De Europa
European and Global Studies Journal
Vol. 6, No. 2 - 2023 | ISSN 2611-853X

Surviving crises – through education?

Guest Editors
Eduardo Barberis, University of Urbino Carlo Bo
Marcelo Parreira do Amaral, University of Muenster

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De Europa

De Europa
Vol. 6, No. 2 (2023)
ISSN 2611-853X
www.deeuropa.unito.it

VOLUME 6, NUMBER 2 (2023)
Publisher: Dipartimento di Culture, Politica e Società (Università di Torino)
Review of manuscripts: double-blind review process

Contacts: redazione.deeuropa@unito.it
Website: www.deeuropa.unito.it
Book design: Silvio Ortolani

With the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union
Jean Monnet Chair *The EU in a Challenging World*
In cooperation whit:
Centro Studi sull'Europa

De Europa
Vol. 6, No. 2 (2023)
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Introduction

Unless otherwise specified, the last consultation of online resources is 17/12/2023.
Salvo diversa indicazione, l'ultima consultazione delle risorse online è del 17/12/2023.

De Europa
Vol. 6, No. 2 (2023), 7-13
ISSN 2611-853X
www.deeuropa.unito.it

Surviving crises – through education?

Eduardo Barberis, Marcelo Parreira do Amaral

Introduction

Europe has faced several moments that have been labelled as crises in its recent past – to *name* but a few: the 2007/8 financial crisis, the so-called migration crisis after 2014, Brexit and its reverberations for political stability, the COVID-19 crisis. Some analysts may disagree, rightly noting that European societies constantly faced a number of challenges: just focussing on the post-War period, we may mention at least the Cold War, the 1968 students protests and following political turmoil, the democratization of Southern European countries. To the point that the concept of crisis, even if multifaceted and ambiguous, can be considered a key concept in Western though. Especially from late 18th century, when it started to be used as a metaphor of political, economic, and historical radical changes (Koselleck 2006).

Nevertheless, seen from a distance, and considering many economic and social indicators, after World War II the idea of an optimistic, never-ending progress was often there. Not by chance, welfare analysts talk about a Golden Age – the *Trente Glorieuses* – where growth and expansion of public provisions granted a safety net for many Europeans (Ferrera 2008). In the field of education, post-war decades saw the generalization of mass secondary education, with the growing participation of groups excluded before: women, working classes, minorities (Tomka 2013; Rogers *et al.* 2010).

The promise of progress within the frame of national industrial capitalism and welfare provisions was first challenged with the oil crisis in the 1970s. From then on, the mid-century social compromise (Crouch 1999) started to crumble: full employment, decreasing inequalities, management of social conflicts via democratic arenas, the Keynesian consensus based on the active role of the public actors in the economy more and more faded (Singer 1997; Jessop 2002).

In this respect, the crises from the 1970s onward were based on a systemic political and economic transformation that seem to speed up with limited chance to find a way out.

The experience of crisis is somehow becoming more common, part of a new normal – a systemic unsettling without a clear outcome (James and Steger 2022): the 2007/8 financial crisis; the so-called migration crisis after 2014; Brexit and its reverberations for political stability; the COVID-19 syndemic crisis; the new armed conflicts at the gates of Europe.

Eduardo Barberis, University of Urbino Carlo Bo, eduardo.barberis@uniurb.it
Marcelo Parreira do Amaral, University of Muenster, parreira@uni-muenster.de

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.13135/2611-853X/8483

Obviously enough, this condition has placed policymaking and governance under substantial distress. All these new and unexpected crises worked to exacerbate already long-lasting dilemmas in the multilevel relations between the European Commission, nation-states, regional and local authorities. Although experienced differently across the continent, with more or less "resilient" contexts (where Italy and Germany stand out for their respective ranking, being the first one of the least resilient and the latter one of the most resilient EU Member States – see Alessi *et al.*, 2020), these are major, across-the-board societal challenges as they become visible, for instance, in the difficult coordination of policy measures in many fields: education/training and youth policy are among the most relevant ones, given the evidence of both their centrality in European policy-making (*e.g.*, within the social investment state strategy), and the difficult social integration of younger generations (Morel *et al.* 2011; Irwin and Nilsen 2018; Parreira do Amaral *et al.* 2020).

Policymaking arenas are ridden with key challenges in their developments, in consideration of raising constraints in the performance of public actors, that concern foundational issues: what are the boundaries of the arenas of solidarity, both in geographical and social terms; which principles and limits are relevant in defining multilevel governance arrangements; how a balanced outcome between setting and reaching common goals, and taking into consideration spatial differences can be achieved. Ultimately, how spatial and social inequalities can be curbed in a diverse but united Europe (Kazepov 2010).

This themed issue calls attention to education and youth policies as key elements in finding a way out of crises for Europe, as arenas directly shaping the future of the Continent. European Union's crisis management through policymaking in education, training, and youth policies can be observed via different points of view, focussing on key present and future challenges – in particular in their intended as well as unintended relations with the creation of economic growth and social inclusion throughout the Continent (Cabane and Lodge 2019; see also Rambla 2022).

Amidst efforts made to create a European knowledge-based society/economy, global and continental thrusts towards adopting specific models and governance principles in the field of education/training (Ertl 2006) – such as 'governing by numbers' and comparative large-scale assessments such as PISA – created standardizing pressures that tend to disregard different regional/national realities. Similarly, in a field where national path-dependency is utmost such as in youth policy, recent European initiatives and actions tackling so-called vulnerable groups (*e.g.* policies targeting Early School Leavers, young people Not in Education, Employment or Training, as well as measures to improve school to work transitions and youth employment, among the others) started not only mainstreaming specific understandings of active inclusion, but also yielding highly uneven effect on European regions due to their varying contextual and institutional arrangements (Hvinden *et al.* 2019; Mertanen *et al.* 2020; Milana and Vatrella 2020).

The regulation of education is one of the building bricks of nation- and state-making in Europe, as much as the transition to labour markets calls into considera-

tion the huge varieties among national capitalisms and ways of regulating economies – still differentiated notwithstanding common (neoliberal) trends and EU coordination processes (Heidenreich 2022). Finally, in the last 20 years at least, we are seeing an increasing return of spatial cleavages and inequalities, along different directions (urban/rural; centre/periphery; dynamic vs. lagging-behind regions; large metropolitan hubs vs. small towns), that impact also on institutional capacity and check and balances (*e.g.* redistribution), on the priorities, social problems and governance structures involving our target policies (Iammarino *et al.* 2019; van Vulpen and Bock 2020).

All in all, the actual priorities, coordination mechanisms, and outcomes are subject to relevant variations that are worth to be taken into consideration both in policy and academic analyses.

1. Focus and orientation

In this respect, this special issue includes a set of six papers that deal with the above-mentioned challenges from a range of perspectives, mostly starting from an interdisciplinary academic and policy dialogue between Germany and Italy. We identified three key themes to be addressed, listed below.

1.1 Economic Crises, Inequalities and Youth in Education, Training, and the Labour Market

Europe has faced financial and economic crises of historic proportions. Since 2007/2008, the volatility in the world's financial markets caused major consequences for European member states and citizens, inducing vast public policy interventions in order to secure the stability of the financial system and support European economy. The European Union's has made considerable attempts at a coordinated framework included policy interventions to control and mitigate as well as resolve the economic and financial turmoil, though less has been achieved in terms of crisis resolution (Bieling 2012; Heins and de la Porte 2015). The latter is arguably related to a well noted nexus in the relationship between state and market, namely that while states are entrusted with regulating and setting limits to markets, they also are key to creating the conditions within which markets are to thrive – with very different perspectives on how this has to be done (Jessop 2002).

This issue is dealt transversally in at least two articles: Lello and Bazzoli discuss the consequences of socio-economic inequalities – also impacted by economic crises – on youth political participation, showing how class penalties are underdiscussed, but still relevant in Europe: the entanglement of educational, political and economic participation risk to reproduce such disadvantages intergenerationally. The argument is strongly consistent with Parreira do Amaral and colleagues, focussing on the crisis of citizenship and the citizenship in times of crises, where economic participation has an ambivalent inclusive and exclusionary effect. As a result, the amount, and the type of investment in education can be considered as one of the key factors impacting young people's life courses heavily.

1.2 Global Migration, Mobile Youth and European Integration

The so-called "migration crisis" has been framing European politics and policies on the incorporation of minorities from an immigrant background in recent years. Regional crises and the limitation of legal channel to enter the EU put European, national, and local institutions under severe stress, and under scrutiny of human rights observers: externalization of border controls and violence, the management of asylum seekers' application are issues at stake (Ambrosini *et al.* 2020). Also, the EU pact on migration and asylum, in an effort to couple border control, migration management and effective integration is unlikely to be effective given the premises of present and past problems (Thym and Odysseus Academic Network 2022).

The contributions in this issue focus on different dimensions of being young and migrant in Europe: the inclusion of minorities from immigrant background – old and new – in education and labour market remains an open question; and there is extensive evidence of intergenerational inequalities in access and success for generations of citizens with immigrant parents, as much as of marginalization and exclusion of new migrants, asylum seekers and refugees (Gabrielli and Impicciatore 2022).

Four contributions in this issue focus on related themes. The ethnographic account by Marconi on Ceuta and Melilla remarkably shows the encounters of different youth – those trying to cross the border and those volunteering to support them, both under the suspicious gaze of authorities controlling the borders. Her article raises much needed questions on the long-term scars of border management, which will affect the future of Europe, and of the global youth looking at Europe. The contributions by Morris-Lange and Rother on refugees' access to vocational education and training in four EU countries, and by Ince-Beqo and colleagues on minor refugees' access to education in Italy and Greece show that the border is not only external. Barriers to basic rights to education – and also to a functionalist approach to migration – penetrate educational and vocational institutions, producing and reproducing refugee disadvantage in the long run. Last but not least, Avolio and colleagues add an interesting focus on another type of relation between migration and education in Europe, *i.e.*, the vocational and professional qualifications of new professions working with migrants, as the intercultural mediators. They show that the EU-level debate is scantly turned into a solid national-level policy, limiting the potential effectiveness of bridging figures in the incorporation of minorities.

1.3 European Identity and Political Participation of Younger Generations

Finally, the political dimensions. As we have already mentioned above, the consequences of the economic crisis taking place since 2007/2008 throughout Europe have impacted youth opportunities – even though with national and local differences related to welfare and educational systems, and younger generations' structural position before the crises.

This can be translated also into specific consequences in the political arenas, *e.g.*, a certain distance between youth and mainstream party politics, as well as a wither-

ing of their feelings and enthusiasms towards the European construction. Scholarship has highlighted a general "greying" of Western European democracies (Goerres 2009), in that younger cohorts are nowadays less active than the adult and more mature ones, in the field of conventional participation but even in social movements and direct activism. "Apathy", however, is not an accurate diagnosis, as it can be questioned to what extent European and national politics actually address young people's interests, hardships, and demands. In this respect, the contribution by Lello and Bazzoli shows a number of influencing factors on participation – in which education seems more important than socio-economic conditions.

The picture emerging from the collection of articles shows several barriers different youth groups face to be active part of European societies. Notwithstanding a quite common formal engagement toward youth, politics and policies seem unable to grasp the complexity of becoming an adult in critical times – fragmenting opportunities, lacking a clear-cut vision for the future, and a shared understanding of how an inclusive, open society can work. In this respect, there is much space for an EU action to coordinate a renewed arena to debate the common future of its citizens.

2. Acknowledgments

The background idea and most of the contributions in this themed issue of *De Europa* were born in a dialogue between the two co-editors, taking the opportunity of the research programme *Hochschuldialog mit Südeuropa* (Higher Education Dialogue with Southern Europe) issued by the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* (DAAD – German Academic Exchange Service). This led to the DAAD funding of a Summer School in 2021, organized in collaboration between the University of Münster (Germany) and the Ph.D. programme in Global Studies at the University of Urbino Carlo Bo (Italy), that had two key events: an online preliminary discussion in March 2021, and three days of on-site presentations at the University of Urbino Carlo Bo – notably enough one of the first in-person events after the COVID-19 lockdowns.

The different events involving established researchers and students at doctoral and M.A. levels from Germany and Italy offered both opportunity for an open dialogue about the social issues at stake and professional development training in the state-of-the-art in relevant academic debates.

The decision to translate this rich debate into a themed issue was shared with the late director of *De Europa*, Umberto Morelli, that warmly welcomed the idea. We thank him for his openness, and we would like to remember him with respect and gratitude.

Also, we would like to thank the managing editor Elisabetta Tarasco for her constant support.

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Essays

De Europa
Vol. 6, No. 2 (2023), 17-40
ISSN 2611-853X
www.deeuropa.unito.it

Citizenship in Times of Crises – Crisis of Citizenship?

Jozef Zelinka, Marcelo Parreira do Amaral, Sebastiano Benasso, Joseph König*

1. Introduction[1]

Europe has faced several moments in its recent past that have been labelled as 'crises'. These developments that shook the European and global community – be it the 2007/8 financial crisis, or the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union and its reverberations for political stability, the worldwide COVID-19 pandemics with its deep and long-lasting consequences for society and economy, the recurring European refugee crisis after 2014, or the Russian military invasion in the Ukraine – have highlighted one important, yet often taken-for-granted attribute of populations – their belonging to states as citizens. For instance, Brexit ended the automatic free movement of people between EU-member states and Great Britain. Equally, the turmoil of the pandemics has demonstrated the blatant differences between citizens of various countries trapped in locations outside their nation-state during the lockdowns. Additionally, due to different political, economic, social, or environmental reasons, millions of people around the globe have gained the status of (illegal) migrants, asylum-seekers, or war refugees, which limits them to fully use their citizen's rights[2]. The examples just mentioned help us to reflect upon three distinctive moments of citizenship:

- First, belonging to a state and enjoying citizen's rights and privileges is based on arbitrary criteria: "In fact, the vast majority of the global population has no way to acquire membership except by circumstances of birth" (Shachar 2009: 4). The first fundamental distinction, therefore, needs to be made between the 'status of being' and the 'process of becoming' a citizen.
- Second, not all citizens within a given territory are equal in making use of their rights and opportunities. While in theory every member of the society is given the same rights and opportunities, "in practice, new entitlements are being realized through situated mobilizations and claims in milieus of globalized contingency" (Ong 2006: 499). The opportunities for full civic participation thus correl-

* Corresponding author: Prof. Dr. Marcelo Parreira do Amaral, Institute of Education, University of Münster, Georgskommende 33, 48143 Münster, Germany. E-mail: parreira@uni-muenster.de

[1] The paper draws in part from discussions during the 'Summer School Surviving Crises through Education' held at the University of Urbino in June 2021 and funded by the German Academic Exchange Service under the initiative 'Higher Education Dialogue with South Europe 2021'. See: https://surviving-crises-through-education.eu/

[2] According to the World Migration Report, the estimated number of international migrants in 2020 reached 281 million people, the number still growing (International Organization for Migration 2019).

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.13135/2611-853X/7134

ate with the spatial fragmentation of territories, leading to emerging spaces with economic hyper-growth and mobilisation of populations, technologies, and markets on the one hand, while leaving whole regions depopulated, impoverished, and politically unstable on the other hand.

- Third, citizenship is not a stable and unchanging concept. On the contrary, the notion of citizenship, especially during crises, is deeply contested, redefined, and reconfigured. Currently, the transformation of the notion of citizenship resonates with a change from 'positional' (modern society) to 'performative' (late modern society) competition over the allocation of goods, positions, privileges, and life chances securing social status and recognition (Rosa 2009: 662 [orig. emphasis]).

Thus, citizenship appears both as an empowering condition, providing its bearers with rights, privileges, and opportunities, and as a performative process of living up to the standards of 'good' citizens, whereby the content of the 'good' has different meanings in different times and places. Apart from that, citizenship touches upon multiple aspects and spheres of life and consists of discursive, cultural, and societal practices (language, rituals, celebrations, artefacts of cultural heritage), political rights and obligations (elections, taxpaying), signs and symbols (anthems, flags, official holidays), materialised manifestations (birth certificates, ID cards, passports, etc.), control mechanisms (barriers, borders, surveillance), state apparatuses and governance policies (educational, cultural, social, asylum and refugee policies), forms of subjectivation (written and unwritten codes of conduct of 'good' citizen, cultivating national identity), etc. The multiple layers demonstrate the vitality and variability of the concept of citizenship, which, through its long history dating back to ancient Greece and Rome, has literally 'witnessed' several crises of state and personhood (see: Bellamy 2008, Ch. 2).

In this paper, the first goal is to use citizenship as a productive entry point for enquiring into the challenges and dilemmas that Europe is currently undergoing and to pay special attention to the role of education in shaping it. The article aims at looking into the concept and practice of citizenship through the lens of the current crises (citizenship in times of crises), while at the same time enquiring whether they are themselves being changed (crisis of citizenship). We proceed in three steps: First, we work with the existing literature on citizenship to embed the concept in the current research debates and highlight the main understandings, approaches to, and readings of citizenship. Second, based on extant research, we choose three dominant trends that have been argued to prompt 'crises' (globalisation, digitalisation, migration) in order to reflect upon the changing representations of citizenship under new conditions. Education seems to be a privileged way to bring about these new qualities to citizenship (global, digital, postnational). Third, we discuss an ongoing exploratory study of how specific forms of education are tasked with shaping the mentalities and experiences of future citizens to cope with the manifold challenges of a crisis-ridden world. The last section deals with the second goal of this paper, namely, to explore whether we are witnessing the emergence of another sense of 'performative citizenship' (Isin, 2017). While Engin Isin's conceptualization of 'performative citizenship'

opened up interesting ways of thinking about how citizenship is less stable than usually thought and is about the struggle over both exercising and claiming a right (Isin 2017: 517), in this paper we explore how, via education, elements of merit are being introduced as new performative criteria for inclusion/exclusion of citizens. In short, the question is whether this gives way to a neo-liberal form of governmentality that works through discursive, dispositional, cognitive, and moral qualities of those seeking inclusion as 'good' citizens. We round out the article with some concluding remarks on the issues raised by such a performative notion of citizenship. The following section briefly discusses the different understandings and approaches to citizenship.

2. Understanding Citizenship

Citizenship is a rich concept full of different meanings and myriad historical nuances. Delivering one smooth definition would miss the point of understanding its transformative power and "historical capacity to reinvent itself" (Balibar 2015: 4). It would be equally misleading to enumerate the endless differentiations that the concept offers (Janoski and Compion 2020). Studies on citizenship struggle to keep pace with the ever-changing effects and implications of citizenship fuelled by late modern transformations and their concrete manifestations. Therefore, instead of tediously walking the reader through the complexity of meanings and definitions of citizenship and providing exhausting historical explanations, which already have been delivered elsewhere (see Isin and Turner 2002; Bellamy 2008; Arvanitakis and Matthews 2013; van der Heijden 2016), we adopted two perspectives that help to distinguish between (a) normative, empirical and critical theoretical approaches to citizenship, and (b) the legal, economic, political, and socio-cultural dimensions of the latter.

2.1 Theoretical approaches to citizenship

From a 'normative' point of view, research revolves around two questions: "(1) whom should polities include and exclude as members, and (2) what the substance of citizenship should be" (Džankić and Vink 2022: 361). The first question reminds that citizenship has always been closely tied with inequality and exclusion. While citizens as inhabitants of towns, from old French *citeien* (city-dweller, town-dweller), have participated in the cultivation of the cities and civilizations, those who lived in the countryside did not acquire rights or culture. "From its inception, therefore, citizenship was an exclusionary category, justifying the coercive rule of the included over the excluded" (Ignatieff 1987: 402). Citizenship was defined by the citizens and not by "the excluded (strangers, outsiders, aliens)" (Isin and Turner 2002: 5). Regarding the second question, the substance of citizenship can be approached according to the rights that individual citizens can possess, such as various educational, health care, or financial entitlements (Crouch 2003: 5f.), or according to the responsibilities towards the state, such as the obligation to pay taxes, enlist in military service or simply "be grateful to the state and […] be proud of the country's achievements" (Kochenov 2019: 167).

Further, an 'empirical' perspective on citizenship focuses primarily on citizenship regimes, understood as "institutionalized systems of formal and informal norms that define access to membership, as well as rights and duties associated with membership, within a polity" (Vink 2017: 222). In this approach, citizenship is viewed through the lenses of policymaking which seeks to "classify the different models for governing citizenship, produce typologies of citizenship regimes" (Džankić and Vink 2022: 362) and develop measurable indexes based on appropriate indicators. These comparative and explanatory studies also contest the prevailing "monolithic and homogenous understanding of what citizenship means" (Naujoks, 2020: 1) and seek to advance "our understanding of the contours of citizenship in general" (ibid.: 2). As a result, citizenship regimes have gained several meanings that highlight the changing relationship between the individual and the state, such as 'denizenship' (Hammar 1990), 'postnational citizenship' (Soysal 1994), 'quasi-citizenship' (Groenendijk 2006) or 'semi-citizenship' (Cohen 2009).

Finally, a 'critical' perspective on citizenship deals with two sets of issues. First, it tries to capture the relation of citizens towards the political organisation of the state. In this reading, critical or attentive citizens, often disagreeing with the government, are considered "essentially healthy for the future of democratic governance" (Norris 1999: 2f) and represent the "*conditio sine qua non* in modern democracies" (Geissel 2008: 53). The core research interest is to capture citizens' dissatisfaction, negative attitudes towards or the level of support for the government, as well as general orientations and moods of the public (Abdelzadeh and Ekman 2012: 179). A second set of issues is related to the process of subjectivation of citizens in modern liberal democracies claiming that "citizenship is not simply a legal status conferring political rights and obligations, but one that additionally shapes identities and forms of subjectivity" (Olson 2008: 40). As a vital part of the state, citizens possess political, economic, productive and military potential and the government of these forces has been successively delegated to the individual subjects by developing various models of governmentality, understood as the conduct of self-conduct (Foucault 2008). From this perspective,

> citizenship is not so much the sum of rights and duties, or the status a person is endowed with by the state, either by birth or through naturalization, but rather a 'mode of conduct' that is acquired over time. (Milani *et al.* 2021: 758 [orig. emphasis])

However, a distinction needs to be made between 'sovereign' subjects holding full citizenship and being able "to control the terms of their own subject formation" (Olson 2008: 47), and those who "enact a form of citizenship 'from below'" (Rygiel *et al.* 2015: 4 [orig. emphasis]), the excluded, marginalised, undocumented, or rejected citizens. The critical reading of citizenship in this sense seeks to carve out those power mechanisms that asymmetrically distribute citizen's rights and limit their "possibility of not being excluded from the right to fight for one's rights" (Balibar 2015: 66). Beyond theoretical perspectives, citizenship also can be discussed by focusing its various dimensions, as detailed below.

2.2 Four dimensions of citizenship

Out of the multitude of dimensions that might characterise citizenship, we choose the legal, economic, political, and socio-cultural dimension to give an account of the depth, or rather the thickness/thinness of the concept (Isin and Turner 2002: 2).

