; unawareness of the role that volunteering can play in the integration process
- Unfamiliarity with the concept of volunteering; major involvement in the informal volunteer work
- Perception of being a “second class” resident, reactive identity, lack of trust in civil society organizations
- Absence/marginality of this issue within the policies for integration

# Rejuvenating the European Integration Model

- Move the emphasis from the aim of adjusting TCNs to labor market needs to how their specific competences and experiences **can be valorized**
- View immigrants not only as people to be helped and assisted, but rather as **new players in a plural society** who are able to activate distinctive potentialities and resources
- Perceive TCNs not as an “object” to be integrated, but as **an actor to be involved** in the process of construction of an integrated society
- Manage this integration process so as to put both migrants and natives in a condition to realize their life project while simultaneously concurring **responsibly to the common wellbeing**
- Reinforce cooperation and change among EU countries in all these fields

# For further information:

[www.ismu.org/diverse](http://www.ismu.org/diverse)

Zanfrini L. (ed.), *The Diversity Value. A study in 10 European Countries*, MacGraw, to be printed

Final International Conference:

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Milan