First, citizenship is understood as a 'legal' term, as it binds the citizens by means of law to the state and obliges the state to protect them and provide them with all necessary services. As such, "it mediates relationships between individuals within a state and relationships between individuals and institutions, including the state itself" (Siapera 2017: 24). By law, citizens are given civil (protection from and against the state), political (legitimation of state power), social (clients of the welfare state), and cultural (participation in education and culture) rights. As a legal concept though, citizenship has been contested by the ancient ideals as much as by the medieval and modern concepts connected to the development and establishment of the market economy: "Modern man was divided between his identity as *bourgeois* and as *citoyen*; the former was his real identity, the latter a false, mythic identity" (Ignatieff 1987: 409). Ignatieff stresses the myth behind the legal dimension of citizenship in contrast to its 'economic' dimension: "we live as market men, we wish we lived as citizens" (Ignatieff 1987: 400). Contrary to the legal dimension, which is based on the shared imagination of 'equal' citizens, economy serves as a more concrete expression of the actual (or real, in contrast to mythical) content of citizenship and can be defined by economic rights, such as "the right to work at the occupation of one's choice (where work includes child-rearing and household maintenance); to earn wages adequate to the support of self and family; to a non-discriminatory job market" (Kessler-Harris 2003: 153).

Second, 'economic', market-based citizenship is informed by the neoliberal discourse, which views citizens "as consumers, namely citizens who exercise choice that is commensurate with consistent or predictable outcomes" (Wilkins 2020: 142). Neoliberalism no longer counts as a purely economic theory about the nature of human-market relations but has gradually become "both a political discourse about the nature of rule and a set of practices that facilitate the governing of individuals from a distance" (Larner, 2006: 200). The economic dimension of citizenship operates through the production of a particular subjectivity of *homo oeconomicus*, the modern self-entrepreneur (Bröckling 2015), that governs the subjects to enhance their employability through constant optimisation of their skills and competencies (Zelinka 2022).

Third, citizenship is closely related to the realisation of 'political' privileges and has different political relevance in democratic regimes as opposed to monarchies or various kinds of dictatorships. More precisely, "it is the relation between citizenship and democracy that serves as a dynamic for the 'transformation of the political'" (Balibar 2015: 2 [orig. emphasis]), which demonstrates that free citizens are able to make use of their political rights create the basis for the stability and reproduction of democracy. "Equally, however, a democratic system as such is not a panacea for

rights protection" (Bantekas and Oette 2020: 351). The latter applies particularly to groups in vulnerable and multi-disadvantaged positions that experience lack of protection, inaccessibility of services or barriers to learning participation. In this case, education plays a key role in shaping the images of political citizenship and presents "a key variable in explaining democratic participation and democratic enlightenment" (Dalton 2014: 37).

Finally, fourth, "citizenship is also based on group identity and shared experiences" (Stokke 2017: 198) and, thus, cannot be understood without its 'socio-cultural' dimension. Identity is central when it comes to citizenship. Apart from legal bounds or economic activities, the sense of belonging to a nation or community within the "metaphorical boundaries" (Staeheli 2010: 394) decides on the readiness and willingness of the citizens to serve and protect their country. In pluralistic democracies, however, "the structure of identity comes in multiple dimensions, such as national, group, associational, ethnic, gender, sexual, religious, professional, socioeconomic identities, *ad infinitum*" (Kalu 2017: 64). The socio-cultural dimension of citizenship underscores the difficulty of building a democratic society upon one single identity. Quite the contrary, in democracy "the public space becomes an arena of competing sets of principles and values" (Kalu 2017: 64) among the manifold adversaries and options.

In summing up the discussion above, citizenship refers to the legal and institutional frameworks establishing relationship ties between individuals and national collectives. It also decides over inclusion and exclusion and refers to the process of identification of individuals with a polity. While legal status still determines much of what citizenship means, its practices make the concept porous and problematic. Here, we concur with Engin Isin (2017: 502) in her arguing that citizenship can be considered as "anything but stable" and that a performative perspective is useful in unearthing the complex processes by which individuals become "subjects of rights" (Isin 2017: 502). Understanding citizenship as a 'mode of conduct' allows us to scrutinize its changing modes, especially in times of crises. What happens to this concept in moments of crises is the theme of the following section.

3. Citizenship in times of crises

In what follows, we discuss citizenship amidst three core transformations – globalization, digitalisation, and migration – that have been described as crises and which are said to be transforming the concept and practice of citizenship. All three phenomena sparked debates surrounding the changes needed to cope with the challenges and transformations they bring with them and prompted calls for global, digital, and deterritorialized/postnational forms of citizenship. The argument in this section is that they share an understanding of citizenship that is less static and less based on immutable characteristics, but is rather, to a large extent, dependent upon individuals' own 'conduct of conduct', or, in other words, their 'performativity'.

3.1 'The citizens of the world' and global citizenship

Three days after Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, on February 27, 2022, early in the morning, the following address was published on the official website of the President of Ukraine:

> The President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy is addressing all citizens of the world, friends of Ukraine, peace and democracy. Anyone who wants to join the defense of Ukraine, Europe and the world can come and fight side by side with the Ukrainians against the Russian war criminals. (President of Ukraine 2022)

Addressing 'all citizens of the world' is not a simple linguistic figure of speech or a calculated political statement. It is also an act of citizenship. Zelenskyy, as a citizen and as a member of the global community, appeals to his fellow 'citizens of the world' who are willing to defend the right to live in a free and peaceful way. The address demonstrates not only the interconnectedness of the world's different corners, it also highlights one crucial development which is meanwhile considered self-evident: the global scale and global of citizenship.

Globalisation, according to a widespread definition,

> denotes the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of interregional flows and patterns of social interaction. It refers to a shift or transformation in the scale of human social organization that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across the world's major regions and continents. (Held and McGrew 2003: 4)

In this globalisation debate, both the positive and the negative transformations have been well argued.

Living in a global community has steadily become possible through positive human advancements, such as the emergence of global trade routes and booming economic hubs, the proliferation of technological systems and digital communication channels, as well as through the mass mobility of goods, finances, and populations. Globalisation, however, has also been experienced through its negative effects such as the spread of global terrorist networks, climate change, or biological threats such as the COVID-19 pandemic — all warning signals of continuing and emerging crises. In this environment, the concept of citizenship gained new weight and new global dimensions.

The idea of global citizenship has been promoted by international institutions and organisations that sought to call attention to the necessity of concerted action and shared understandings:

> Global citizenship refers to a sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity. It emphasises political, economic, social and cultural interdependency and interconnectedness between the local, the national and the global (UNESCO 2015: 14).

Scholars have indicated aspects that characterise the content of global citizenship, conceptualising it as "global awareness, caring, embracing cultural diversity,

promoting social justice and sustainability, and a sense of responsibility to act" (Reysen *et al.* 2012: 29). As such, the concept of global citizenship has been informed by various scholarly fields, theoretical perspectives, and lived experiences. It carries the appeal to global morality and shared ethical conduct (Appiah 2006), to global awareness on different educational needs (Hanvey 1976), to social justice on a larger global scale (Ife 2001), to its legal recognition and protection (Dower 2002), to the necessity of psychological connection and identification with the 'global' others (Reysen and Katzarska-Miller 2013), to the establishment of global democratic institutions (Carter 2001), as well as to the emergence of regional and global knowledge economy (Dale and Robertson 2009).

When considering the aspiration of the concept, it is questionable whether 'global' citizenship applies the same in different settings. In terms of education, for example, scholars are critical about promoting the idea of global education, calling it instead "a 'rich world' initiative" (Hicks 2003: 269 [original emphasis]). Especially in the context of the so-called 'Third World countries', the difference between the idea and the reality of global citizenship becomes painfully obvious:

> Yet where people live has implications for how citizenship is carried out and experienced. For instance, while students in the developed countries of the West are encouraged to embark on study abroad and international service-learning programs as part of developing their global citizenship, in developing countries, such travel is often induced by war, repression, poverty, and climate change (Aboagye and Dlamini 2021: 9).

Not only are some populations disadvantaged prior to any attempts to establish global citizenship, they are also being subjected to the hegemony of the neoliberal agenda that takes hold of every level of governance. Some see global citizenship as a possibility, if not to defeat at least to overcome the constraints of neoliberal rationalities.

Amidst these discussions, citizenship has been embellished with cosmopolitan normative values and moral sentiments that are said to be necessary to create a sense of belonging beyond the national, and from which specific sets of ethical conduct are derived. As criticized in this strand of the debate, highly unequal structural conditions are made invisible, which potentially can be used to 'blame the victim'.

3.2 Citizenship in the digital era

The digital era has been characterized based on technological transformations that are said to have the same scale as the industrial revolution during the nineteenth century, heavily impacting on economy and society (Shepperd 2004). It is mostly related to information and communication technologies (ICT) and the faster pace of mobilizing and producing (new) knowledge, elements associated with Third Industrial Revolution (Rifkin 2011) and Fourth Industrial Revolution (Schwab, 2016). The digital era not only marks the shifting from mechanical/analogue electronics to digital technology since the late twentieth century; it also refers to the sweeping changes

brought about by digital computing, artificial intelligence and big data technologies that are central to today's 'surveillance capitalism' (Zuboff 2019).

The advent of the digital era was accompanied with controversial discussions about the social and economic transformations it brought about both for individuals and society/economy (Doukidis et *al.* 2004; Baumann and Lyon 2013; Skilton and Hovsepian 2018; Helbing 2015). The digital era also saw the emergence of the quantified self (Lupton, 2016; Mau, 2017) which is more or less directly related to issues of performativity[3], and discussions about the repercussions of algorithms and big data in decision-making processes at large (Danaher 2016), which potentially threatens democratic governance and raise civil and human rights issues (Han 2022). Again, as with other crisis-induced challenges, educating individuals to cope with these transformations was deemed central to successfully deploying digital technologies. In this sense, digital citizenship refers to knowledge, skills, and the duty to participate meaningfully and safely in the society of the twenty-first century. It also entails the concern to build resilience against online threats (for instance, cyberbullying, manipulation, etc.) (Council of Europe 2022).

In research on digital citizenship, three main perspectives could be recognized: a normative, a conditional, and a contextual perspective (Jorring *et al.* 2019).

In a 'normative' perspective, digital citizenship is understood as "the ideal way to act online" (Jorring *et al.* 2019: 16). This perspective orients itself on a normative definition of what it means to be a 'good' citizen, paralleling a traditional definition of citizenship and highlighting the rights and duties that apply to any digital citizen. For once, the digital citizen should engage online in political participation, educate themselves, seek for information, engage in dialogue etc. Further on, a 'good' digital citizen is expected to know how to behave online when dealing with cyberbullying or online civic engagement. In this regard, digital citizenship opens up many new possibilities. As Isin and Rupert highlight, more than the ability to participate online, the digital citizenship can be understood as "a composite subject of possibilities of obedience or submission to authority, but also of potential subversion" (Isin and Rupert 2020: 67). Focus of attention and locus of implementation of such a set of expectations is the individual, which makes the examination of subjectification crucial. After all, these expectations go hand in hand with a learned specific technological skillset required to fulfil them: "[...] the privilege of cybercitizenship requires skills beyond the technical capacity to search out information, engage in dialogue, or play games" (Berson and Berson 2004: 5).

These skills and the material possibilities to access the digital space and to acquire the necessary skills constitute the ability to participate online, which is the main topic of the 'conditional perspective'. It highlights the importance of access to the digital space to be subjected to the same rights and duties as a 'full' citizen. In this regard, the material and social conditions and requirements needed to access the online space become crucial: "Internet access is seen as a necessity for individu-

[3] It seems worthwhile stressing how the very perspective of quantification paves the way for a permanently self-improving self.

als in order to be full citizens in modern democracies" (Jorring *et al.* 2019: 17). Since not all citizens have the means to access the virtual space in the same quality and at the same costs, the digital transformation is very likely to deepen the existing socioeconomic inequalities, rendering digital citizenship a further means of social differentiation.

The third strand of research, the 'contextual perspective', critically examines the idea of digital citizenship, placing more value on the different contexts in which we speak of digital citizenship and focusing primarily on the fluidity in the understanding of the concept of digital citizenship. Critical digital citizenship studies are concerned with questions of power and scrutinize the emergence of new power structures through algorithms or big data (see reflection on digital divide: Shelley *et al.* 2004).

3.3 Migration and fragile citizenship

Scholars converge on the idea that the changes that occurred at different societal levels in relation to migration processes over the last decades have produced a new 'pressure' on the political, epistemological, and ontological framings of citizenship (see for different perspectives on the issue: Faist 2000; Tambini 2001; Schierup *et al.* 2006; Cinalli and Jacobson 2020). The 'classical' understanding of citizenship as the right to belong to a nation-state, as formulated by Hannah Arendt (1951), is undermined by cultural and structural dynamics triggered by contemporary migration flows.

First, the intertwinement between migratory processes and macro factors, such as globalisation, questions the assumption of borders and national state as 'natural boundaries' for citizenship as an intrinsically national project (Greblo 2014). The 'porosity' of borders is enhanced by forces operating at a meso level, with international non-governmental organizations strengthening cross-national bonds through cooperation and support for human rights at a supra-national level. From a micro-individual perspective, according to Soysal (1994) the activity of transnational institutions enables new opportunities for participation which go beyond national membership. New practices of citizenship (Cinalli and Jacobson, 2020) as forms of bottom-up agency are thus potentially envisaged for social groups that are partially or totally excluded from nation-based citizenship rights (as for instance second generation migrants born in countries regulated by *ius sanguinis*). In addition, the subjective cultural work of reinterpretation of the dominant understandings of citizenship contributes to its constant change, shaping new forms that "are mostly defined by universalistic oriented aspirations, rather than by the belonging to a political regime, as result of a sovereignty acted through formal administrative procedures" (Greblo 2014: 1108).

The combination of these elements has accelerated the erosion of 'traditional' nation-based citizenship, even in its academic expression of 'methodological nationalism', as pointed out by Beck (2007). Room was thus made for a post-national framing of citizenship (Jacobson 1996; Soysal 1994). This territorially dis-embedded form of citizenship potentially impacts the leeway for inclusion of new citizens based on social/human rights – a supposed key element in contemporary democracies'

agenda – stimulating at the same time claims for exclusion. Paradigmatically, starting from the late 1990s, the significant growth of the formal recognition of dual citizenships across the world has concurred with the emergence of a nationalist backlash feeding populist and sovereigntist politics and social movements.

From a governance perspective, this questions national welfare systems and their capacity to deal with a mutable and de-territorialised form of citizenship. As argued by Schierup *et al.* (2006), it has often led to the paradoxical consequence of even more exclusive welfare systems, which is particularly notable at the European level, as it resonates with the widespread notion of 'democratic deficit' of the European system, as well as with the metaphor of 'fortress Europe', the update of which refers to a community which resists to the migrants pushing at its borders. In this sense, the still ongoing process of construction of Europe as a supranational community, political project, and legislative body threatens to be countered by the contrast between national institutions' interests and the endeavours of 'democratizing democracy' (Balibar, 2015: 119).

In their cyclical processes of crisis and restructuring, the different European welfare systems have indeed tended to react with more selective criteria for inclusion, entailing

> the substantial negation of the right and actual ability to participate as a 'full member of the community' (Marshall, 1950), as sanctioned by the edifice of citizenship and the type of social contract on which the liberal democratic national welfare state has typically been founded (Dahrendorf 1985). (Schierup *et al*. 2006: 1 [original emphasis])

Amidst migration debates, changed understandings of citizenship questioned its close ties to national polities and pushed it closer to de-territorialised assumptions and criteria of inclusion.

As stated at the outset of this, we have sought to show how dynamic and versatile the understandings of citizenship can be and how the key developments shaping the late modern societies have created critical junctures at which elements of citizenship were increasingly questioned and slowly but steadily transformed. Although the subsections are not connected to each other and offer separate readings of the same phenomenon, they call attention to the need to consider not only the more substantial features that give form and meaning to the concept of citizenship, but also to the (cultural) practices and contexts, or, in other words, to the performative features of enacting citizenship.

4. Towards Performative Citizenship?

The term 'performative citizenship' has already been used (Isin 2017; see also: McThomas 2016) to discuss how becoming/being political subjects – citizens – involves "both the capacity and authority to exercise rights 'and' duties." (Isin, 2017: 501 [original emphasis]) As Isin argued, "'because' citizenship is 'constitutive' of rights and who can claim these rights is itself 'contested', citizenship is defined not just by having

these rights, but also by 'claiming' them." (Isin 2017: 515 [original emphasis]) Thus, citizenship is performative because it is both about exercising a right 'and' about claiming a right, even if those claiming it are not seen as (full) citizens. This discussion helped to overcome the idea that citizenship is stable and static concept that separates citizens from non-citizens, citizens from subjects, and opened up interesting avenues of research both of the (unstable) subject positions within and across polities and of the acts of citizenship entailed in enacting and claiming citizenship.

In the remainder of this paper, we explore another sense in which citizenship can be seen as performative, namely as a form of governmentality (Foucault 2007) that prompts individuals to conduct themselves in specific ways — ways that are discursively constructed as being a 'good' citizen and as crucial in dealing with crises.

To start with, social theory has debated current developments as effects of a general trend of technological acceleration (propelled by economic, capitalist logic), social acceleration (propelled by secularism and modernity), and the acceleration of the pace of life (powered by functional differentiation of society) (Rosa, 2013 [2005]). Social acceleration refers to processes of dynamization and continuous unsettling of modern certainties. Acceleration, Rosa conjectures, has been brought about throughout history by technical and technological innovations and their implementation in society. Rosa (2009) also discussed the impact of social acceleration on patterns of recognition in society that shapes relationships in modern social life. This is reflected in cultural knowledge, social institutions, and personal relationships, encompassing both structural and cultural aspects of institutions and social practices. Manifesting itself in a 'shrinking of the present', this phenomenon makes our relationships to each other and the world fluid and intricate. It seems thus worthwhile asking, whether the implications of this megatrend might go beyond social positions and status and encompass also the notion of citizenship? That is, not only recognition within a polity, but also the terms of membership themselves. Writing about social position/status, Rosa argued that these are no longer taken for granted and positionally ascribed to their bearers but have to be continuously and performatively negotiated and determined anew (Rosa 2009: 663).

Further the developments and transformations discussed above already hinted at changed understandings of citizenship suggesting that elements of merit are introduced as new performative criteria for inclusion/exclusion, as showed by the emergence of workfare systems across Europe. As Ong argued:

> Some sites and zones are invested with more political resources than others. Meanwhile, rights and entitlements once associated with all citizens are becoming linked to neoliberal criteria, so that entrepreneurial expatriates come to share in the rights and benefits once exclusively claimed by citizens. The difference between having and not having citizenship is becoming blurred as the territorialization of entitlements is increasingly challenged by deterritorialized claims beyond the state. (Ong 2006: 499f)

Making full use of one's own citizenship is more and more based on educational credentials as well as individual dispositions that, while not completely supplanting

national citizenship, increasingly determine access to and accessibility of rights, services, and personal liberties. The question we ask ourselves is, whether we are witnessing the onset of a new basis for citizenship. Greeks and Romans based citizenship on either blood lineage (*ius sanguinis*) or place of birth (*ius solis*). More recently, some states started discussing the possibility to add some educational/qualification criteria to nationalization processes. For instance, Italy has discussed the participation in the formal education system as one such criterion under the label *'ius scholae'* [4].

Performative citizenship, in this context, might be best understood as a form of neoliberal governmentality. Michel Foucault famously coined this term to think about government or the state by rejecting a substantial state theory, that is, a theory of the state as a "transcendental reality whose history could be undertaken on the basis of itself. It must be possible to do the history of the state on the basis of men's actual practice [sic], on the basis of what they do and how they think" (Foucault 2007: 455). Under the premises of the (neo) liberal state, the question of governing appears as linked to the question of how people are governed to govern themselves.

In a similar way, understanding the transformations of citizenship might be pushed forward by looking into the 'practices, concepts and techniques' of performing citizenship.

The term performativity was coined by Judith Butler to describe gender as a form of social action, a process by which reality is socially constructed. Building up on linguistic theories of the act of speaking not solely as constating or describing reality, but as a language that effects changes in the world (Austin 1962). Butler wrote: "Within speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names" (Butler 1993: 13). In other terms, a speech act produces that which it names by referring to socially accepted norms, codes, etc.; the latter are then iteratively cited or repeated (and thus performed) in the pronouncement. Butler argues that, by ceaselessly referring to the conventions and ideologies of the social world around us, we enact that reality; in the performative act of speaking, people 'embody' reality by enacting it with their bodies, but then again that 'reality' nonetheless remains a social construction (Butler 1990). Butler used the concept to explore how gender and sexuality are constructed by linguistic acts and other forms of social practices. More recently, economic sociologists used the concept to better understand 'economic performativity', namely the fact that economists and financial experts not only describe their subject matter, but also shape them with their own practices (Brisset 2019; see also Beckert and Bronk 2018).

Performing citizenship, entails discursive, dispositional, cognitive, and moral qualities. From a cross-reading of the buoyant literature on citizenship education, one can identify numerous distinctive features that are best described as performat-

[4] One of the main topics of discussion in the debate for the last elections for the Italian national government (September 2022) has been the issue of migrants' citizenship. The centre-left parties counter the right-wing and sovereigntist parties' claims for the closure of borders by proposing the introduction of the *ius scholae* as a new criterion of recognition of the right to citizenship (cf. Alicino 2021). Even though this discussion was part of political calculations during the elections, it is telling that education figures so prominently in the issue at hand.

ive: flexible, entrepreneurial, singular, resilient, generalist, aware pro/consumer, creative/innovative, tolerant, digital native, reflexive, etc. Further, educational institutions promoting disruptive innovation as the only way forward, also capitalize in cultivating these dispositions in their students.

4.1 Educating performative citizens

In an ongoing research project, we explore how new educational models and institutions contribute to educating performative citizens as discussed in the previous section. We focus on two examples that can be termed 'global universities' both in terms of their ambitions and stated missions, which represent specific forms of education with peculiar consistency with the surrounding discourses about performativity. In presenting these examples we do not seek to provide an empirical foundation for our argumentation, rather we look for resonance at the individual level with the discourses reshaping the dominant understanding of citizenship at a global level.

The first example is the Minerva University, a for-profit elite online university based in California, USA. The Minerva University departs from two basic reasonings for fundamentally changing higher education: First "we are facing a dire, cross-sector, global shortage of effective leaders […and second] education, and specifically higher education, must play a critical role in solving this problem" (Kosslyn and Nelson 2018: 5). The mission statement is to reinvent higher education and "give students the cognitive tools they would need to succeed after they graduated" (Kosslyn and Nelson 2018: 1) as well as getting to leading positions in a changing, globalized world. Among these cognitive tools are "four core competencies: critical thinking, creative thinking, effective communication, and effective interactions" (Kosslyn and Nelson 2018: 9) around which the curricula and programmes are built based on a science of learning pedagogy and digital technology.

Minerva reorganized the physical facilities, the curriculum, seminars and lectures, the role of faculty and staff, etc. in order to revamp the study experience and to cater to the best students of the world, irrespective of nationality and social origin. Student courses are all held as online video classes, Minerva does not foresee lectures and the seminars are strongly based on the students' 'fully active' participation and on a radically 'flipped classroom' concept, with a strong emphasis on practical, general skills and competences, such as creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Students are required to travel to different places around the globe and spend their semesters in different mega-cities worldwide (San Francisco, London, Hyderabad, Buenos Aires, Seoul, Taipei, and Berlin) in order to become global citizens and leaders.

The second example is the Aalto University, a Finnish new founding model termed 'an innovation university' that combines science, art, technology and entrepreneurship, and aims at a sustainable future through entrepreneurship and innovation (Aalto University 2020; Moisio and Kangas 2016). Aalto reorganized its physical and immaterial settings of learning to create a new education 'ecosystem' that fosters entrepreneurial identities. These new performative subjectivities are crafted not in

traditional lecture or seminar rooms, but rather in joint projects revolving around designing/creating a product or invention as well as in numerous student activities such as start-up events (for which there is even a 'Startup Sauna'), promotional literature and on-campus marketing banners.

As anticipated, our reflection might be enriched by exploring different narratives of people who have experienced the educational and learning models of Aalto and Minerva universities. Indeed, those accounts can be seen as the result of the negotiation between subjective stances and the values fostered by specific educational models that work as institutional 'devices' for promoting performative self. The focus is on the interactions with such pedagogical models and on how the push towards performativity resonates in the accounts of the students. Thus, our attention is mainly devoted to the performative type of engagement and the justification for membership in those universities.

Specifically, our analysis focuses on one 'provoked' narrative (nar_1) collected by a face-to-face interview held at Aalto University and three 'spontaneous' narratives (nar_2; nar_3; nar_4) of Minerva University students uploaded on public YouTube channels.

Before going into the analysis, it is important to highlight some heterogeneity in terms of the general tone of the narratives. Although to some extent all four accounts provide insights about the pros and cons of the participation in those educational environments, we could find different balances, with a stronger appreciation expressed in nar_2 and nar_1, and more room devoted to the reflection on the downsides of the experiences in nar_3 and, above all, in nar_4.

A first common thread among the narratives is the representation of Minerva and Aalto universities as more challenging than 'traditional' universities. In nar_1 this is expressed by comparing the 'classical' atmosphere of art schools with the merging of art and business school proposed by the Aalto University. The idea is that artsy social environments are necessarily unproductive, and this impacts on the atmosphere and the attitudes of their students. Instead in Aalto,

> the atmosphere is less Art School, whatever that means. I think that means […] if there's a person who just wants to like wander around in the Art School, […] it might not be the best place. [nar_1]

On a different mood, nar_4 tells how the challenging environment has enabled the student to find her ambition, although her performance revealed not adequate:

> Minerva challenged me academically, and I think because of that I was forced, more so than I might have been at a normal college, to confront the question of what I was willing to be that challenged to do, and that is how I figured out that I want to work in a creative field […] but that's kind of TBD because I haven't tried out enough to know for sure. I don't know if I would [to be defined] realized that at a different school. [nar_4]

Aalto and Minerva are described as social environments, where high levels of self-activation are expected. The participation in these communities is expressed

through the collaboration to a 'collective performance'. This resonates in the idea of a convergence of the individual and institutional 'mission', a sort of 'shared destiny' mostly based on reputation (a key dimension of social performativity):

> Aalto has a great brand within it, if you say you're from Aalto it's different when you say like you're from [another more traditional art school] […] I wouldn't want to use it everywhere but if I put it in my Instagram profile to be […] that is always good topic in a conversation and that is, uhh, that separates when you seek for jobs for example [nar_1].
> Minerva ['s aim is to establish", the authors"] themselves as a respected University to build this reputation as a good school. So, I realized that it's not so much whether the institution or school cares about you or not, and what it really comes down to is: what is their interests and does that align with your interests. It is very much in Minerva's interest as an institution that wants to preserve and improve itself, to invest a lot of time and effort into us students right now [nar_2].

Therefore, the general depiction that comes out draws the engagement in those educational environments as intrinsically performative, as it derives from the match between individual attitudes and skills (often framed under the notion of 'talent') and the capacity of the educational institution to recognize and cultivate them. Enrolling in Aalto or Minerva university thus looks more like a privilege which must be deserved, both proving a 'natural' disposition and enacting a proactive approach. This gets evident when students stress the capacity of Minerva to see subjective features of the students, such as their values, and organize the work among them accordingly:

> they put you into these professional development groups with people that have similar values and then together you think about what's important to you and how do you turn that into a career. [nar_2]

Evocatively, this goes in the direction of a sort of 'Calvinist predestination' to an exclusive community, and it also embodies elements of the contemporary dominant understanding of membership as a merit which needs constant confirmation. In a broader perspective this is consistent with the 'new' feeling of belonging related to citizenship, which moves from the traditional proudness being a member of a nation (based on geographical and cultural belonging) to a more dynamic and, again, performative vision of it.

On the side of the institutions, this reflects in the attribution of an almost 'redemptive' function assigned by their students, who have found in them a chance to emancipate from the shortcomings of the traditional educational system, in the wake of their change of mindset.

> All these new ways of thinking have actually changed how I see the world around me, which is really wild. And then we have to apply these new ways of thinking that we learned to actually, [nar_2]

The shared *telos* of membership embodies several abstract concepts which prevail in the surrounding discourses on global citizenship and cosmopolitanism. In

terms of expectations, it translates into a normative prescription which shape the subjective choices, and promote specific modes of self-conduct, fostering subjectivities oriented to permanent self-improvement. For instance, multiculturalism, which is often referred to as the 'glue' keeping the community together, as well as one of the most relevant values in this context, entails specific forms of performance. To be actualised, such concept requires a permanent mobility (in nar_3 it is reported as 'seven countries in four years'). The high mobility results in a further increase of the social performativity which is enacted in continuously entering and leaving different communities. This impacts the students' experiences making them even more dynamic:

> I have the most wonderful, supportive, interesting, kind and quirky group of a hundred sixty classmates more or less from about 40 different countries. People come from so many different backgrounds and experiences and have such a big range of opinions and beliefs about the world, different religions, (so) that you're constantly just having these super interesting mind-blowing conversations where you're always learning something. [nar_2]

Yet, it forces to a constant social proactiveness, which can be very demanding, as pointed out in nar_3, when a period of vacation in the hometown of the student is mostly appreciated as a suspension of social performativity:

> Not trying to prove myself to anyone but just being accepted fully, completely, without even trying, not having to explain anything to new people about Who I am and trying to reinvent myself […] Spending time with my family, my old closest friends it kind of brings me back to this point of like: "hey I deserve to be loved I deserve to be like appreciated unconditionally. [nar_3]

Significatively, the dominant values of mobility and openness to multiculturalism are also the main reasons of struggling for the students, who also express the difficulties faced in participating to those environments. This issue is particularly evident in the fourth narrative, when the student relates her depression to the difficulties faced in moving to different countries, creating positive relationships with her always changing roommates and find support in the different Minerva's psychological counsellors:

> when I moved to San Francisco I let myself be completely isolated from all of my friends back home and it quickly became clear that I had serious attachment and co-dependency issues, which I failed to do anything to address. Part of this is because when I did go to Minerva's psychologist counsellor person, I had such a hard time communicating with him that I let him convince me that I was just homesick and that I would get over it. I did not get over it. [nar_4]

Noteworthy, we can find a common attitude in nar_3 and nar_4, where the narrated difficulties are justified. In both accounts, and with some evidence in the fourth, the responsibility for the struggle is always self-assigned, leading to a general self-blaming which is a typical consequence of governmental dynamics. Then neoliberal 'good citizen' is indeed made responsible for the outcomes of his/her social performance:

> I'm pretty sure Minerva exacerbated my depression and made my mental illness worse, just because of how hard it is and how much more uprooted and unsettled you constantly are. And how hard it is to build a relationship with the therapist that you actually get on with well. But then I can just say that my big regret is really that I didn't seek out help early enough that I didn't tell the people that cared about me that I needed help, and that I haven't been able to figure out a way to communicate with the people who can help me in a way that lets them help me. [nar_4]

These narratives are interesting in and of themselves but reading them in the thematic context of this paper illustrates how becoming/being a 'good' citizen is to be achieved by performing in specific ways. Both the educational environments discussed cater to those students willing to excel, to make a change in the world — or quoting the Minerva homepage: "students come together as future leaders and entrepreneurs from 100 nations to live and learn together […] as one community to address the greatest challenges facing humanity" (Minerva University website). Students at Aalto are also seen as the future transnational 'professional citizens' (Moisio and Kangas 2016: 269) needed to ensure Finland's economic prosperity in the global knowledge-based economy.

5. Concluding Remarks

In the article, we have discussed the dynamic nature of citizenship and its recent performative turn. It is not without difficulty to discuss this concept, as it is laden with multiple meanings due to its historical role and relation to global ruptures and transformations. With the perspective of education, which is called to address the issue of fostering, or even 'producing', good citizenship, we have added another layer of complexity. It enabled us to carve out razor-thin observations on how performing citizenship is replacing the mere status of being a citizen. The aim of the article was exactly this: to walk the reader through the mutual transformation of the global and the individual, the changing nature of the society and the shifting notion of being a member of it. The concept of citizenship offered us a fitting entry point. We have sought to argue that the critical junctures created by recent crises under global, digital, and postnational/deterritorialized circumstances are challenging the nature of citizenship and fostering new forms and practices of self-conduct.

Our argument was built on three premises: First, as discussed in section two, the concept of citizenship has multiple intertwined layers and horizons fuelled by social change. Second, as argued in section three, it absorbs and is affected by critical ruptures in technology, transfer, and scalability as it is linked with the ultimate question of identity. And third, as analysed in section four, it no longer functions prescriptively, but rather performatively. The examples briefly discussed performed the role of 'evocative stimuli' aimed at hinting that how this changed understanding of citizenship is negotiated in educational settings, particularly in those that present themselves as providing a solution to contemporary crises. Such development raises critical questions as to the exclusionary character of citizenship, but more importantly as to the function of education as a leveller of inequalities.

To conclude, the performative feature of citizenship is both provoking and threatening. It provokes us to move beyond the taken-for-granted and birth-given entitlements connected to the arbitrary distribution of citizenship rights and question how being a full member of society can be re-imagined on new grounds. The threat it possesses lies in the very idea of performance, which follows the neoliberal dictum of constantly re-inventing oneself. What appears to be the new promise of education — the saviour from future uncertainties —, can quickly turn out to be a false lighthouse navigating blind, because self-centred, citizens.

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De Europa
Vol. 6, No. 2 (2023), 41-59
ISSN 2611-853X
www.deeuropa.unito.it

Youth political participation and inequalities: comparing European countries and different repertoires of engagement

Elisa Lello, Nico Bazzoli

1. Introduction

In recent years, research on Western democracies has shown that political participation has undergone a deep transformation in its very nature (Dalton 1996). Among the various crises that have affected Europe in the recent past – from the financial crisis of 2008/2009 to the most recent Covid-19 and energy crises – that of political participation has acquired structural aspects, and it is redesigning the relationship between citizens and political parties. Europeans vote less than half a century ago and are more politically disengaged (Norris 2011; Papadopoulos 2013; Allen and Birch 2015). Disengagement looks particularly evident for the youngest cohorts of the population: among them, we can observe the lowest values of electoral participation compared to any other age groups (Kitanova 2020).

Young people are perceived as increasingly disengaged and disconnected from traditional political processes in Europe, especially regarding voting (European Commission 2001; 2007). New cohorts' political commitment has become increasingly scarce, intermittent, and superficial in the last decades (Gozzo 2010). This trend is so visible that it has determined the attribution to new generations of labels such as "invisible generations" (Diamanti 1999) or "sons of disenchantment" (Bontempi and Pocaterra 2007). According to some authors, these are characterized by an eclipse of interest in politics and a progressive retirement into the private sphere (Ricolfi 2002). Furthermore, young people are not only labelled as disengaged but even as apathetic or alienated from traditional forms of politics (Stoker 2006; Hay 2007), while other scholars have pointed out how the difficult socio-economic situation of young people, and even more so their worried and pragmatic vision of the future – especially in Italy and other Mediterranean countries – has rather led to a shift towards a technical, almost depoliticised conception of politics (Lello 2015; 2020).

Several scholars have opposed the thesis of apathy or retirement into the private sphere of younger cohorts, pointing out how they prefer to engage in unconventional forms of activism and protest, such as associations and volunteering or issue-based political initiatives (Spannring, Ogris, and Gaiser 2008; Sloam 2016).

Political participation has indeed become something broader and more complex than mere traditional political activities such as voting in elections (Ekman and Amnå

Elisa Lello, University of Urbino Carlo Bo, elisa.lello@uniurb.it
Nico Bazzoli, University of Urbino Carlo Bo, nico.bazzoli@uniurb.it

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.13135/2611-853X/7368

2012; Pitti 2018). It can include a wide range of activities such as participating in cultural organizations or associations, signing petitions, or boycotting specific products (Bourne 2010). The overall emergence of these forms of political participation in society is often associated with the role played by younger generations.

A substantial body of literature states that young people engage more in politics through those types of political activity (Norris 2003; Spannring *et al.* 2008; Kestilä-Kekkonen 2009) which are generally labelled as "unconventional", in opposition to "conventional" ones (such as voting, contacting public officials, taking part in a party campaign). However, while younger cohorts were generally more engaged than adult ones in these forms of activism during the 1970s-80s, research has also showed a decrease in non-institutional youth participation during the latest decades. These activism practices are indeed no longer over-represented among younger cohorts compared to adult ones (Goerres 2009; Grasso 2014; Fox 2015). Consistently, Grasso (2014) points out that today's youth are the least politically engaged generation ever, in terms of both conventional and unconventional political participation. These processes have to be placed in a wider social context marked by the impact of neo-liberalism and the consequent individualisation of risk, where everyday problems and shortages are increasingly interpreted as the result of personal failures rather than the consequences of structural factors to be addressed collectively, thus contributing to discouraging collective mobilisations (Chiapello and Boltanski 1999; Beck and Beck-Gerhsheim 2001).

Studies on political participation have often focused on common tendencies in voting and alternative forms of engagement in single countries (Dalton 2009; Van Deth *et al.* 2007; Whiteley 2012) or across some democracies (LeDuc *et al.* 2014; Norris 2011). Less attention has been paid to comparing youth participation practices across a wider range of countries and the relative popularity of different modes of participation among younger citizens (Sloam 2016; Kitanova 2020).

Our work addresses this relative gap in the existing literature by investigating the recent dynamics of youth political participation through data from the 9th edition (2018) of the European Social Survey (ESS). The first aim is to explore differences in young people's political involvement levels within the European Union. On the other hand, the transformations regarding the very nature of political participation also affect the relationship between socio-economic inequalities and political engagement, implying the emergence of both new possibilities and barriers to access, which are related to different dimensions of exclusion (Bruselius-Jensen, Pitti and Tisdall 2021; Bruselius-Jensen and Nielsen 2021; Tisdall 2021). The second objective, therefore, is to assess the impact of socio-economic inequalities on political engagement based on a quantitative and comparative approach, comparing younger cohorts with older ones.

To explore these issues, the rest of the article is organized as follows. The next section provides a conceptual framework contextualizing our analysis within the existing literature on young Europeans' political participation and formulates the main hypotheses guiding the empirical analysis. The third section deals with methods and

provides adequate clarifications on data and empirical choices. The fourth one aims to expose the results of the analysis and unravel the differences between some groups of countries, based on the relative popularity of conventional and unconventional participation among youth. In the fifth section, the analysis is focused on the relationships between political engagement and socio-economic inequalities according to an individual-based analysis, which compares young and old people. Finally, the last section provides some conclusive remarks with the aim of discussing the interpretations of the empirical results and their possible implications.

2. Class, inequalities, and youth political participation in Europe

The life of young Europeans has changed considerably in the recent past under the pressure of economic, cultural, and institutional factors. The transition from youth to adulthood for those born in the late 1980s is delayed and staggered compared to that of their parents. This phenomenon is evident to such an extent that it has influenced the way of defining young citizens (Arnett 2004; Flanagan 2009). We hear more and more often about "young adults", meaning the subjects who have only partially experienced the different stages of life marking the transition to adulthood (Cavalli and De Lillo 1993). In some countries, especially Italy and other Southern European countries, the presence of structural factors that hinder young people's economic and housing independence – more than in other national contexts – has led to the extension of the age range within which one person is considered young (Cuzzocrea, Bello and Kazepov 2020).

These changes are related to the increase in the years of study, the delayed entry into the labour market, the challenges posed by growing job insecurity, as well as the postponement of choices such as marriage and having children (European Commission 2009). Structural changes in the labour market have caused younger cohorts to face more significant social risks than previous generations, resulting in both a loss of certainties such as job security and an increase of precariousness (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). The risk of downward social mobility particularly affects young people, and for more educated youth a central element becomes status incongruence (Raffini 2013). Moreover, the delayed acquisition of social and economic stability can affect the constitution of individuals' identity and the very definition of subjective interests, determining a deferral or disengagement in the assumption of social, civil, and political responsibilities by new generations (Gozzo 2010).

In recent decades, the ways of understanding politics have also changed. The individualization of values has led to the emergence of so-called "lifestyle politics" (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005, Giddens 1994). Young people have been described as the protagonists of a reinvention of politics, which leads to a politicization of everyday life (Pirni and Raffini 2022). Old class divisions much less define the political activities of young Europeans than their own experiences and perceptions of democracy in their social and work environments (Marsh *et al.* 2007). Young citizens' political commitment increasingly concerns participation in personally significant issues

driven by their lifestyle, values, and social networks (Bennett 2007), in accordance with a shift from political to cultural conflict (Touraine 1980) and from a traditional "dutiful" citizen model to a newer "self-actualising" one (Bennett and Wells 2009; Pleyers and Capitaine 2017).

Notwithstanding the declining importance of the class dimension in structuring processes of collective identification, it may be argued that social class in itself keeps playing a crucial role in determining different degrees of access to political participation. The interaction between socio-economic exclusion and political exclusion has been explored since the origins of empirical research on civic engagement by the Social Centrality Model (Socio-Economic Status Model, hereinafter SES Model), according to which political engagement increases as we move towards those social components that can benefit from larger stocks of economic, cultural, social, and psychological resources linked to personal and family social position (Milbrath and Goel 1977; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995)[1]. That model was discussed in the classic contribution by Alessandro Pizzorno (1966), who shifted attention away from social-economic inequalities to collective identification processes and the role of mass organizations like parties and trade unions. Looking at the history of Western democracies, such organizations did play a decisive role in counterbalancing the effects of the SES Model, contributing to steering wide components of blue-collar workers and subaltern classes towards political participation. It was also noted that within these organizations differences in the intensity and quality of participation often recurred, especially relating to the control of resources linked to the socio-economic condition (Pizzorno 1966). Nonetheless, political organizations have helped to politically "form" and "integrate" vast social segments that would otherwise have largely remained on the margins of the political system.

This point is momentous since, in the absence of this counterbalancing role historically assumed by mass political organizations, the effects of social centrality can cause political participation to become an arena of reproduction, and perhaps even widening, of social inequalities. In fact, the issues that become the object of mobilization processes tend to receive more attention, resources, and answers from institutions than those which do not (Schlozman, Verba e Brady 1999), even if the latter are of interest to a wider audience, and precisely for this reason find it harder to organize themselves (Olson 1971). In other words, it is likely that issues raised by those social components who engage most – largely overlapping with the wealthiest social sectors – receive more attention from governments. In this way, census, while no longer being a discriminating factor at a legislative level, continues to determine unequal access to participation, as well as differentiated chances of receiving answers in terms of policies, from the point of view of concrete, everyday social dynamics (Gaxie 1978).

[1] We are aware that social class and the SES model are not synonymous, since social class refers to a common belonging that concerns economic situation, but also prestige and profession, cultural capital, aesthetic criteria and lifestyles (Bourdieu 1979), while the SES model is basically an operationalisation of the concept of social centrality. However, since the SES model includes aspects related to economic situation, educational level, belonging to linguistic and religious majorities/minorities, etc., we can reasonably relate the two concepts.

In this paper, we highlight that a number of factors occurring in recent times bring the relationship between class and access to political participation again to the fore, concerning the whole of society and especially youth. Such factors partly have to do with the impoverishment of middle classes and the increasing inequalities taking place throughout Western democracies, as well as with the abovementioned processes that identify younger cohorts as the most exposed to social risks and marginalization. Thus, distances between central and peripheral social positions are getting wider and deeper, even though – and at the same time as – class as an object of political conflict and identification has lost relevance when compared to other dimensions (such as gender, race, and sexual orientations).

Secondly, in recent decades a real change in the nature of political participation has begun to occur, whereby the contraction of conventional engagement has been accompanied by a widening of the repertoire of participation itself, which has included an increasing variety of unconventional forms. This may lead to an exacerbation of the influence of variables attributable to "social centrality". On the one hand, there is no longer a widespread presence of organizations that mobilize people in the territories, in society, and at workplaces. The transformation of participation and the withdrawal of political organizations from society towards institutions (Katz and Mair 1995) make political participation more of an individual rather than an associative issue, as it was, after all, before the emergence of mass political parties (Manin 1995). Parties decrease their efforts towards socialization and mobilization (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000) and the ability of trade unions to mobilize workers that are fragmented in terms of their contractual position and physical workplace becomes decidedly more uncertain.

On the other hand, heterodox activism seems to require more resources (skills, interest, information, as well as time and familiarity with new technologies), compared to mobilization within large organizations. It is the very characteristics of unconventional participation that lead us to suppose that the probability of its activation is influenced by the control of cognitive, socio-economic, and relational resources, to an even more pronounced extent than activism in conventional forms (Verba, Nie and Kim 1978; Dalton 1996). On average, these are methods of involvement that indeed require a more active role on the part of the individual in various ways: from the very selection and framing of the issues to the need to obtain information and develop one's own counter-expertise and to think up original forms of mobilization capable of penetrating the media without having to bring huge crowds of people to the streets. In all these aspects, the role of those who decide to mobilize is clearly much more active, and therefore requires more resources, compared to a time when the protagonists were mass organizations which made decisions and organized demonstrations limiting themselves to asking militants to take to the streets.

Based on such premises, our work is aimed at analysing ESS data moving from some major hypotheses:

1) We expect higher levels of youth political engagement to be associated with wealthier social conditions, in accordance with the SES model, through both an

individual-based analysis and a comparison of different national cases. In the latter case, we expect to find higher political engagement in European countries where younger generations experience better socio-economic conditions. In addition, we focus on differences between countries also concerning the repertoire of political engagement (conventional or unconventional). However, we are conscious that a comparison between different national cases is influenced, beyond youth socio-economic conditions, by contextual characteristics, since the social and cultural peculiarities of national contexts can have a direct and diversified impact on political participation (Kitanova 2020). National civic-political cultures can indeed play a leading role in determining young and older citizens' political participation (Sloam 2016).

2) As for the individual-based analysis, we expect to find a deeper impact of social centrality on unconventional rather than conventional participation, since the first form relies to a larger extent on individual resources which are, in their turn, related to individual social positions; at the same time, it is less dependent on the intervention of political organizations able to counterbalance the effects of social centrality.

3. Data and methods

This article addresses young Europeans' political participation from a comparative perspective between some EU countries. The work draws on data from wave 9 of the ESS (2018)[2] to examine political participation in six different political activities. The six indicators selected concern electoral participation (voting in most recent national parliament elections) or forms of unconventional participation (wearing or displaying a badge or sticker, signing a petition, participating in a boycott, participating in a demonstration, posting or sharing something online about politics).

In order to analyse the relationship between socio-economic conditions and forms of political participation by young Europeans, we mainly relied on the respondents' educational level. Even though this can be considered a good proxy for the socio-economic status, since it is related to other dimensions (such as income, parents' education level, professional position, social recognition, self-esteem and so on), we verified if we were to obtain consistent results even through another indicator, that is the respondents' feelings about their current household income.

All these data derive from specific ESS questions as presented in Table 1. For the purpose of cross-country comparison, we have aggregated the data at the national scale, calculating the rates for young people and the rest of the population for each indicator.

[2] We preferred to use these data rather than the recently published ESS wave 10 data (2020) to avoid possible biases related to the emergence of the Covid-19 crisis in 2020. The reliance of our paper on only one edition of the survey may be considered as a limitation of the study.

Tab. 1 – Selected indicators (ESS 9 2018).

	Indicators
Participation in election	Voted last national election
Unconventional forms of participation	- Worn or displayed campaign badge/sticker last 12 months. - Signed petition last 12 months. - Taken part in lawful public demonstration last 12 months. - Boycotted certain products last 12 months. - Posted or shared anything about politics online last 12 months.
Socio-economic	- Educational level (tertiary: BA and MA; vocational and upper secondary; until lower secondary. - Feeling about current household income (difficult + very difficult on present income; coping + living comfortably on present income).

Although it would have been preferable to investigate a broader range of participatory acts, the selected ESS items provide a good overview of youth participation in each country. For reasons related to the availability of ESS data at the national level, it was necessary to focus only on 22 of the 27 EU Member States. Great Britain was included in the analysis because during the surveying window of wave 9 ESS (2018) it was still a member of the EU, and the effects of Brexit were not yet implemented. Then, the comparative analysis covered 23 European countries, involving both founding member states of the EU and more recent member states.

In this article, respondents to wave 9 ESS (2018) aged 15 to 34 are defined as "young Europeans". The reason therefore is twofold. On the one hand, it is linked to the extension of the youth age range mentioned in the previous section. On the other hand, considering the 15-34 age group as young has practical reasons due to the size of the sample in single countries. Overall, the analysis was carried out on data from 40563 respondents distributed in 23 countries; 8938 respondents between 15 and 34 years of age and 31625 respondents older than 34.

However, when dealing with electoral participation, we restricted the youth category to the 18-34 age range and set aside those who declared not being eligible to vote at the time of the most recent national election.

Analyses were conducted after weighting data by using *anweight* (analysis weight), since, as reported in the ESS Data web portal, this weight is "suitable for all types of analyses, including when you are studying just one country, when you compare across countries, or when you are studying groups of countries"[3].

4. Youth political engagement across European countries

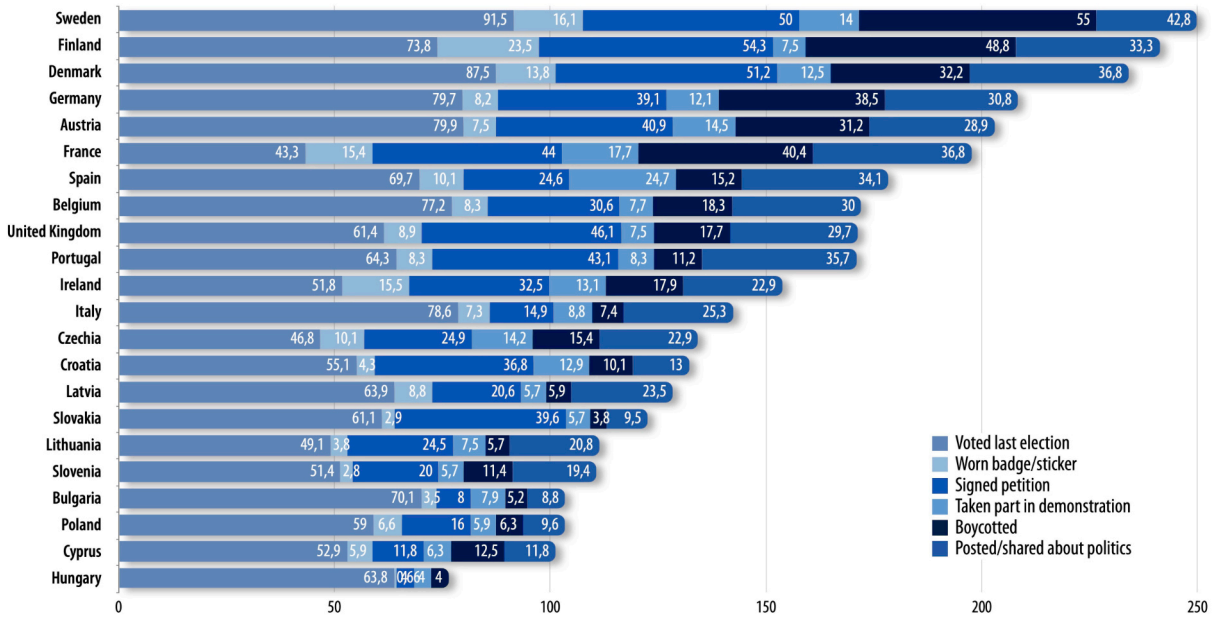
As shown in Fig. 1, youngsters' rates of political engagement vary considerably across Europe. A group of Northern European countries stands as the one characterized by the highest level of youth involvement in politics, while at the bottom we find Eastern and Baltic countries, together with Italy (and, to a lesser extent, the Nether-

[3] https://stessrelpubprodwe.blob.core.windows.net/data/round9/survey/ESS_weighting_data_1_1.pdf

lands). It is interesting to note that, while differences in electoral participation are sometimes relevant, yet generally modest, differences between countries where youngsters are most or least engaged particularly concern unconventional participation. Thus, those countries where young people are less engaged show relevantly lower rates of youth engagement in boycotting, sharing posts online, and signing petitions.

These differences between countries may also be interpreted as a partial confirmation of the perduring relevance of the SES Model. Younger cohorts generally do seem to be more engaged in those countries where their social and economic situation are better – although we are aware that the economic situation is only one aspect of social centrality, albeit a crucial one. Conversely, countries where youngsters engage less partially overlap with those where their preceding conditions of vulnerability have been further worsened by the effects of the economic crisis started in 2007-2008, so that their present situation is particularly critical compared to other age groups, including some Southern and Eastern European countries (European Commission 2017; Morlino and Raniolo 2017; Pitti 2018).

Fig. 1 – Rates of youth (18-34 year olds) participation in voting and non-electoral forms of engagement

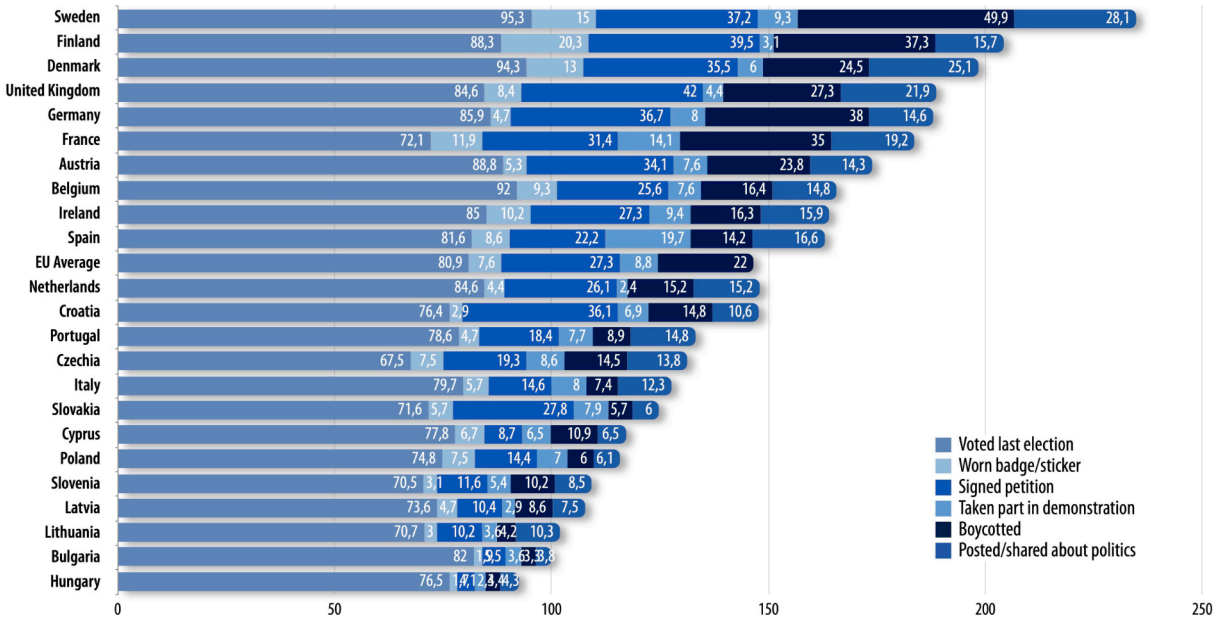


Source: European Social Survey data, Wave 9 (2018).

However, patterns of youth engagement also reflect and reproduce important traits of national political cultures, concerning both general trends and the prevalence of specific (conventional or unconventional) repertoires of engagement.

As for the first point, we can see that the country hierarchy based on youth engagement rates is consistently similar to the one obtained when focusing on adult and older people (Fig. 2). In broad terms, youngsters tend to imitate and reproduce other cohorts' propension to political engagement.

Fig. 2 – Rates of adult (35 year olds and over) participation in voting and non-electoral forms of engagement



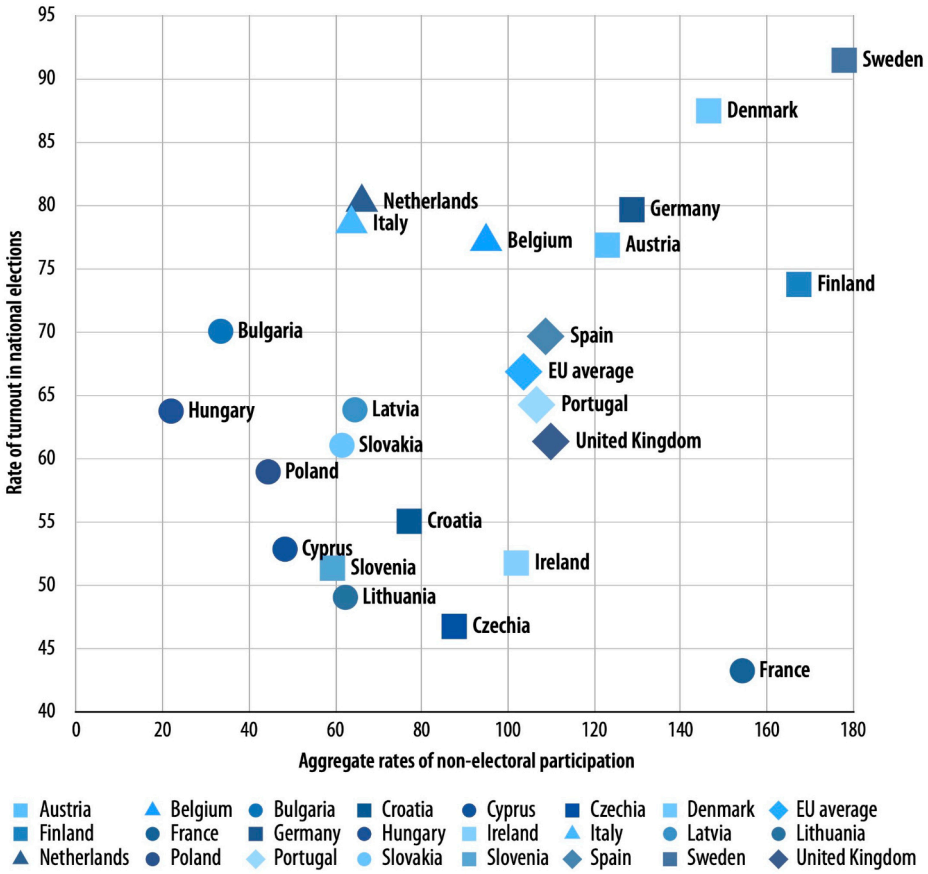
Source: European Social Survey data, Wave 9 (2018).

As for the second one, youngsters' attitudes about the specific repertoires of political engagement show aspects of consistency and continuity with elements of the traditional political culture of each state. In Figure 3, it is possible to look at the collocation of each country according to two axes: the horizontal one reporting the aggregate rates of youth unconventional participation, while the vertical one indicates the rates of youth turnout in most recent general elections. In this way, it is possible to identify a group of Northern-Western countries (Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany) where youngsters are highly engaged in both electoral and non-electoral forms of political involvement, reproducing high levels of commitment which are usually reported for adult and older cohorts as well (Garcia-Albacete 2014). While most other Western European countries (Belgium, Austria, Spain, Portugal, United Kingdom) vary from moderate to high levels of youth engagement in both repertoires of political engagement, and score quite close to the average European value, other countries stand apart. This is the case of most Eastern and Baltic countries (Czechia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia), where past Communist regimes and the historical circumstances of their transitions towards liberal democracy have fostered widespread feelings of detachment and scepticism towards politics, thus nurturing low levels of engagement, concerning both electoral and unconventional forms (Howard 2002; Bordignon 2007; Vukelic and Stanojevic 2012); while Latvia, Hungary and Bulgaria, though scoring low in unconventional participation, show levels of electoral participation close to Portugal and UK.

However, this is also the case of Italy. In Italian political culture, engagement is traditionally meant more as a political struggle between opposing ideologies and militant fronts than as grassroots activism. This has traditionally fostered high levels of

turnout (and party membership) alongside significantly lower rates of non-electoral (and non-partisan) participation (Biorcio 2003). Italian youngsters thus seem to reproduce their fellow nationals' political behaviour. Something similar – albeit in the opposite direction – happens in France. Here, the traditional weakness in the social and territorial organization of political parties is intertwined with a political culture that is more oriented towards direct actions and contentious politics (Sawicki 1997; Ysmal 2005). Once again, young people's trends seem to follow coherently, so that they stand among the most engaged in non-electoral forms and as the least involved in voting.

Fig. 3 – Rates of youth participation across EU



Source: European Social Survey data, Wave 9 (2018).

5. The Social Centrality Model, between conventional and unconventional repertoires of engagement

While differences between national cases are mostly related to contextual factors such as political cultures and styles of civic engagement, the impact of social centrality is instead more clearly identifiable in the individual-based analysis. When using educational level as a proxy for the individual socio-economic status, we can observe a relevant difference between the most and the least educated, both among young people and older ones, for what concerns electoral participation as well as unconventional forms of civic engagement. The same results are obtained when we use the indicator concerning respondents' feelings about their own household income, although differences are even wider when measured through the education level.

Tab. 2 – Electoral and unconventional participation by educational level (%) and by feelings about present household income (%), among young Europeans (18–34-year-olds) and older cohorts (35 years old and over)[4].

	18-34 (excluding the non-eligible to vote)				35 and over			
	Up to lower secondary	vocational and upper secondary	tertiary (BA and MA)	tertiary – lower secondary (percent. points)	Up to lower secondary	vocational and upper secondary	tertiary (BA and MA)	tertiary – lower secondary (percent. points)
Voted last national election	49	66	80	31	73	82	90	16
Engaged in two or more forms of unconventional participation*	18	28	39	21	10	24	39	29
	(very) Difficult on present income	Coping or living comfortably	Coping or living comfortably - (very) Difficult on present income (percent. points)		(very) Difficult on present income	Coping or living comfortably	Coping or living comfortably - (very) Difficult on present income (percent. points)	
Voted last national election	51	71	20		69	84	15	
Engaged in two or more forms of unconventional participation*	25	31	6		16	25	9	

Source: European Social Survey data, Wave 9 (2018), no. 28847 (when using the educational level parameter), no. 28730 (when using the household income feeling parameter).

*Data indicate respondents who declared that they had engaged in at least two among the following: Worn or displayed campaign badge/sticker last 12 months; Signed petition last 12 months; Taken part in lawful public demonstration last 12 months; Boycotted certain products last 12 months; Posted or shared something about politics online last 12 months.

However, different trends can be identified for young people or adults. If we focus on adults, educational level affects unconventional engagement (29 percentage points of difference between the most and the least educated) relevantly more than conventional participation (16 p.p.). Thus, within the total sample of the ESS survey, only 10% of the least educated adults engaged in two or more forms of unconventional participation, vs. 39% among the most educated.

This result is consistent with hypothesis no. 2. On the one hand, quite expected results emerge from the analysis carried out on adult cohorts. On the other hand, we observe something much less expected among youngsters. While the level of education impacts to a relevant extent (although less than among adults) for what concerns unconventional participation (21 p.p.), unlike adults the gap is even wider when we consider electoral participation (31 p.p. vs. "only" 16 p.p. among adults).

If we move on to analysing respondents' feelings about household income, results seem once again to contradict our hypothesis no. 2, since the impact of this variable

[4] For the sake of clarity of presentation, we opted for a cross-tabulation presentation of the data. However, we also checked the coefficients of linear regression: setting the education degree as the independent variable, among adults we found a beta-standardised coefficient of 0,299 for what concerns unconventional participation and 0,15 for electoral participation. Among young people, the beta-standardised coefficient regarding voting is 0,211, while it is 0,16 for unconventional engagement. In all cases, sign. = 0,000.

is greater on electoral participation than on unconventional engagement. Differences, however, are not so relevant among adults, but much wider among youth (6 vs. 20 p.p.), confirming a relevant exclusion of young Europeans in socially peripheral positions concerning electoral participation, even more than unconventional engagement.

We tried to investigate these very relevant and counter-intuitive data in depth, examining the gap caused by educational level in electoral participation within each country, between young people and adults. In particular, we aimed to verify whether the different groups of countries, as emerged in Fig. 3, showed consistent differences in the social centrality gap (as defined through education) concerning youth participation in elections. As already said, the different groups of countries in Fig. 2 are defined based on youth involvement in conventional and unconventional participation, but they also reflect historical differences rooted in national political cultures as well as relevant differences in youth social and economic conditions. Hence, we used this operation to ascertain whether this major gap in youth electoral participation is related to the above differences, or whether it concerns most countries regardless of their different historical patterns of citizen involvement and youth socio-economic conditions.

Tab. 3 – Electoral participation by country and educational level: difference between respondents having tertiary education (BA and MA) and those having up to lower secondary education (percentage points).

Northern Countries: high levels of both electoral and unconventional youth engagement	18-34-year-olds*	35 and over
Germany	44	38
Sweden	14	10
Denmark	24	8
Finland	29	13
Other Western European countries: moderate-high levels of both electoral and unconventional youth engagement		
Belgium	36	4
Austria	40	16
Spain	30	10
Portugal	22	9
United Kingdom	45	11
High levels of youth electoral participation, low levels of youth unconventional engagement		
Italy	35	18
Netherlands	31	20
Moderate-low levels of youth electoral participation, low levels of youth unconventional engagement		
Hungary	58	23
Bulgaria	30	11
Poland	25	14
Latvia	--	--
Slovakia	--	--
Slovenia	--	--
Cyprus	--	--
Low levels of youth electoral participation, moderate levels of youth unconventional engagement		
Croatia	28	14
Czechia	41	18
Ireland	--	--
Low levels of youth electoral participation, high levels of youth unconventional engagement		
France	25	15

*Excluding the non-eligible to vote.
Source: European Social Survey data, Wave 9 (2018), no. 37666. Data unavailability (--) is due to insufficient sample size.

As we can see in Table 3, differences are scarcely related to groups of countries as identified in Fig. 2. In all Western European countries, the education gap is very relevant among youth, and much wider than among adults. The only difference is represented by Sweden, where it is lower than in other countries and closer to what detected among older cohorts. No relevant differences may be detected between countries based on their traditional level of general turnout or on the socio-economic condition of younger generations. The gap is wide and much wider than among older cohorts in Eastern European countries as well.

6. Discussion and conclusions. A withdrawal from electoral participation marked by class positions.

The comparison between national levels of youth engagement only partially corroborates the predictions based on social centrality, since younger cohorts tend to reproduce older generations' attitudes towards participation, while contextual traits rooted in national history, such as the ones related to political culture, keep their influence on youth political behaviour. Our first hypothesis, however, finds a clearer corroboration in the individual-based analysis, showing that young, as well as adult Europeans holding socially central positions are more willing to be politically active than those who are socially more peripheral, whether we use educational level or respondents' household income feelings as an indicator to measure social centrality.

On the contrary, our second hypothesis only finds partial corroboration. When we measure social centrality by educational level, we can assess that the gap among adults and older people is wider for what concerns unconventional participation than electoral participation, consistently with our hypothesis. Differently, when we measure social centrality through feelings about household income, the opposite is true (although the difference is less relevant). These results may suggest that the resources that matter most in explaining unconventional engagement are related even more to education than to the individual/family economic situation. This is also confirmed by results concerning youth, where unconventional participation appears to be decidedly more affected by educational level than by feelings about income. This result can be read in line with the tendencies highlighted in the theoretical framework, which pointed to the possibility that political participation would increasingly depend on the capacity to construct an autonomous, individualised relationship with politics, outside the processes of identification in homogeneous groups supported by solid institutional references (Bennett and Segerberg 2013); but this capacity on its turn depends, plausibly, on the control of cultural and cognitive resources even before economic ones.

Among youth, however, contrary to what our second hypothesis would suggest, regardless of the item used to measure social centrality, its impact is widely more relevant on conventional than on unconventional engagement – although differences are greater if educational level is used as an indicator.

This unexpected result signals the need for new interpretative hypotheses and hopefully inspires the development of new empirical research, both quantitative and qual-

itative, capable of explaining it comprehensively. Such a result cannot plausibly be explained by resorting to the characteristics inherent in that specific participatory repertoire, given that, as evidenced by literature, it is unconventional participation that requires a greater personal investment and therefore greater quantities of resources on which to rely. Nor does apathy or retirement into the private sphere appear to be convincing motivations, given that recoil against electoral participation is not evenly spread over the young population, but is in fact strongly unbalanced on the basis of social centrality.

Consequently, in order to explain these results, it appears plausible that we must consider youngsters' scepticism and bad judgments about electoral and party politics (Bruselius- Jensen, Pitti and Tisdall 2021), also highlighting that this disaffection is strongly marked by a class dimension.

Thus, it is the concept of class that seems to take on a central role, although connoted more in terms of cultural resources – also linked to the ambitions and professional and existential trajectories that young people set for themselves – than in strict connection to family economic conditions. Class has lost relevance as a line of conflict and a dimension of collective identification, even within left-wing parties and movements, which for decades have shifted the centre of gravity of their identity towards other axes of conflict and revendication, such as those linked to gender, race, or sexual orientation (Inglehart 1977; Kitschelt and McGann 1997). At the same time, it has acquired greater importance in relation to the processes of polarization in the distribution of wealth and the growing inequalities within individual states. It may be said that, while class was becoming increasingly irrelevant as a political dimension of conflict and belonging in the past few decades, it is electoral politics that has become increasingly irrelevant in the eyes of young people coming from lower-class positions. This class-marked abstentionism can arguably be read as a declaration, on the part of the most fragile young Europeans, of their evaluating electoral politics as something that cannot really change or ameliorate their lives. Recalling O'Toole *et al.*'s warning that youth disaffection from politics should be read more as their being "left out" rather than "tuned out" – meaning that the problem is not young people's disinterest in politics, but, if anything, politics' disinterest in young people and its inability to deal with issues that are relevant to their everyday lives (O'Toole *et al.* 2003; Henn *et al.* 2005) – what emerges here is a dynamic of exclusion from electoral politics that affects the most fragile among European youngsters. Such exclusion largely tends to cut across national differences concerning both political cultures and youth economic conditions.

Nor does the objection according to which involvement in other forms can play a counterbalancing role sound really convincing, given that 1) the most socially fragile young people participate less even through the unconventional repertoire; and 2), even if unconventional may be considered, for a number of reasons, as the new conventional (Pitti 2018), one cannot neglect the function of educating to citizenship and legitimizing political institutions carried out by traditional forms of involvement, which are also most closely linked to the circuit of representation (Matonti 2005). From this point of view, the risk would be to minimise the consequences of a kind of abstentionism (Capdevielle 2005) that is strongly related, particularly among youth, to social vulner-

ability, with its possible collateral effects of nurturing alienation and delegitimization of representative institutions.

Responding to such a challenge thus calls into question the processes that have led most Western traditional parties to stifle political conflict and progressively restrict the space of variation between viable proposals and party programs (Katz and Mair 1995; 2009), leading to a problematic erosion of popular sovereignty (Mair 2013) and an increasing self-referentiality of traditional party politics. Mainstream parties have converged on the neoliberal agenda and on the dogma of T.I.N.A. (There Is No Alternative, citing Mrs. Thatcher), which have legitimized the exclusion from viable political options of those individual and collective actors that are the most critical of the mantras of neoliberalism, austerity, and the Western development model.

Moreover, this interpretative key also seems to find support in a disaffection with politics and traditional parties which could be deduced from young people's tendency to favour anti-establishment parties – those which openly challenge mainstream parties – in different voting circumstances in the same years as the survey considered herein. This was the case of the Spanish Podemos, the Greek Syriza, the Italian Movimento 5 Stelle, the French Front National, and France Insoumise, all of which were able to attract relevant shares of support among youth (Lello 2020: 24-25). In other cases, young people supported traditional parties provided these were capable of expressing leaderships and programs in strong rupture with the past, such as in the case of Jeremy Corbyn in the British Labour Party and, outside Europe, Bernie Sanders in the US Democrats (Lello 2020: 24-25). While young people have shown on various voting occasions that they favour alternative parties overtly claiming their diversity to the mainstream, these data tell us that many other young people, and among them especially those from subaltern class positions, have even lost their confidence in the effectiveness of voting itself, thus renouncing this right.

Therefore, the course cannot be reversed through more or less "cosmetic" or communicative choices such as adopting youthful looks and youth-sounding linguistic registers or by lowering the age of electoral participation. What is required is a revitalization of political conflict that can reconnect party politics to conflicts effectively existing in the social fabric. This would allow for a link between parties, fragile youth's concerns, and collective identities taking form in groups and social movements within civil society. Secondly, a substantial, rather than cosmetic answer would imply intervening on factors nurturing different and overlapping dimensions of youth socio-economic disadvantage, with the aim of contrasting and reducing inequalities.

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De Europa
Vol. 6, No. 2 (2023), 61-80
ISSN 2611-853X
www.deeuropa.unito.it

Degrees of hostility towards migrant solidarity: the case of Ceuta and Melilla

Valentina Marconi

Melilla está rodeada de una valla que no es simplemente un obstáculo de hierro sino todo un simbolo de la politica oficial. Todo lo que sea estar en contra de eso tiene un coste.

Melilla is surrounded by a fence that is not just an iron obstacle but a symbol of the official policy. Being against this has a cost.

(José Palazón, *Diario de Ibiza*, 2017)

1.Introduction

In the context of my doctoral fieldwork, on February 8th, 2020, I participated in the "March for Dignity" in Ceuta, a yearly event held to commemorate, and demand justice for, the death of at least 14 migrants who died in 2014, while trying to cross into the Spanish enclave from Moroccan territory. That year, the event was supported by more than 150[1] civil society organisations (CSOs) and was monitored by police officers along the way, ending at the border on the Tarajal beach, where migrants had tried to cross in 2014 by swimming into the enclave.

When I arrived at the border fence, police officers were standing on the Tarajal breakaway behind the metallic barrier, wearing dark uniforms, sunglasses, and caps. On the other side of the barb-wired fence, there were mainly two groups of people: migrants and members of civil society organisations. As at that point I had been in the enclave for months, I was able to recognise some of the local activists and NGO workers and, at the same time, notice the absence of others. Some rumours I heard days before said that the latter had probably decided not to take part in the event, deeming it too *controversial*.

In Ceuta and Melilla, like in other border areas in Europe, humanitarian work attempts to attenuate the violence of the contemporary migration regime (Walters 2011) and a multiplicity of civil society actors provide a range of "services" to the migrant population. This process of humanitarianization is intertwined with processes of securitization/militarisation, and the humanitarian landscape is crisscrossed by internal tensions and a significant degree of contention. As "humanitarianism is a field which exists in a permanent state of co-option, infiltration but also provocation with the state" (Walter 2011: 149), instances of criminalisation of migrant solidarity have been recorded across many EU border localities.

Valentina Marconi, University of Trento, valentina.marconi@unitn.it

[1] The majority of the civil society organisations that express support for the event were based in the rest of Spain.

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.13135/2611-853X/7086

The shrinking space for civil society actors in support of refugees and migrants across Europe has been explored in different studies (see, for example, della Porta and Steinhilper 2021), that have looked at both the discursive mechanisms underpinning the shift toward public hostility (Cusumano and Bell 2021), and the concrete legislative developments and judicial battles that have punctuated this process across EU external and internal borders (see, for example, Carrera *et al.* 2018; Cusumano and Villa 2021; Fekete 2018).

However, migrant solidarity and its criminalisation in Ceuta and Melilla are an underexplored topic in the literature so far, and this article attempts to address this gap through an ethnographic study based on the analysis of interviews and participant observation, carried out during my doctoral fieldwork in these territories (2019-2020). I explore this issue from the "embodied" perspective of those working on the ground and, in doing so, I attempt at showing to what extent local CSOs, engaged in humanitarian work with the migrant population, face different degrees of hostility, stemming from both state and non-state actors; I also demonstrate how forms of criminalisation and policing – not only linked to anti-smuggling legislation but also to forms of intimidation, harassment and disciplining – are part of the daily operations of some of the local actors, especially those involved in advocacy on human rights violations at the border.

Although these territories have not been the epicentres of the so-called 2015 refugee crisis, they have played a significant symbolic and material role in the process of gradual militarisation and fortification of the EU external borders during the last three decades. Looking at how migrant solidarity face different forms of hostility in these tiny territories that are European outposts on the African continent allows us to enrich our understanding and critique of the contemporary EU border management: in fact, the construction of migration as a security threat and the enactment of the so-called "border spectacle" (De Genova 2013) through the deployment of military and security technologies at the border, have had a profound impact first and foremost on migrants and also on that portion of civil society that works towards supporting migrant lives.

The article is divided in four sections. In the first, I discuss the literature on the criminalisation of civil society organisations in the migration sector and I present the methodological approach I followed in this study. In the second, I illustrate the characteristics of this specific case, by underlining the specific role played by the Spanish enclaves within the larger Moroccan-Spanish border and providing a description of the CSOs landscape in these border localities. The third section explores what hurdles and obstacles local humanitarians encounter in their daily work, both online and offline, in their interactions with the local population. Finally, in the last section, I analyse tensions and frictions between CSOs and local authorities.

2. Humanitarianism and the criminalisation of migrant solidarity

Civil society is composed of a range of different actors, such as small local associations, large international NGOs, social service providers and philanthropic founda-

tions: such an ensemble of different organisations differ from each other in many aspects, such as size, source and extent of funding, core activities, etc. (Anheier, Lang and Toepler 2018). In more abstract terms, the term "civil society" refers to the domain that exists between the state, the economy, and the private sphere, in which people attempt to represent and define their own interests (Simsa 2017).

During the so-called refugee crisis in Europe, civil society actors have played an important role in handling refugee arrivals and reception (Simsa 2017) in several contexts, both inside national territories and in border areas. In the Central Mediterranean Sea, for example, the activity of a range of "civil humanitarian actors" (Esperti 2019) intervening in saving migrants' life at sea has emerged. On land, the role of formal and informal and grassroot initiatives has been important in meeting migrants' needs when the state failed to do so, in a range of different places such as Greece (Kalogeraki 2020), Germany, (Toğral Koca 2019), Austria (Simsa 2017), and so on.

Despite the significant role civil society actors played in assisting newcomers, legal and extra-legal attacks against NGOs and activists helping migrants and refugees in Europe have multiplied, as well as acts of intimidation. Studies on this phenomenon have started to catch up and expand, especially from 2018 on. For example, a significant amount of work has been done on the criminalisation of sea rescue NGOs in the Central Mediterranean Sea (Cusamano and Bell 2021; Cusumano and Villa 2020; Sciurba 2020; Camilli 2019) which explore, among other things, the processes of discursive delegitimization underpinning the criminal proceedings and policy initiatives against the work of sea rescue NGOs and, at the same time, fuelling a growing climate of intimidation. In fact, sea rescue NGOs have been accused of collaborating with smuggling networks, constituting a "pull-factor" for migrants, and of ferrying them to Europe (Tazzioli 2018). The situation at the French-Italian border has also been looked at (Reggiardo 2019; Tazzioli and Walters 2019) where cases of incrimination and/or arrest of individuals helping people in transit were recorded, and the politicization of migrations has led to the politicization of the work of civil society actors such as the Church, NGOs, and the Red Cross, obliging them to operate daily amid increasing public distrust and hostility (Reggiardo 2019). Other works on the criminalisation of solidarity with migrants and asylum-seekers have studied this phenomenon in other contexts, such as Croatia (Anić 2022), Sweden (Kolankiewicz and Sager 2021), and Australia (Bessant and Watts 2022).

While the political and social developments that have unfolded after the 2015 "refugee crisis" have contributed to further shrinking the space for civil society actors' support to migrants and asylum-seekers, criminalisation and policing of humanitarian assistance is not an entirely new phenomenon. Cases of criminalisation of solidarity have been numerous since the early 2000s across Europe, with criminal prosecutions or intimidation tactics carried out against established NGOs, individual solidarians, medical staff, and public officers in several European countries (Fakete 2009). Cusumano and Villa (2020), for example, cite the case of the Cap Anamur, a sea rescue NGO whose ship was confiscated by Italian authorities in 2005, while the captain, first officer, and head of mission were charged with aiding and abetting illegal immigration, and later acquitted.

Given the significance of such phenomenon, a range of concepts have been introduced to describe and analyse this shifting constellation of practices and discourses against civil society organisations and their members. Tazzioli (2018), for example, mobilises the concept of "crimes of solidarity", an expression already employed by activists and human rights organisations. In her work, it is used to point at those crimes that are defined and prosecuted according to the 2002 EU Directive on the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit, and residence of migrants, that has been used across the EU to criminalise the work of organisations and their members. While her analysis focuses especially on criminal prosecutions and trials, other works, have shown that the activities of CSOs have been the target of other types of measures and actions as well. Carrera *et al.* (2018), for example, introduced a broader framework of analysis, including a wider range of punitive tactics carried out by the EU and its Member States, such as suspicion, harassment, and intimidation, disciplining – *i.e.* using administrative measures and even trials but outside the scope of anti-smuggling legislation – and, finally, formal criminalisation. In fact, these scholars argue that the policing of humanitarianism takes place not only through the use of criminal law and criminal-law type of approaches, but also through other forms of actions that include, for example, on the one hand, surveillance, and indirect pressures, and on the other hand, bureaucratic/ administrative practices, such as calls for registration and more centralised coordination, and/or increased levels of financial accountability and transparency on funding sources. This hostile working environment engenders fear in the actors on the ground and can produce self-disciplining actions (Carrera *et al.* 2018).

In trying to explain the variations within such phenomenon, scholars have also underlined that its impact varies when considering different types of humanitarian actors. For example, Dadusc and Mudu (2022) elaborate a distinction between what they term "the humanitarian-industrial complex" and practices of "autonomous solidarity"; according to their interpretation, the organisations that fall within the latter category are those whose work is more at risk of being criminalised. In the article, I will illustrate that although this seems a valid distinction, in the context of Ceuta and Melilla, because of the closed political opportunity structure (Alcalde and Portos 2018) and the militarised and securitised character of the enclaves, the majority of local actors does not engage in "radical" forms of solidarity; here, the most relevant distinction seems to be that between actors who document human rights violations at the border and those who prefer not to do so.

Finally, analysing the increasing obstacles that CSOs working with migrants and refugees face, della Porta and Steinhilper (2022) describe this as a shrinking or closing space for solidarity. The scholars argue that both in the context of the financial crisis and the 2015 so-called crisis of European migration, the notion of "solidarity" has gained renewed prominence, but its practice has also become increasingly contentious (Della Porta and Steinhilper 2022). In the field of migration, the political and cultural space for civil society organizing has been shrinking all over Europe in countries traditionally considered as established democracy (Della Porta and Steinhilper 2022).

Interestingly, here not only attacks on CSOs from governmental actors are considered, but also tensions with non-governmental actors (*e.g.*, right-wing political parties and movements): this wider reflection is relevant to the situation in the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, where – as I will discuss in the following sections – the work of civil society actors is met with resistance by a significant portion of the local population. In fact, while most of the existing literature focuses on forms of legal and political hostility towards migrant solidarity, this article also sheds light on examples of bottom-up, social hostility, towards the work of CSOs.

2.1 Methodology

The data I discussed in this article were collected during a fieldwork in the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, that were one of sites of a multi-sited ethnography on border violence at the European Union borders I conducted for my doctoral thesis in 2019-2020. In designing the initial methodology, I drew on Casas-Cortes *et al.* (2015) who called for a multi-sited approach to the study of migrations and the contemporary forms of governance of mobility. The data used in this article are the result of sustained fieldwork interactions with, and working as a volunteer for, different types of civil society organisations in the Spanish enclaves.

During the leg of fieldwork at the Spanish Moroccan land border, I lived in Ceuta for four months and I used participant observation through volunteering in three organisations: I volunteered in a small Church-affiliated organisation that provides Spanish language courses and organises cultural activities for the migrants in transit; I also helped with classes geared towards children excluded by the official education system and, finally, I was active in a project that offered courses and day activities to unaccompanied minors in transit. Through my involvement in such organisations, I was able to hold several informal conversations with volunteers, NGO workers, and migrants in transit and participate in migration-related public events. During my stay, I carried out a field visit in Melilla in February 2020 where I shadowed the work of a group of volunteers providing first aid medical care to unaccompanied minors in transit. Finally, I complemented my observations with key-informant interviews with 15 practitioners and activists of the civil society, the majority of whom were based in Ceuta and Melilla, while the rest used to visit the enclaves on a regular basis.

Negotiating access to this field was challenging. In the context of Ceuta, I encountered strong feelings of suspicion towards my work as a researcher. In the literature, gaining access is often constructed as a practical step but, as Cunliffe and Alcadipani (2016) underline, how we get access tells us a lot about the type of organisation we are trying to interact with and its internal power dynamics; for Waldrop and Egden (2018), resistances from the field contain important data. The initial resistance I encountered – especially from specific actors – relate to different factors: firstly, the enclaves are highly securitised and militarised territories where a certain level of repression and monitoring shapes the daily activities of actors in the migration sector, especially those which have developed a more critical discourse towards official mi-

gration and border policies; secondly, organisations tend to display a "protective" attitude towards the migrant population as, as one interviewee put it, "migrants in Ceuta are the ones who pay the price when things go wrong" (Interview with research participant n.2, November 2019, Online). For ethical reasons, I anonymised all the interviews and interactions described in this article.

3. Ceuta and Melilla: migrants and humanitarians at the Moroccan- Spanish border

Ceuta and Melilla are Spanish enclaves on the Moroccan northern coast and the only existing Euro-African terrestrial border[2]. They are at the centre of a long-standing territorial dispute between Spain and Morocco, together with a series of nearby small territories called *Plazas de Soberania* (Ferrer-Gallardo 2008). Since the beginning of the 1990s, and after that Spain entered the European Union (EU) in 1986 and the Schengen Agreement in 1991, Ceuta and Melilla came to play a vital role with regard to migratory movements toward the territory of the EU (Ferrer-Gallardo and Albet-Mas 2016). In fact, after the elimination of internal border checks on EU territory, the two enclaves – that previously were rather marginal even inside Spain – became a point of entry not only to Spanish territory but also to the territory of other EU countries, catalysing the attention of EU institutions (Castan Pinos 2009). Therefore, following the entry of Spain into the Schengen area, the enclaves' land and sea border underwent a process of re-organisation (Ferrer-Gallardo 2008), which entailed a progressive militarisation and securitisation of their perimeters.

For their strategic position, Ceuta and Melilla have been given considerable attention by academic studies (see, for example, Aris Escarcena 2022; Carling 2007; Ferrer-Gallardo 2008; Ferré Trad 2016; Lara Fuentes 2017; Queirolo 2019), NGO reports (see, for example, APDHA 2014; Servicio jesuita a migrantes 2014) and media outlets: some described them as the portal of Europe (Ferré Trad 2016), or limboscapes (Ferrer-Gallardo and Albet-Mas 2016) "on the top of the line of fracture between Global North and Global South" (Zurlo 2011: 1).

Their strategic role should be contextualised by framing it within a much larger border area, that many Spanish speakers call *Frontera Sur* (literally, "Southern Border"), an expression largely used especially in NGOs reports and activists' circles (APDHA 2019). With this phrase, most refer to the maritime border between Spain and Morocco or, as Andersson (2014: 16) put it, "the Spanish section of the Euro-African border". One of my research participants stated:

> The border could be conceived as a segment which develops from north-east to south-west; it goes from the sea of the Balearic Islands and, passing through the Strait of Gibraltar, reaches the waters in proximity of the Canary Islands. This, in addition to the terrestrial borders, represented by Ceuta e Melilla and the so-called Plazas de Soberania (Interview with research participant n.11, December 2019, Online).

[2] Although Ceuta and Melilla are the only EU terrestrial border on the African continent, there are other territories which are part of the European Union territory and geographically situated in Africa: for example, the Canary Islands but also the islands of Réunion and Mayotte (part of France) and Madera (part of Portugal).

The sea route is the main route taken by migrants on their way to Europe: in 2019, for example, around 80% of the people arriving in Spain did so by crossing either the Atlantic Ocean or the Mediterranean Sea, while only the remaining 20% crossed into Ceuta and Melilla (APDHA 2019). The latter did so either by sea (*e.g.*, swimming or with makeshift boats) or by land, for example, jumping the fences, using forged documents, or hidden inside a car, or in more rare events, with the use of trucks across the border entry points.

Once migrants and refugees cross into the enclaves, they are accommodated either inside the Centres for the temporary holding of migrants (Centros de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes - CETIs) or inside the Centres for Unaccompanied Minors. Some migrants – mostly minors from Morocco – decide not to access the official system of reception and live rough in the streets. This group is mainly composed by unaccompanied minors "on the run from protection centres that they perceive as jails" (Queirolo 2019: 63) and attempting to reach the *Península by* sneaking into the boats connecting the enclaves with the mainland. Therefore, even if the media discourse – especially outside Spain – has mostly focused on migrants and refugees coming from sub-Saharan countries, the territories of the enclaves are crossed by different forms of mobilities and temporarily "host" people coming not only from sub-Saharan countries but also countries belonging to the neighboring Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia) and other Arab countries (Palestine, Syria, Yemen) (APDHA 2019).

Once inside the enclaves, migrants and refugees face a situation of limbo (Andersson 2014). The time they will have to wait before being able to cross into the mainland varies according to their nationality and their personal circumstances. At the time of my fieldwork, some people were allowed to leave after three months, others took much longer, sometimes remaining in the enclaves for more than a year. Therefore, once the spatial limits embodied by the borders have been overcome, time becomes for some an additional dimension through which border violence is exercised. In this context of temporal and spatial limbo, the life of migrants and refugees in transit is organized and managed by a range of actors.

In the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla the humanitarian sector is small but includes a range of different civil society actors, which differ in size, social base, sources of funding, activities, and degree of collaboration with the State in migration and asylum governance. Such as in other EU local border contexts, it is "an interorganisational domain" where "various organisations with different and sometimes conflicting principles co-exist" (De Jong and Ataç 2017: 29). In the enclaves it is possible to find institutional actors such as UN agencies (UNHCR) and the Red Cross, international, national, and local NGOs, Church-run and/or grassroots associations. Furthermore, different actors work in different spaces: some mainly operate inside facilities run by the State such as the Centres for the temporary holding of migrants (CETIs); others in private buildings (often rented); few in specific areas of the city (*e.g.*, the border or the harbour), sometimes closer to where their "beneficiaries" live. In this article, I analyse only the predicament of actors that work on land: therefore, it falls outside the scope of this study the work of *Salvamento Marítimo* that performs search and rescue operation at sea.

Some of the research participants underlined that relations among entities working in this sector are not always harmonious and vary greatly. While some of them constantly cooperate, others do so sporadically, and in some instances, cooperation is non-existent. Differences can sometimes engender tensions, and activists complain of a lack of synergy especially in activities related to advocacy: in particular, a dividing aspect appears to be the fact while a small group of the entities are engaged in advocacy on human rights violations at the border, many others refrain from doing so. One of the research participants recounted that she had been actively discouraged from volunteering in a specific organisation by a previous employer and the situation had escalated when her short-term work contract had not been renewed. However, it is important to underline that, at the time of the data collection, some activists and social workers were working and volunteering in more than one association at a time or had worked for some of the other organisations in the past. This seems to point to the fact that some level of tolerance for the work of other organisations exists, and it is likely that individual worker/activists try to balance their different roles in different organisations in order not to generate conflicts.

Given the small extension of the enclaves, civil society actors working in the migration sector tend to know each other well, although sometimes there is no ideological and strategy alignment among them; on the contrary, relations with Moroccan organisations beyond the borders seems weak. Although some research participants have described having contacts with other activists/organisations in Morocco, and I observed some Moroccan organisations participate in yearly public events on migration, other actors claimed not to know which civil society actors work on the Moroccan side of the border and not to have any contacts with them. Furthermore, almost all interviewees underlined that Morocco has poor standards of human rights and high rates of criminalisation of solidarity with migrants. In their accounts they tended to trace a clear distinction between the situation on the Spanish and the Moroccan side of the border, depicting the latter as far worse in terms of protection of migrants' rights and space for civil society actors.

In general, activists and social workers in the enclaves are either from Ceuta and Melilla or other parts of Spain: while some have settled in the enclaves long ago, others − mostly in their twenties − have moved to the enclaves more recently and have either joined pre-existing organisations or established their own, either as an extension of an existing one or as a totally autonomous entity. This latter group is rather interesting as their permanence inside the enclave is less stable, but they perform a great amount of work with the migrant population. Sometimes, before moving to Ceuta and Melilla, they volunteered in other parts of the EU external borders, such as the Balkans or Greece or in other countries like Morocco. A common feature among this group lies with the motivation of "doing something in the backyard of their home" (Interview with research participant n.12, February 2020, Melilla).

Relations with civil society actors from the *Península* seems to play an important role in providing support to organisations based in Ceuta and Melilla. Some research participants recounted episodes when activists from the rest of Spain helped them

by providing advice, or support in organising events. One of them said:

> People in Ceuta usually attack us while people outside support us. Many people in the rest of Spain give a lot of attention to what is happening at the southern border. (Interview with research participant n.1, November 2019, Ceuta).

This testimony points to the fact that civil society actors based in the rest of Spain are an important point of reference for actors based in the enclaves, operating in a political and social context where migration is considered a particularly sensitive issue. Having the possibility to communicate and organise together breaks the isolation of organisations in Ceuta and Melilla, which face complex issues daily. This network of support plays an important role in re-connecting this borderland organisations with a much larger and vibrant civil society sector: in this way, best practices, information, and more practical forms of support (*e.g.,* legal advice) flow in both directions and such exchanges are essential in strengthening the connection between this "first line of reception" and the rest of the country.

Finally, while relations with the civil society sector in the rest of Spain tend to be strong, these borderlands remain rather isolated and marginal within the European Union. While hundreds of European volunteers – many of them young – have reached different border localities to offer help and support during the so-called 2015 refugee crisis, during my 2019-2020 fieldwork I observed that most of the activists operating in these territories tend to be Spanish, while "international" volunteers are few and stay for limited periods of time. A situation very different from that of small Greek islands such as Lesbos, or other border localities along the Balkan route. This lack of "internationalisation" of the civil society sector in the enclaves could be explained by different factors: for example, the type of work that is needed in the enclaves whereby organisations act as a "bridge" between migrants and the public administration and therefore it is essential an excellent knowledge of Spanish and, to some extent, Spanish bureaucracy. Moreover, although the local civil society sector is well connected with civil society actors in the rest of the *Península*, these territories remain marginal and scarcely known.

4. Working in a hostile environment: online and offline attacks

In one of the first fieldwork interview, I met an activist and social worker in a café close to the harbour in Ceuta. As it was November, it was slightly cold, but he insisted on sitting in the outdoor seating area to chat more freely, even if the café interior was empty. While taking our seat in the outdoor, street-looking table, he explained that he felt more comfortable speaking about his work where nobody was listening. During the interview, while I was taking notes as I was not allowed to record, I felt that the interviewee was tense and very aware of his surroundings. Although other people I interviewed did not display the same degree of concern and vigilance, many agreed that working with refugees and migrants in the enclave expose them to significant pressure, especially from the local population, mostly because of widespread anti-migrant attitudes.

Many of the civil society actors interviewed in Ceuta and Melilla recounted having been the target of hostile acts by a portion of the local population. In the descriptions of the research participants, attacks happened both online – for example on social media such as Facebook, or in the comment sections of local media outlets – and offline, in the public spaces where organisations carry out their activities and/or interact with migrants.

In the virtual sphere, attacks and discursive forms of intimidation were directed either against a prominent individual within a specific organisation, or the work of an organisation *tout court*. The research participant whose interview I mentioned at the beginning of this section, for example, recounted an episode whereby a prominent local media outlet published an anonymous article that contained accusations aimed at discrediting, and damaging the overall public image of his organisation. In another interview, a research participant who worked for an NGO recounted to be aware of the existence of WhatsApp groups where pictures of social workers bidding farewell to the migrants who were transferred by the authorities to the *Península* were circulating; those pictures were taken without the consent of the social workers, probably with the intent of annoying and harassing them. Other colleagues who were also locals described how difficult it was to speak of their work with most of the people in their social circles. Such "virtual" incidents do not constitute a form of obstacle to the work of these local organisations, but they contribute to shape a certain "hostile" environment in which social workers, activists and volunteers operate.

In the "physical" public space, attacks and other forms of intimidation can take different shapes. For example, two research participants – each leading an NGO based, respectively, in Ceuta and Melilla, recounted that their presence was met with hostility by the residents of their neighbourhood. The one in Ceuta recounted that at some point neighbours had collected signatures to expel the organisation from the area, and the electric cables of the NGO office were cut by unknown people, to stop them from providing free WI-FI to young migrants living rough in the streets. On the other hand, the research participant in Melilla described how the landlord had unexpectedly and suddenly decided to terminate their contract and to what extent they struggled to find an alternative space for their office. Other "incidents" recalled by other participants concerned, for example, activities carried out with migrants in the public sphere: a social worker recounted an episode when a group of volunteers was sharing a cake with some unaccompanied minors in a public park. Neighbours started giving them hostile looks, taking pictures of volunteers and migrants, and gesturing as if they were going to call the police; when confronted by the volunteers, they claimed that the presence of the youngsters was making them angry and that they were afraid of them. Overall, these forms of intimidation and harassment by locals against migrant-supporting organisations contribute to add another layer of complexity to their work in the enclaves.

Some participants have stated that local people tend to have a hostile attitude towards CSOs because they *fear* migrants and their presence in the cities. It was recounted that even law-enforcement officers can be under pressure by the local pop-

ulation for the same reason and perform raids in areas such the harbours to appease the nerves of local residents. An NGO worker who is based outside of the enclaves but travels there on a regular basis for research purposes stated:

> Migrant people who live in Ceuta are the target of clear rejection by the local population who has real fear – although not based on objective data – of them and is particularly scared by the prospect of an invasion from Morocco. (Interview with research participant n.2, November 2019, Online).

In fact, some participants underlined that the "group" of migrants who engenders the most fear among the local population comprises mostly Moroccan minors who remain outside the formal reception system. Although these young people often live rough in the areas close to the harbour, a social worker explained that many of them alternate periods in which they sleep in the Centre for Minors, with others in which they fall outside of the official reception system. Undoubtedly, they are one of the most vulnerable migrant groups in the enclaves, both because they are unaccompanied minors, and for their extremely precarious living conditions. Participants also underlined that male sub-Saharan migrants are feared by locals as well, but they mostly are invisible downtown and are either confined in the peripheral space of the CETI, or reach only the external part of the city, for joining the activities of local organisations or buying essentials in the shops.

Overall, the data collected point to the fact that civil society organisations in the migration sector can be the target of different types of hostile acts both online and offline; such hostility is underpinned by a widespread perception of migrants – especially unaccompanied minors and sub-Saharan migrants − as "dangerous" and "fear-inducing". For Alcalde and Portos (2018), activists in the enclaves face strong opposition from a good portion of the local society and even when migrants lost their lives during border crossing attempts in the past, the local population has failed to show solidarity. The tensions with the local population represent only one aspect of the "hostile environment" wherein these actors operate daily; in the next section, I will turn to examine their relationships with local political institutions.

5. The relations with local authorities: softer and harder forms of criminalisation

While civil society organisations face forms of intimidation and hostility by a good portion of the local population, *prima facie* their work seem largely tolerated by local authorities. This seems certainly true for those CSOs that work in state-run facilities (*e.g.,* CETIs - the Centres for the temporary holding of migrants) and, more generally, within the official reception system, or what Dadusc and Mudu (2022) term the "humanitarian-industrial complex". On the other hand, those organisations that are engaged in more "informal" activities, for example, in the public sphere, may encounter more problems, although some reported that their work is tolerated and even encouraged by authorities, as they have gradually become known to public officials, and their work responds to a need that is not fulfilled by other actors. As one social worker based in Ceuta put it:

> Regarding our relationship with the authorities, we can say that they tolerate us. They do not openly conflict with us because they have other issues to deal with. At the beginning, when they saw us with the boys [unaccompanied minors], they would ask if we needed help: the interaction with law enforcement depends on the individual officer […]. In some cases, they can be very racist, while in others, they are not. Generally, they let us work because they know who we are; by now, they are familiar with us. (Interview with research participant n.1, November 2019, Ceuta).

Despite this, the accounts of other organisations and some observations seem to point to another direction. One of the activists I interviewed in Melilla, for example, explained that his job consists of providing help to migrants living in the streets from a socio-sanitary point of view; as a nurse, he performs a first screening and assessment of the situation and together with other volunteers he brings people in need to the local hospital. In our conversation he clearly described how committed he was to stick exclusively with those activities, because he was aware that if he were to go further, for example by being vocal about specific problems or doing advocacy work, the "space" left open by the authorities for his *autonomous* socio-sanitary interventions, would soon be closed. He explained:

> They let me work because I don't create problems, here as in Ceuta, I could be reporting problems every day. If I see something particularly serious, I'll pass it to another organisation. (Interview with research participant n.14, February 2020, Melilla).

This type of self-censorship seems to point to the fact that civil society actors are aware of what the boundaries of their work are, and on which conditions humanitarian interventions are tolerated by local authorities. Although no direct criminalisation is reported by this participant, humanitarians' activities are taking place in a highly tense, politicised field, and in choosing their actions, and inactions, they need to consider that a certain degree of monitoring and pressure by authorities is present.

In more informal conversations, other activists in Ceuta have been more explicit about this point, for example, complaining about the lack of political opportunities in the enclaves, describing the militarised character of these territories and even mentioning that, as local activists, they feel monitored, especially the few who are engaged in advocacy activities. Although it was impossible to verify these statements, the perception of being monitored in their communications with other activists reflect a certain degree of uneasiness and suspicion that – at least some of them – feel towards local authorities.

During public events organised by civil society organisations − such as the yearly March for Dignity or other gatherings on migrants' rights − I observed the great extent to which the presence of the law-enforcement officials was visible and numerically significant, especially when considering the nature and size of such events. In my fieldnotes on my participation to the March for Dignity I wrote:

> The March started around 3 o'clock. It was very long. During the whole duration of the March, the police escorted the protesters, carefully monitoring that everything proceeded without problems. (Fieldwork notes, February 2020, Ceuta).

On that occasion, the massive presence of law-enforcement forces during the duration of the event stood in contrast to the festive and overall relaxed atmosphere of the march, which has mainly a commemorative character. However, this apparent contradiction must be contextualised taking into consideration the daily reality of the two enclaves, that during the last thirty years have undergone a progressive militarisation and securitisation, becoming an external EU border. As a result of this, the organisation of the social space in the enclaves is quite different from the rest of the Spanish *Península* and this is evident in the number of military vehicles that circulate across these tiny territories, the significant presence of law enforcement officials, and the visible and routinary presence of people dressed in military uniforms in the public space. Therefore, this dimension of militarisation and securitisation needs to be considered when looking at the work of civil society actors in the field of migration, as it contributes to shape the social and political environment wherein these actors move during their everyday activities.

Alcalde and Portos (2018: 171) state that, in both of the enclaves, the political opportunity structure for CSOs in the migration sector is very closed, and increasing levels of violence and repression by the police and far-right groups are recorded, a situation that in Europe is comparable only to the one in Calais. Most of the data collected during my fieldwork point to the presence of *softer* forms of "punitive tactics" (Carrera *et al.* 2018) such as intimidation, indirect pressures, and monitoring, against CSOs; however, other forms of policing against actors who carry out humanitarian activities have been recorded as well.

For example, a Barcelona-based activist who visited the enclaves on three research missions explained:

> When my colleagues did their work, they had problems on the Spanish side (of the border) in Melilla [...] they were fined for taking a photo where it was not allowed and in the end they were fined under the *Ley de Seguridad Ciudadana*[3] which also regulates pushbacks, and on the Moroccan side […] they were followed by the police. (Interview with research participant n.10, March 2020, Online).

The testimony of this participant points to the fact that the area close to the border fences is inaccessible. The same seems true for Ceuta where during my fieldwork two activists brought me close to it by car, and during such trip I could perceive their uneasiness in getting so close to the border line. In the specific case she refers to, her colleagues were sanctioned with a fine for taking pictures and documenting the reality of this border infrastructure in Melilla. Although this does not equate to a form of *hard* criminalisation, it still amounts to an attempt at disciplining (Carrera *et al.* 2018) CSO actors, where an administrative measure is adopted as a form of punishment and deterrent.

Moreover, a review of documents shows that there have been at least two high-profile cases where *harder* forms of pressure against local humanitarians were deployed, that involved fines but also charges and trials. The most relevant to this paper

[3] The Ley de Seguridad Ciudadana, also known as the "Gag Law," is a controversial Spanish law that was passed in 2015 and has been criticized for its restrictions on freedom of expression and the right to protest.

is that of José Palazón, founder of a Melilla-based association for migrants and children rights (PRO.DE.IN.) and the award-winning author of an iconic 2014 photo depicting a group of migrants atop the fortified Spanish fence overlooking a perfectly groomed golf course (The Guardian 2014). For his work with unaccompanied minors, and especially for being vocal about human rights violations, Palazón has faced not only verbal attacks by local politicians and forms of harassment by local authorities, but also administrative measures such as fines, and has been the target of lawsuits (Diario de Ibiza 2017). In 2015, for example, an unaccompanied minor in Melilla, died while attempting to sneak inside a boat heading toward the *Península* and his friends decided to bid him farewell in a spontaneous event where members of Palazón's organisation participated as well. One month later, the organisation received a fine for serious alteration of the public order (El Faro de Melilla 2016). Two years later, other two unaccompanied minors died in Melilla (Público 2018); in the first case, Palazón accused the administration of the Centre for Minors, claiming that the child died after he was hit and treated harshly in the Centre itself; in both cases, the activist identified the families of the deceased minors. For his work and the accuses he raised, he was harshly attacked and threatened by the Councillor of Social Welfare of the People's Party (PP): the politician also sued the activist accusing him of slander and of making false criminal accusations (Público 2018). Finally, in a 2022 verdict, a Provincial Court in Malaga condemned Palazón to the payment of legal costs and the compensation of 3,000 euros to the former Councillor (Jiménez 2022).

Commenting on the hostile environment faced by activists in Melilla, Palazón said in a published interview:

> They curse you; they confiscate your camera, they report you…they try to make your life impossible, but when this happens continuously, you end up getting used. Before, when I received a complaint, or the Prosecution called me at trial to witness, I would feel scared to death. Now when I receive a fine or a summons to court because I took a picture or something similar, I say to myself, well, one more. (Excerpt from Diario de Ibiza, 2017).

The case of Palazón points to the fact that being vocal about human rights issues, and openly challenging the local political elite, can expose CSOs and activists to forms of policing that include suspicion, harassment, intimidation and disciplining. Although these forms of pressures do not amount to criminalisation *strictu sensu* whereby anti-smuggling legislation is weaponised against humanitarians, they still have an impact on the local population's perception of the organisation. For Alcalde and Portos (2018: 174), for example, PRO.DE.IN. is the main organisation in Melilla migration sector and its awareness raising work is recognised both nationally and internationally; at the same time, many local people are afraid of collaborating with them.

Another important example of policing of solidarity with migrants at the Southern border is the one concerning the Spanish activist Helena Maleno, a journalist and researcher who was based in Tanger and is the founder of the NGO Caminando Fronteras (Jones 2018). Her work in support of sub-Saharan communities in transit in Morocco is known internationally and she has received awards for it both in Spain

and abroad. Apart from documenting deaths and disappearances at the border, she is also involved in helping people in distress at sea by using social networks to alert maritime rescue services. For her work helping boats in distress, she was firstly the target of a failed investigation in Spain and then was brought to court in Morocco for abetting illegal migration, being finally acquitted in April 2019 (Jones 2019). In addition to the judicial case, the activist was also the target of online hate, threats, included threats of rape and death threats (Público 2017); in 2021, she was expelled from Morocco. Her case reflects how softer forms of criminalisation have been accompanied by criminal justice measures based on anti-smuggling legislation, with a disruptive impact on the activists' life.

Combining data from the fieldwork with a review of documents allows us to explore how civil society actors working with migrants in this segment of the Spanish Moroccan border can face forms of pressure and repression, such as fines and even trials. Although this seems to mostly apply to "high-profile activists" who are particularly vocal in reporting human rights violations at the border, the data collected shows that softer forms of indirect pressure, intimidation, and monitoring concern a larger group of civil society organisations in solidarity with migrants. In the tense and hostile environment of the Spanish enclaves – tiny territories crisscrossed by multiple political and social tensions – local actors engaged in humanitarian activities have to carefully pick their battles and stick to the "agenda" of their organisation: in many cases, this can result in self-censorship and daily negotiations, in order to continue to assist the migrant populations in transit through the enclaves.

6. Conclusions

The Spanish Moroccan border, as other external EU borders, has faced a process of gradual militarisation and securitisation. This has had a significant impact on the migrant population transiting through the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, as well as on the civil society organisations working in the migration sector. While scholars have explored migrants and refugees' living conditions in these territories, this study provides an ethnographic account of the challenges CSOs face in providing help and raising awareness, that is a topic so far underexplored in the literature.

In this article, I showed how the CSOs' relation with the local population is also fraught with tensions as a good portion of it holds anti-migrant sentiments and *fear* the presence of migrants, especially unaccompanied minors living rough in the streets. Testimonies from research participants describe several incidents taking place both in the virtual and the physical space where residents attempted to harass and/or intimidate civil society actors.

In addition to this, I showed that some of the local humanitarians face forms of policing that include indirect pressure and intimidation by local authorities. Some cases of disciplining through administrative measures and charges with offences not related to smuggling have also been recorded. In general, these CSOs that mostly perceive to be monitored and, sometimes, harassed by authorities tend to be those

more engaged in advocacy activities, while other civil society actors see their work as tolerated and generally well-received.

Overall, this article explored how local CSOs working in the migration sector face different degrees of hostility both by governmental and non-governmental actors. While acts of hostility by locals are carried out towards the work of humanitarians in general, forms of policing by local authorities take place towards those CSOs more involved in activities of advocacy on human rights violations at the border. The presence of these tensions and frictions makes the work of local humanitarians more complex, and many engage in careful daily negotiations to be able to continue their work in these territories. Finally, the limited political opportunities for migrant solidarity in the enclaves (Portos and Alcalde 2018) has also to do with the militarised and securitised character of these secluded border territories, that contributes to shape and constrain the activities of these actors.

Although the exceptionality of these territories partly seems to explain the constrains and hurdles that CSOs face, the criminalisation of migrant solidarity and the rise of anti-migrant sentiments are phenomena taking place across many EU external and internal borders. The securitisation of migration and the deployment of military and security technology to contain migratory movements, have both impacted migrant's lives and shaped how humanitarian actors work in border areas.

The presence of widespread social hostility towards the work of CSOs in the enclaves is of significant concern, as research across EU borders demonstrate that suspicion and mistrust often precede criminal prosecution. Hence, future studies on this locality could assess whether the predicament of migrant solidarity will develop a negative trajectory, particularly in the event of a significant increase in the number of irregular arrivals.

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De Europa
Vol. 6, No. 2 (2023), 81-106
ISSN 2611-853X
www.deeuropa.unito.it

School integration of refugee minors: An analysis of the barriers to education quality and continuity in Italian and Greek school systems

Gül Ince Beqo, Yiannis Roussakis, Vittorio Sergi

Introduction

Since the past decade, Europe has faced one of the most severe crises in the continent's recent history concerning migration and asylum flows and their management. Social and political upheaval (*i.e.*, the Arab Spring protests in 2010), civil wars (*i.e.*, in Syria), ethnic and religious conflicts (*i.e.*, in Afghanistan and parts of Africa), poverty (*i.e.*, in Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South Asia) and climate change (*i.e.*, in Southeast Asia and Africa) have given rise to a dramatic displacement movement of people who aspire to a safer and brighter future in the European Union (EU). Moreover, the global health crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the humanitarian emergency in Ukraine after Russia's military intervention in early 2022 have significantly influenced migration movements. The number of displaced persons in 2021 increased by 8% from the previous year and doubled from 10 years ago, reaching 89.3 million people (UNCHR 2022b), and, in Europe, the number of Ukrainian refugees has exceeded 7.5 million people at present (UNCHR 2023). In this context, the number of both accompanied and unaccompanied minor asylum seekers, whose protection is framed within different sets of rules, was 166,760 in 2021, 31.2% of first-time asylum seekers registered in the EU (Eurostat 2023). These large-scale movements have a reckoning impact on host countries and pose significant policymaking challenges at both the supranational and national levels in Europe, which are exacerbated by the political contestation of migration flows in the growing public debate, mainly by the populist right. Another challenge relates to the coordination of the multiple administrative levels (European, national and local) and between governmental and nongovernmental institutions and organizations having varying degrees of autonomy in managing the socioeconomic incorporation of migrants and refugees in the destination countries. The education systems of most EU member states also face significant challenges of access, inclusion, opportunities for educational success and continuity in education of migrant and refugee minors[1] (Koehler and Schneider 2019).

Gül Ince-Beqo, University of Milan, gul.ince@unimi.it
Yiannis Roussakis, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, yiannis.roussakis@eds.uoa.gr
Vittorio Sergi, University of Urbino Carlo Bo, vittorio.sergi@uniurb.it

[1] The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child uses the term "child" to include anyone "below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier" (UNGA, 1989, p. 2). Because the use of the term "child" under this definition can cause confusion, we prefer to use the term "minor" to refer to refugee children and adolescents. In the case of children and adolescents "who are separated from both parents and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, has responsibility to do so" (UNHCR, 1987, p.4), we use the term "unaccompanied minors".

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.13135/2611-853X/7135

In terms of educational inclusion, the right to education for all, including refugees and asylum seekers, can be traced in several international agreements at the global scale, such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and so on. Since 2009, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU has been enacted as an integral part of the Lisbon Treaty, and, at the EU and pan-European level, several recommendations (see for example Council of Europe 2019) and following policies have been decided to ensure the education of refugees and asylum-seeking children and youth (*i.e.*, the European Commission Action Plans) on the "integration of third country nationals" and on "integration and inclusion 2021-2027." The EU Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals (European Commission, 2016) identified education as one of the policy areas to be addressed for refugee integration, with special reference to promoting language learning and civic education, teacher training and refugee minors' access to early childhood education and care. The Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 (European Commission, 2020) widened the scope of education policies, to include interventions from early childhood to higher education, vocational training, and recognition of qualifications. Furthermore, the Communication from the Commission on the Protection of Children in Migration (European Commission, 2017), building on the Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010-2014) (European Commission, 2010), calls for increased awareness on the protection and assessment of the needs of unaccompanied migrant and refugee minors and their immediate access to education upon arrival to a member state. In this context, EU member states, transnational, national and local authorities have enacted a wide range of initiatives and policies to integrate and include migrants and refugees, with help, expertise and support from international, civil society and nongovernmental organizations.

However, there is often a huge gap between national and supranational normative frameworks that respond to human rights ideals and refugee-focused policies and practices institutionalized within these existing frameworks (Taylor and Sidhu 2012). In such a context, notwithstanding a common concern throughout Europe and the ambitious goals which national frameworks set for protecting the best interests of the refugee minors, local regulations and practices do affect their access to quality education (Dryden-Peterson *et al.*, 2019).

The research presented in this paper focuses on refugee minors, with a particular attention on unaccompanied minors, who are considered a key target in Italian and Greek refugee youth policy. Its unit of analysis, then, is the school as a place of possible incorporation, normalization and stability for refugee minors being subjected to major disruptions in schooling and carrying potential traumatizing experiences. Drawing on international literature, policy documents analysis and empirical data collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with teachers and policymakers, within the 3-year KA2 Erasmus+ project (2020-2023) "Ensuring Continuity in Education for Refugee"("The Continugee Project")[2] funded

[2] https://continugee.eu/.

within the framework of "Strategic Partnerships for school education," we aim to illustrate (1) the fragmented implementation of inclusive national legal frameworks and (2) the obstacles related to the continuity of refugee youth education, in two project partner countries, Italy and Greece, at national and/or local levels. Continuity is intended here as a three-stage process that does not follow a linear path: access, recognition, and transition. As our findings show, in fact, these processes are often intertwined, and their achievement is recognized as relevant for educational success.

The first section of this article discusses theoretical and empirical issues concerning the education of refugee minors and the continuity of their schooling. The second section presents both data and legal/institutional framework analysis focusing on (1) inclusive policies and their fragmented implementation and (2) differentiated school inclusion models and various embodied educational practices. This section also introduces a brief excursus on the management of school placement of minors from Ukraine in both countries, which appears to be a relevant new event in this policy field that could act as a possible driver of policy innovation or segmentation. The last section presents the conclusions.

Refugee minors and continuity of schooling: theoretical and empirical evidence

School inclusion of foreign minors is a crucial issue at the local, national, and supra-national levels because the large influx of refugees and migrants in Europe has turned refugee education into a European issue (de Wal Pastoor 2016), and the impact of newcomers on the school systems has highlighted problems of inclusion/exclusion, continuity and consistency in education and learning outcomes. Furthermore, educational responses to refugee and asylum-seeking minors represent a litmus test not only in terms of the inclusiveness and cohesion of the educational systems of the contexts analyzed, but also how the effects of globalization on education and social change are understood (Pinson and Arnot 2007).

Despite extensive policy talk and policy measures in EU member states, several studies have highlighted various structural obstacles that make it difficult for refugee minors to be placed in school without major disruptions to the continuity of their educational path. First, refugee minors are not often targeted in educational surveys (Bloch *et al.*, 2015) and data on their school results are quite often not available at neither the local nor national databases (Crul 2017). What is more, while in different contexts, refugee services invest heavily in providing quality educational programs for refugee minors in their care, their educational outcomes either lack systematic empirical analysis (*i.e.*, Aleghfeli and Hunt 2022, for unaccompanied minors) or there is few recent research evidence (*i.e.*, Edele *et al.*, 2021; Hutchinson and Reader 2021). It is likely to be so because the "refugee crisis" is perceived as an immigration control issue related to adults rather than a global policy issue with educational aspects (Pinson and Arnot 2007). Nevertheless, in the absence of such databases providing the necessary information on the school profile of refugee minors, it becomes complex to identify needs and implement policies dedicated to this specific group.

Second, backgrounds characterized by civil war, ethnic conflict, persecution, and exile are significant in shaping the lives of refugee minors (Bloch *et al.*, 2015), and concomitant educational programs that do not consider such experiences, often fail to identify and attend to their actual needs. However, excessive focus on trauma, risks homogenizing the individual and collective experience of refugee minors' oppression, while also overshadowing the exclusion and discrimination suffered in the destination context (Rutter 2006).

What seems essential is the relational approach in refugee minors' school placement, and the knowledge of not only individual but also family, school and community contexts of minors is necessary to understand the ideal environment for young people to thrive in learning (Aleghfeli and Hunt 2022). According to the comparative analysis of Koehler and Schneider (2019), the challenge is to advance from the ad hoc measures taken in reaction to the immediate emergencies to more permanent structures and concepts that presume high levels of heterogeneity in classrooms as the most likely normality of schools in the future. Research on the socio-spatial and temporal elements of refugee placement in school contexts (Borsch 2021) has also shown that both the biographical time of refugee and immigrant minors and the social, instructional, and contextual characteristics of the reception classrooms in which care practices take place, are essential for their well-being and learning development as well as a favorable accompaniment. As a result, educational approaches designed for refugee minors from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds must place a strong emphasis on the creation of effective curricula as well as the professional development of educators. Because many refugee minors have never attended school or have been away from it for a long time — usually years — using instructional practices that actively engage these students is crucial. Recent applied research has repeatedly underlined a structural drive toward teachers and school innovation and improvement[3].

The frequent change of reception centers and the consequent change of schools make it slow and challenging for refugee minors to adapt to the host country's school culture and learn the language (Crul 2017). In fact, because in most cases the border member state that became the point of entry of refugees into the EU or the first country of settlement will not be the place of their final relocation, it is necessary to ensure a degree of continuity in the content and form of the educational services provided and to facilitate their school integration. In 2015, in Lebanon, for example, about only one in five Syrian refugee children were enrolled in schools because the number of Syrian school-age children exceeded the capacity of the entire Lebanese public school system (Sirin and Rogers-Sirin 2015). Last but not least, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the normal function of educational institutions throughout Europe since spring 2020 up to school year 2022/2023. For more than 24 months, the consequences of this disturbance have disproportionately impacted the migrant and refugee youth who largely depend on vocational education and training (VET), a

[3] The Horizon 2020 Project Immerse has a wide and updated database that is available online. Recently, a focus on young refugees from Ukraine has been opened: https://www.immerse-h2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/IMMERSE_Ukraine-10-principles_EN.pdf.

mode of teaching and learning that relies heavily on in-person classes and workplaces that have been suspended or limited (CEDEFOP, 2020; OECD 2021b).

The research methodology

The qualitative data for the Italian case are based on 14 qualitative interviews held between January and June 2022 with teachers and social workers working in different regions of Italy. The qualitative data for the Greek case are based on two focus group discussions held online between December 2021 and February 2022, with the participation of 11 teachers, principals, policymakers and coordinators of refugee reception and education structures.

Most interviewees for the Italian case work with minors hosted in Italy as "unaccompanied minors." In the Italian case, the choice of the study areas aimed to cover various policy contexts, as Italy is characterized by the strong territorial differences in public service provision and access: Lombardy and Piedmont (north), Marche (center) and Sicily (south). In terms of document analysis, we performed a review of Italian sociological literature and institutional documentation. The networking with social services and civil society organizations provided us also with firsthand information on the policy process.

In the Greek case, focus group discussants hold various positions relevant to refugee education: teachers, principals and refugee education coordinators work with both accompanied and unaccompanied minors who attend the refugee education structures set up in local schools, Attiki (the region of the country capital, Athens) and Central and Northern Greece. Due to the centralized control, policy frameworks are almost identical across Greek regions and are discussed with policymakers from the Ministry of Education. But policy implementation in educational structures depends on school and teachers' capabilities. In terms of document analysis, we have reviewed institutional documents and the reports from the Ministry of Education Scientific Committee for Refugee Education, along with relevant reports by international organizations and NGOs operating in Greece.

Determining factors and barriers of education quality and continuity: the Italian case

Over the past decades, Italy has been a major destination for both accompanied and unaccompanied minor refugees. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (MLPS) records — as of December 31, 2021 — 12,284 unaccompanied minors in Italy increased to 14,558 in May 2022 (Ministero del Lavoro e dell Politiche Sociali 2022) following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The main country of origin is Ukraine (28.1%), followed by Egypt (22.5%), Tunisia (9.4%) and Albania (7.2%). In this context, even though the growing number of unaccompanied or separated children arriving in Italy has been a matter of concern for public and private bodies involved in providing immediate humanitarian response, no data were available on their migration trajectory and, more generally, on their living conditions (Dovigo 2018) or regarding the

type of educational institution they are enrolled in, the distribution according to gender, age, country of origin and so on (Grigt 2017) until 2020. In this context, the two research studies involving the same sample conducted by ISMU[4] in 2020 and 2022, commissioned by the Ministry of Education and developed within an AMIF[5] project, builds a national picture of unaccompanied foreign minors' access to education and other learning programs. It mainly suggests that a constant synergy between schools, educational agencies and reception facilities is the main condition for successful school integration.

In recent times, there has also been a growing concern on the unaccompanied minors disappearing from hosting institutions (Burrai *et al.*, 2022), apparently fleeing toward family networks in other countries or just hitting the road with dangerous, informal, or illegal migration networks[6].

The preliminary results (Barberis *et al.*, 2022) of the Continugee project also confirm that refugee youth's migration plans often do not foresee a long stay in Italy. Thus, they may not be as motivated to learn Italian, even feeling "trapped" in reception systems, so much so that a relevant share of guests tries to exit from hosting institutions and policy paths. However, we can also see the problem from another perspective: reception and school institutions are not as capable of motivating refugee youth and providing educational paths fitting/supporting/reorienting their migratory plans.

Our findings showed that educational opportunities available in Italy are segmented and fragmented along at least three dimensions: location, age, and legal status[7]. As expected, the quality and the availability of educational opportunities are usually higher in Northern Italy. The Italian model of reception of managed migrations, including refugee youth and unaccompanied minors, is characterized by a dispersal strategy. Thus, many facilities are located in suburban and rural areas. In 2021, a nationwide research platform was opened by the NGO ActionAid to evaluate the performances of the reception system and the geographical distribution of the reception facilities (Openpolis, ActionAid 2021). As hosting facilities are so scattered, educational institutions may not be feasible; thus, access to education may require public or private transportation, even for quite long routes (*i.e.*, more than 30 km, as mentioned in cases from Sicily and Marche regions).

[4] The Foundation Iniziative e Studi sulla Multietnicità (ISMU) is an independent scientific body studying migration phenomena in Lombardy, Italy, and Europe.

[5] https://www.msna-ali.it/ The project proposes concrete activities aimed at enhancing the integration process of UAMs in Italy, including by means of information and digital tools through the extensive national collaboration undertaken by the Provincial Center for Adult Education (CPIA 2) Metropolitan Bologna. An additional aim is to promote universally recognized values such as welcome, integration and the right to education, as well as to disseminate good practices and experiences to the public, teachers and experts in the field. On AMIF see European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs, Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (2021-2027), https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/funding/asylum-migration-and-integration-funds/asylum-migration-and-integration-fund-2021-2027_en.

[6] See the European network of journalists that follow the issue of minors' disappearance with an EU-wide coverage: https://lostineurope.eu/.

[7] See Morris (2003) for legal statutes as formal markers of inclusion and exclusion and civic stratification as a formal system of differentiated rights.

> We had a hard time when there were kids who wanted to go to high school, but it was too far away, and they couldn't even come back home by public transport in the evening. They finished at nine in the evening, and they couldn't get home by any public means of transport. (Social worker, Milazzo).

The limitation in autonomous access to education weakens migrant youth's road to autonomy and their freedom of choice over the kind of education they can achieve. The main educational opportunity usually and consistently offered to refugee youth in Italy refers to Italian language courses, called "L2" (second language). Such classes are often offered by the same reception centers, hosting facilities and host families. Another common option is short, usually no more than 3 months, vocational training courses in some specialized skills that provide formal certificates. Nevertheless, the state of vocational training in Italy is such that quick access to the labor market is not that easy (Ascoli, Ranci and Sgritta 2016).

> The young refugees often receive the offer of free and short professional courses on professional topics like HACCP[8] food management and safety in the workplace, and some others have managed to do welding courses for a fee, but with private training companies. The courses we offer in our reception projects, which are in agreement with public vocational training institutions, are such kinds of courses. They allow you to use food, allow you to work in restaurants and allow you to administer food or safety at work, or to know how to use a fire extinguisher, trivially. They don't give direct access to a job, though. (Social worker, Milazzo).

As previously stated, the age of unaccompanied minors is currently very often close to 18, and the overwhelming majority are males. In this context, even if Italian legislation on the school inclusion of foreign minors, law no. 47/2017 (the so-called "Zampa" Law[9]), provides for the activation of specific conventions for apprenticeships and the possibility of obtaining qualifications even when coming-of-age, unaccompanied youth can no longer enjoy a special permit of stay, this profile often faces direct and indirect discrimination in the access to education. Provision is also made to support those coming of age up to the age of 21, should they need a longer integration program. However, in the field, mainstream upper secondary schools are not rarely ill prepared (when not willing) to welcome students with low proficiency in Italian and unclear previous educational paths at an age close to the final exam for the school-leaving certificate.

The main option they are offered is in the frame of the so-called CPIA (Provincial Centers for the Education of Adults), public schools providing lower and upper secondary school degrees (ISCED 2-3) or vocational training. The latter, managed by both public and private institutions, is regulated at the regional level.

The access to normal upper secondary education (ISCED 3) is less likely, also due to various limitations: (1) lack of official degrees of formal education in the country of origin; (2) lack of formal education at all; and (3) schools' reluctance to include stu-

[8] Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points. It is compulsory training for workers and businesses in the catering and food sector.

[9] Named after the MP proposing the bill.

dents aged 16 to 18 in the first grades of secondary education, as age gaps are deemed to produce ineffective class management.

In Italy, the Government Decree no.130 of 2020 has set new standards for the reception system targeting refugees and minors. This regulation states minimum standards of social services provision, includes: linguistic and cultural mediation; teaching of Italian language; school placement and/or vocational training; career guidance and job placement; access to housing and social services; legal support; health and social support; and pocket money. Although the quality of formal provision of integration services has been improved, education and training offered to refugee youth do not often match their expectations.

> Certainly, often minors as well as children in general arrive with very high expectations toward the hosting institutions. And these expectations are projected onto the reception team and the services offered. We often hear controversy about the services they are offered, which always seem to be too poor. Perhaps the education offered to them is too poor; it is difficult to connect the hosting institutions with an employer because vocational training may not immediately activate a job contract. (Social worker, Jesi).

What is more, in apprenticeship positions, identifying trustworthy employers is not always very easy for those teachers and social workers who manage VET projects: As stated by some interviewees managing reception facilities, some employers see refugee youth as a low-cost labor force and do not comply with the training dimension of apprenticeship and vocational contracts.

The quality and efficacy of training and education are also related to learning-group arrangements. On the one hand, dedicated L2 classes may be more targeted to specific learning needs and levels; on the other hand, it is well known in education studies that separate education, without proper intergroup interactions, also involving native peers, has negative effects on both educational achievement and societal integration at large.

> Considering the language training, in the centers for adult education (CPIA), sometimes there is a poor assessment of the needs of the young refugees. We try to fill the gap by increasing the search for educational paths for them and by trying to mediate with language teachers. If we realize that the boy needs to be placed in a higher class, because we see that he is bored and no longer finds the motivation to learn the language, we talk to the teachers. It is the community worker who mediates this gap. (Community worker, Ancona).

In the specific case of unaccompanied minors in reception centers, the problem of social isolation is magnified by the location of hosting accommodations, not rarely placed far from educational facilities and populated areas. On the other hand, if we focus on pre-primary and primary education (ISCED 0-2), our interviewees considered the quality of education, as much as the efforts for a good school participation made by schools, in a much more positive way. The availability of integration resources (*e.g.*, intercultural mediation, teachers' expertise) may be variable, but the attitude in educational settings is seen as more positive. In this context, the most im-

portant barriers to school attendance are in producing school certificates from countries of origin and assessing minors' age, school grade and learning and social skills. Upper secondary schools (ISCED 3-4) tend to refuse the enrolment of those older than 18 or even less for fear of causing "disruption" in classes and courses. Under this perspective, younger children are seen as much less of a threat than young male adults. Here, the most important obstacles to school attendance are the production of school certificates from the countries of origin, as well as the assessment of children's age, school grade and learning and social skills.

> The starting point is an assessment of the language in their school experience. This applies rarely as you may consider that, when you flee by boat, it is difficult to carry your school documents. They don't even have their IDs, or they come from places where they usually attended 6/7 years of schooling only. We ask someone to send us school documents, but we see that there are very poor places with difficulties in accessing these documents, especially if they come from (Sub-Saharan) Africa, while in countries like Egypt, the situation is much better. (Social worker, Ancona)

In addition to the subjective difficulty expressed by the social worker, this quotation is also evidence of a paradoxical bureaucracy, whereas Italian law provides that a lack of documentation cannot in any way be a reason to exclude a child from education; in practice, this lack becomes a major obstacle in accessing education. As can be seen, the problem is not so much formal access (rules and regulations entitling children to education) but informal practices that undermine accessibility through arbitrariness in the enjoyment of rights due to refugee minors.

In this context, the educational system, based on groups of classes of the same age, seems rather rigid and struggles to adapt to a good number of refugees' individualized educational paths.

> We have had difficulties with respect to the insertion of boys in high schools — for example, some trade schools. They told us they were not taking adults because they were already eighteen years old […] Schools are not open to the world outside. When they have a class already formed, teachers want their clique of pupils. Some teachers say, 'I don't want them to sink my class.' (Social worker, Milazzo).
>
> The number of young refugees in public school is low, and why? Because the boys already arrive at the age of 16/17. We have cases of kids that enter school in the eighth grade, but it happens if they are 14. Otherwise, when a boy reaches the age of 16/17, our job is to try to give basics — basic skills, basic autonomy, practical and self-care — and our project is aimed to grant them access to the labor market. So, we tend to invest in basic autonomies and job-oriented skills, and we propose training courses instead of formal schooling. (Community worker, Ancona).

On the other hand, refugee youth's motivation to continue schooling is challenged by the conflict between the need for autonomy and some economic gain as well as long-term educational and vocational plans. What is more, schools usually do not accept the timing of young refugees' life course: integration in the same age group of students becomes difficult as the class can react with resistance and distrust to the newcomers. In general terms, this is connected to the complex and lunatic

management of time in the reception system of Italy, both hurried by an emergency framing and slow in the never-ending wait times recipients experience (Pitzalis 2022).

> A conflictual issue is precisely in the timing of the project. Families enter the project at any time of the school year, and, therefore, at any time of the year, we turn to schools for the inclusion of children in classes. This sometimes creates discomfort, resistance and difficulties linked in part to institutions that have a systematic rigidity, as you well know. The same problem arises at the end. It is true that families stay with us for 2 years more than individual guests. It is true that our guests, based on the work and life opportunities that arise, decide to leave the territory and go elsewhere. This is not a positive school experience it is experienced in a somewhat traumatic way, so to speak. (Social worker, Jesi).

In conclusion, the most accessible educational institutions are those intended for adult workers (CPIA). In that context, refugee youth are placed in existing (adult) classes, or, more often, a number of refugees are regrouped in a single class. The result is that — contrary to the much-praised Italian comprehensive model — special classes are created, with a sort of educational segregation in "refugee-only" groups. In this respect, the formal principle of inclusion as a cornerstone of the Italian educational system risks becoming a form of exclusion if resources and skills are not effective enough to support equal participation (Barberis and Buchowicz 2015). This is quite consistent with the progressive subsidization of the Italian welfare model where the actual implementation of incorporation is up to households, civil society organizations and local institutions (from municipalities to schools) without a clear support (Kazepov and Carbone 2009).

However, it is worth mentioning that, through the abovementioned AMIF-funded project "ALI-MSNA 1 and 2"[10], Italy has received, in an emergency measure, funding to support and sustain the learning pathways of UAMs — up to a maximum of 1,000 — through the adoption of personalized learning plans (PDPs) and interventions to strengthen linguistic skills and tutoring in the study of other school subjects.

Differentiated school inclusion models and relevant educational practices in Italy

If inclusion policies are jeopardized by territorial and administrative fragmentation, another factor that affects the effectiveness of policies is everyday informal interaction. The cultural diversity of refugee minors, gender and age is an embodied dimension that does have a relevant impact on the outcome of education policies (Vass *et al.*, 2017). On the issue of racism and discrimination in school and by the teachers toward young pupils, there has never been an institutional action. Few voices have claimed a decolonization of school curricula, and less have underlined the implicit or even explicit conflicts emerging between school management and students and families of refugees exacerbated by the COVID-19-related social crisis (Migliarini 2017; Locatelli and Mincu 2020; Mincu 2020; OECD 2021a).

[10] For the project report in English, see ISMU (2021).

Our interviews with social workers confirmed this problematic relationship. Migration and cultural diversity in schools are often still perceived as a threat and not as an opportunity, but according to some cultural mediators, the attitude of public-school teachers is slowly changing toward a more open approach:

> We go to the meetings with the aim of doing mediation work, and to do our part, I can tell a lot of anecdotes involving teachers. I could write a book about how many there have been. Once I had to specify that these guys arrived in Italy by boat, and when I confirmed it, the teachers changed. The whole situation has changed. From an aggressive approach in front of a parent who does not understand and does not listen, we have moved on to a more understanding approach — a willingness to communicate — because this is the hardest difficulty. (Social worker, Jesi)[11].

On the other hand, although professionalization in dealing with migrant youth is constantly in demand, according to senior and experienced teachers, the school community should avoid relying completely on outside experts and social workers in their educational role to foster inclusion, as teachers are the main figures in the daily interaction with refugee minors. Under this perspective, if teachers are not trained consistently on migration issues and cultural differences, external help by experts will not be effective:

> If I were to choose, I would implement teachers' training because they live a day-to-day interaction with boys and girls. I also see that is dangerous to delegate all to outsourced experts (psychologists, cultural mediators etc.) because teachers are those bringing the burden of the educational relationship. (Teacher, Urbino).

Learning support teachers can be a crucial resource for integration work in education as they can be activated by schools to build a favorable teaching environment for migrant students. In the complex governance entanglement of migrations, clear policy directions seem to be lacking (Blangiardo *et al.* 2022) as some teachers have pointed out:

> I would love to receive training helping me to understand who migrant children are, instead of just teaching me coding or using a tablet or knowing how to integrate lessons with online videos. That is, if I speak to a Colombian, Chilean, Venezuelan, a Kurd, a Turk […] if I have a Kurdish boy and a Turkish boy in the same class, how should I behave? What experiences do they have within their families? These are perhaps the lessons and training that we need now, especially if we want to have a school that can be not only up to date but truthful to our students, as classes are changing. (Teacher, Pesaro).

In terms of differentiated reception models, it is worth mentioning the management of the Ukrainian refugee flows. As of June 28, 2022, 141,562 Ukrainian exiles were registered in Italy, in which some 32% were minors[12]: compared to any recent refugees, this is a much higher share flow to Italy. On June 6, when registered Ukrain-

[11] This quote was extracted from the Intellectual Output 2 of the Erasmus + Project "Continugee" (Barberis *et al.*, 2022).

[12] Data were collected and released by Vittorio Nicoletta and can be retrieved here: https://github.com/vi-enne/profughiUcraina/blob/main/data/outputProfughi.csv.

ian exile minors were close to 42,000, 27,495 (some 65%) were already included in the school system (Ministero dell'Istruzione 2022); 45% of them were in primary schools — something quite different from what the older refugee minors usually have. Almost 5,000 schools have been hosting Ukrainian exile minors, with an unprecedented diffusion of refugee students (mostly in Northern Italy: one-third has been hosted in just two regions, Lombardy, and Emilia-Romagna).

The educational placement of minors from Ukraine in Italy has been highly exceptional in nature: they triggered a process of relative innovation in the system under several respects: unlike what applied to other refugee flows, Ukrainian refugees were free to decide where to settle based on preexisting family or friendship ties, and they were exposed to highly simplified procedures in the issuance of documents and access to services (Campomori 2022), including schooling. Two interviewees reported as a "shock" the fact that Ukrainian minors were included in mainstream classes even a few weeks before the end of the school year, even though this opportunity was explicitly barred by the very same schools for a Bangladeshi family. Also, another experience from Rome confirmed the exceptional rapidity of the implemented routes of refugees from Ukraine:

> To produce the documents here in Rome, they were quite fast; in fact, a very fast procedure was implemented that worked anyway and should be implemented in other emergencies because it worked well. The police headquarters also sped up the time; if it was always like this, it would be perfect. (Social worker, Rome).

In conclusion, in the Italian case, the management differences applied to different refugee flows risks deepening inequalities horizontally, not only between natives and refugees but also among refugees from different backgrounds. Furthermore, the high degree of educational institutions' autonomy has resulted in a very uneven and dispersed scenario for young refugees that creates educational offerings that are high quality in some places and highly fragmented and segregated in many others. The system appears incapable of raising the standards of benchmark levels, and its outcomes will worsen as long as the age of pupils grows.

Determining factors and barriers of education quality and continuity: the Greek case

The Greek system of education is generally considered to be equitable and "relatively inclusive" (OECD 2018: 33), in the sense that it is comprehensive, avoids early selection and employs policies and practices focusing on the inclusion of socioeconomically disadvantaged and at-risk student groups. According to Greek law, asylum-seeking minors are required to attend primary and secondary school under conditions similar to Greek nationals (Greek Council for Refugees 2021).

Formal structures for refugee education came into operation in Fall 2016, almost after a year into the crisis, focusing on allowing minors to leave the reception and accommodation centers (RACs) and get a fresh start in their education within their new societal context. The Ministry of Education described the school year 2016-2017 as a

"pre-integration" "transition" year and included the establishment and operation of three different structures for refugee minors' education (Ministry of Education, 2017):

1) Preschools within the RACs, mainly operated on a voluntary basis, or enrollment of refugee minors in neighboring mainstream preschool facilities: these structures could not reach all refugee minors in need, but, according to teachers and coordinators, they were rather successful. A strong reason for their success in the integration process was that the teachers did not need to have highly developed intercultural competences, they did not drastically change their routine and communication with minors often relied on nonverbal and activity processes.

   Refugee minors face the same problems of adapting to school like all early age children, regardless of their origin and country, because, due to the age of the children, it takes some time to adapt anyway. However, they adapted more easily than older children who had already formed their personality, and they acted as 'sponges' absorbing new school experiences. In their second year, they had no problem following the program, like native children. (Preschool teacher, Central Greece).

2) Afternoon classes in designated public schools accessible from the RACs, called Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (RFRE, Greek acronym DYEP), aimed at enabling refugee minors with little or no education background to gradually adjust to the new national, cultural and school environments, as well as to experience Greek and European culture and literacy, covering a weekly program of 20 hours, and offering four core subjects (*e.g.*, Greek, mathematics, English, information technology), as well as arts and sport activities. The ministry and the teachers agreed that DYEPs did not serve educational purposes only:

   The purpose of the establishment of the DYEPs was to get the child into a school 'normality,' into a school context, and not leaving them out, as long as they were forced to stay in Greece or they themselves decided not to leave. (Ministry official, Athens area).
   Most teachers were aware that the purpose of the DYEPs was not for children to acquire literacy skills, as there were basic communication and language problems. Interpreters and translators were not available in the DYEPs; neither were cultural mediators. (Primary school teacher working in DYEP, Athens area).

The refugee minors who benefited most were those who had a basic knowledge of English:

> Many of the students came to school speaking English quite well because of the language lessons delivered by NGOs and by unemployed teachers paid by the Public Organization for Employment in the RACs. These lessons were 'lifesaving.' Without the knowledge of English, the children would not have been able to cope, and neither would we. (Primary school teacher working in DYEP, Northern Greece).

3) Reception classes (RCs) within primary and secondary schools located in zones of educational priority (ZEP), which are defined by the Ministry of Education and that aim at teaching Greek to refugee minors housed in nearby areas: many teachers in these classes did not feel prepared to help these minors integrate into the school environment.

> It was clear that these were not the 'kids next door.' We didn't know what they carried inside them and what they had experienced in their countries. (Lower secondary school teacher working in RC, Athens area).

In our research, we identified several factors that undermined or limited the effectiveness of the relevant policies and initiatives for the inclusion and educational success of refugee minors following the 2015-2016 refugee "crisis".

First, the refugee and migrant emergency coincided with the last phase of the economic crisis in Greece, which had a significant impact on the living conditions of the Greek people. Since the beginning of the crisis in 2009, the average household income had decreased by more than 30%, unemployment had reached 23% for the general population and 44.2% for young people under 25 years old, and 15% of the people lived in conditions of extreme poverty (OECD 2016; Dianeosis 2016). In the same period, public spending for education fell sharply during the crisis, affecting the maintenance of educational infrastructures and teachers' salaries, staffing of schools and many educational aspects of all at-risk groups (OECD 2018). The economic crisis was also associated with the xenophobic and exclusionary reactions of local communities where far-right racist discourses found listening ears (Kalerante 2020). As one teacher put it:

> The first days refugee children came to school were very difficult. There were protests from far-right Golden Dawn members and reactions from parents who were worried about mixing 'unvaccinated refugees' with other students (Primary school teacher working in DYEP, Athens area).

Second, the number of students in need of urgent interventions for their education was extremely difficult to manage. According to official UNHCR data, 1,038,864 people (one-third of them minors) arrived in Greece by sea or land in 2015 and 2016. Most of them departed to other European destinations, but some 60,000 people (more than one-third of them minors who traveled with their families or who were unaccompanied) had to stay in the country when the Balkan borders were closed (Ministry of Education 2017). The challenge for Greek authorities and local communities was large, as their experience for handling similar situations was rather limited. In our focus group discussion, a municipality representative argued that "municipalities exceeded themselves during the refugee crisis," and most participants nodded agreeably. The volatile number of refugee and migrant minors due to frequent relocations or departures made the situation even more unpredictable, giving policies a character of "improvisation and trial and error" (OECD 2018: 70).

Third, as we clearly see in the case of DYEPs, the education of migrant and refugee minors was largely organized in terms of the monitoring and control of relevant populations rather than the considerations of providing quality education. RACs were usually set up in remote, degraded areas and lacked the infrastructures to accommodate the large numbers of residents and to properly host educational activities, whereas the integration of refugees in urban houses had been slow (Ministry of Education 2017).

In those difficult circumstances, the response of the Greek government and local authorities relied heavily on European and international funding and support (*i.e.*, on resources from European Asylum, Immigration, and Integration Fund; AMIF). Most educational activities taking place in the reception and identification centers (RICs) and the RACs in the islands and mainland Greece in 2015-2016 were nonformal. They were organized by international and nongovernmental organizations, many of which were invited by the Greek state authorities to establish such programs and initiatives (Palaiologou *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, there were huge discrepancies in the nature, aims and scope of these initiatives, which were pertinent to the characteristics of the facilitating organization.

A fourth issue affecting inclusion has to do with the fact that educators employed in RFREs in most cases lacked both training in managing socially sensitive students and the motivation to take on this challenging educational duty. They were selected from the general list of replacement teachers, usually on a part-time basis, and left when they took a full-time appointment in mainstream schools. During the first year of operation, some RFREs changed teachers up to four times (Ministry of Education, 2017).

> Teachers had difficulty understanding the institutional framework for the operation of the DYEPs and the consequent issues of the logistical infrastructure. In some schools, active and sensitive Principals helped to overcome difficulties (*e.g.*, use of morning school equipment, consumables). But most teachers were asking for a specific textbook to use in their teaching and found it difficult to understand that the proposed textbooks were just the starting point and that they had to develop approaches specific to the students of their classes. (Refugee education coordinator, Northern Greece).

The role of the parents of both refugee minors and local students was equally important. In some schools, the racist and xenophobic reactions of student parents resulted in feelings of insecurity among refugee parents, who felt that their offspring would be in danger outside the RACs. Also, in many cases, the communication between schools and refugee parents was difficult due to language and cultural barriers:

> Sometimes I had to call refugee parents who had a basic knowledge of Greek or English to act as cultural mediators to other parents. I asked them to translate what I was saying during school meetings. (Preschool teacher in urban kindergarten, Athens area).

However, there were many reports of refugee parents who had developed high expectations from their children's education. The sense of continuity of education was important for them:

> Refugee parents whose children attended education in Turkey since they left their country had very high expectations from schools, and they were very interested in their children's school performance. (Primary school teacher working in RC, Athens area).

The Greek Ombudsman for Children reported that, at the end of December 2016, 21,000 refugee minors — among them, 10% unaccompanied minors — stayed in Greece, in State open accommodation centers, flats and hotels rented by UNHCR and similar organizations. An unidentified number of minors, as high as 2,000, were reported as staying in solidarity squats hosted by Greek families or in residences rented by their families (Ministry of Education 2017). The 112 RFREs that operated in that school year hosted 3,240 students aged 6 to 15 coming from 33 RACs. Another 1,500 refugee minors were enrolled in mainstream schools, either in regular classrooms, the RCs of educational priority zones or one of the 26 intercultural schools running in Greece[13] (Crul *et al.* 2019). In the following school years, the number of minors enrolled in all available educational options increased significantly, and by December 2018, it amounted to 11,500, a 44% increase compared to the end of the previous school year (UNHCR, UNESCO, IOM 2019).

The flow of people decreased the following years, but minors still amounted to around 20% of the newcomers. Mid-2022 figures estimated that the number of refugees recognized in Greece is 147,420, but the number still fluctuates significantly. Unaccompanied minors are estimated to have reached 2,666 (UNHCR 2022). The decrease in the numbers of migrants and refugees reflects the border policy changes in Greece and the restrictions of population movements during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the pandemic brought about a new drawback in the effort toward inclusion. The Greek Council of Refugees mentions "disproportionate restrictions imposed on camps and more broadly refugee-hosting facilities, in the context of measures aimed at limiting the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic" (GCR 2021: 173), which complicated school access for minors leaving RACs to pursue education. Moreover, due to the lack of a technical infrastructure or essential personal equipment for online learning in RACs and homes, refugees and asylum-seeking minors have been further excluded from education.

As a result, although RAC infrastructures have improved in the years following the peak of the crisis, educational programs were streamlined and approved by the Greek Institute of Education Policy, relevant materials were created, and the number of trained educators increased, the educational attrition rates in migrant and refugee minors remain high. The 2021 Ombudsperson's Report states that the dropout rates for refugee minors attending mainstream schools or RFREs are extremely high and that school inclusion in RICs is practically nonexistent (Greek Ombudsperson in Collaboration with UNICEF Greece Country Office 2021).

Moreover, a crucial refugee education policy deficiency is the absence of specific measures aimed at adolescents throughout the discussed period. This is a serious drawback in inclusion attempts as it excludes a large number of refugee and migrant minors in need of education and training.

[13] Intercultural schools and ZEPs were initially set up in the 1990s to integrate migrant and disadvantaged students into the Greek educational system.

Differentiated school inclusion models and relevant educational practices in Greece

Migrant education started as a small-scale policy issue in the 1980s, when Greek migrants returned from countries of Europe, North America and Australia, and became an education policy priority during the 1990s, when Greece received an increased number of immigrants from the Balkans (mainly from Albania, the former socialist republics of Eastern Europe and from Russia, Ukraine and Georgia); many of whom were acknowledged as ethnic Greeks by the Greek state and accorded with preferential treatment. Almost a generation later, this transformation, from a country of outbound migration to a country predominantly receiving immigrants and refugees, is not easily inscribed in social consciousness, and the reluctance of the Greek society toward others' integration is still reflected in education (Markou and Parthenis 2015).

In Greece, migrant minors can stay for more than 6 school years in RCs, which aim mainly at Greek language learning or other preparatory programs and receive limited instruction in other core subjects (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice 2019), which has a significant impact on their educational trajectories. In addition, even these classes, as well as the afternoon tutorial classes that help students improve their performance, are usually established in ZEP schools, which host the highest density of other at-risk populations (*i.e.*, Roma and vulnerable social groups). OECD data show that these groups make up a large proportion of the low-achieving Greek, based on international surveys such as PISA (OECD 2019), suggesting that these groups are very much at risk of exclusion from education and/or employment. Attendance at RFRE/DYEPs can also be extended from one to two school years by the teachers' board, who can postpone prompt enrolment in mainstream primary or secondary education schools, on the grounds of students' unpreparedness to attend all school subjects.

However, the most important problem of the inclusion models used in Greek education is that migrant and refugee education is focused exclusively on compulsory education, which ends at 15 years of age. To enroll in a general or vocational upper secondary school (Lyceum/Lykion), students need a high school graduation certificate. As Crul *et al.* noted, however, "the lack of an adequate assessment system has locked most refugee youths over age fifteen outside the Greek education system" (Crul *et al.* 2019: 15) and pushes these groups into unregulated nonformal VET provided by NGOs and international organizations with limited educational and employment opportunities.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine revealed another form of differentiated inclusion in Greek schools. In Greece, according to official Ministry of Civil Protection data of June 2022, the number of Ukrainian refugees was 27,809, among them 7,266 minors, and the numbers were continuously rising. Similar to what happens in Italy, the issue of Ukrainian refugee education is also being dealt with at the top level of policymaking in Greece (*i.e.*, at the Ministry of Education). RCs have been set up in schools hosting Ukrainian students, and the Ministry of Education circulated informational mater-

ial in Ukrainian and established contact points for the school enrolment of minors in all regions, also including a call center in Ukrainian. The Institute of Education Policy set up training sessions for teachers in receiving schools and provided guidelines for the use of educational materials. A full array of psychosocial support services targeting minors and their families were arranged in cooperation with other ministries (Ministry of Education, 2022). However, at the end of May 2022, only 9% of the minors were enrolled and attended school (EC, EACEA, Eurydice 2022). The accuracy of this number cannot be easily verified[14], but the low enrolment rate contradicts the rather quick response of the Ministry of Education and can be attributed to the fact that many families were still on the move during their first months of refuge, and refugee minors were not enrolled in any school. The situation is expected to change in the 2022-2023 school year, with much higher enrolment rates. It is worth mentioning that in several Ukrainian regions (*i.e.*, in Mariupol), there is a large community of ethnic Greeks with cultural and educational relationships with the Greek state and with relatives already living in Greece. The ethnic ties to the Ukrainian people and regions contribute to Greek society's exceptional willingness to accommodate and support Ukrainian refugees.

The arrangements described here, and the previous sections of this article reveal that, for Greece, the issue of continuity in refugee education is difficult to confront. It depends to a large extent on refugee minors' access to quality, inclusive education services suitable for their needs in a supportive educational environment. The educational trajectories of refugee minors can be easily disturbed or interrupted, and the risk of exclusion is extremely high.

Conclusion

Immigration in Italian and Greek schools has become a relevant issue that is here to stay. In 2021, the asylum applicant minors of age in Italy were 11,569, of which 28% were unaccompanied. There was a sharp increase compared to 2020, in which 7,106 minors were hosted in refugee and asylum seekers' reception facilities, of which 36.7% were unaccompanied (ISMU 2022). After a slowing down in pandemic times, their number is increasing sharply. As of September 30, 2022, there are 18,801 unaccompanied minors in Italy, of whom 83.07% are male, and 43.8% are 17 years old. In Greece, the situation is similar: the number of asylum applicant minors increased in 2021, and at the end of the year, it reached 8,445 minors, with more than 26% of them unaccompanied.

At the regulatory, formal level, these two European countries are among the most inclusive ones in terms of access to school, guaranteeing to all minors the right to education. However, as highlighted by recent research (Grigt 2017; Dovigo 2018; Quadranti 2021), achieving the goals stated in the law is difficult without adopting

[13] The European Commission/ European Education and Culture Executive Agency - EACEA/Eurydice publication reporting these enrolment data notes that they "must be treated with caution, especially as they are constantly evolving. In particular, the number of school-aged children and young people from Ukraine who are enrolled in schools has been increasing in some countries." (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice 2022: 9).

effective implementation plans and education practices, as they are often flawed by the lack of funding, staff or skills necessary for coping with the specific needs and developing the potential of refugee youth. Our research confirmed this assumption. Although the legal framework and institutional paths for refugee minors' inclusion are in place, the case of refugees' and migrant minors' education in Italy and Greece is characterized by a number of implementation difficulties and setbacks that depend on the entrenched problems of the national education systems and of their teachers and staff. In fact, both countries are confronted with several problems in the policy, practice, and governance of the system.

In Greece, policymaking is patterned by a significant degree of fragmentation. Reforms and changes are usually decided and enforced in an unstructured, controversial manner, and, as a result, they are often short lived and unaccomplished. Centralized governance of education ensures a degree of coherence in the administrative and educational processes, but the limited autonomy of schools and local education authorities renders the system more inert to change, inflexible and unresponsive to the localized circumstances and needs, such as those of schools in small islands, remote regions and schools facing emergencies. Last but not least, the system has so far demonstrated limited capacity in effectively monitoring policy implementation and in analyzing, interpreting and using education data for policy learning and improvement.

Italian education policies are characterized by a relevant territorial fragmentation that shows very different levels of performance. Furthermore, local practices in various contexts are often not aligned with the national inclusive policy design. In fact, our results pointed out that refugee youth are often placed in existing adult classes in CPIAs, or, more often, a number of refugees end up in a single class in VET schools. The result is that, contrary to the much-praised Italian comprehensive model, special classes are created with a sort of educational segregation in refugee-only groups. The situation is similar in Greece where refugee youth are largely excluded from formal schooling and vocational training, a fact that generally limits their potential for inclusion and for an independent future within Greek society. Furthermore, the education system based on the same age class groups is quite rigid in both Italy and Greece and struggles to adapt to the needs of individualized educational paths of a good number of refugees.

In terms of school placement, the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis has been dealt with in both countries with an institutional response labeled as "extraordinary," leading to policies that extended the access to the educational system and invested new resources focused selectively on minors from Ukraine. That situation has further complicated the civic stratification of rights and opportunities among migrants and refugees with different statuses. At the same time, this emergency not only showed that entrenched distortions, discriminations and inequalities in the social and educational opportunities for adult and minor refugees can be amended if a strong political will is supporting school management at national and local levels (ANCI[15] 2022) but

[15] National association of Italian municipalities (Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani).

also that educational inequalities are embodied in everyday practices that are hardly recognized by social actors, such as structural racism, gender gaps and postcolonial frames of education provision. Keeping in mind that teachers also move within certain structures and that the policies create the framework conditions for this, changing ingrained habits, prejudices and stereotypes in teachers' attitudes are a long and complex cultural work that has not yet received the necessary institutional attention.

Finally, in our fieldwork, we note an emerging claim of a relevant knowledge gap among teachers and school managers on the structures and functions of the various educational systems of the home countries of young refugees. European paths for ensuring continuity in education across countries are developing, even if quite slowly, whereas the possibility of a continuity in education across different geographies is almost not supported by specific educational policy actions. The other challenge is the (failed, in many cases) coordination of the multiple administrative levels (European, national and local) and between governmental and nongovernmental institutions and organizations having varying degrees of autonomy in managing the socioeconomic incorporation of migrants and refugees in the destination countries.

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Annex 1 – Italian field work: interviews

Interview	Role	City - Region
1	Teacher	Urbino - Marche
2	Teacher	Pesaro – Marche
3	Social worker	Jesi – Marche
4	Social worker and community worker	Ancona - Marche
5	Social worker	Milazzo – Sicilia
6	Social worker	Bari – Puglia
7	Social worker	Milano - Lombardia
8	President of third sector association	Torino – Piemonte
9	Cultural mediator	Milano – Lombardia
10	Community worker	Milazzo – Sicilia
11	School headmaster	Milano – Lombardia
12	Manager of reception centre	Urbino – Marche
13	Officer of social cooperative	Pesaro – Marche
14	Social worker	Rome

Annex 2- Greek field work: focus Groups

Focus Group 1	
1 Preschool Teacher	Middle Greece (Evia)
3 Primary School Teachers (2 working in DYEPs, 1 working in RCs)	Athens area / Thessaloniki area
1 Primary School and DYEP Principal	Athens Area
1 Refugee Education Coordinator	Northern Greece (Katerini area)
Focus Group 2	
1 Lower Secondary School Principal	Middle Greece
1 Ministry Official	Athens Area
2 Lower Secondary Education Teachers	Athens area / Thessaloniki area
1 Municipality representative	Northern Greece (Thessaloniki area)
1 Refugee Education Coordinator	Middle Greece (Thessaly area)

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge and thank Mariagrazia Santagati and Eduardo Barberis for their valuable comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this paper. We also thank anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments on our manuscript.

De Europa
Vol. 6, No. 2 (2023), 107-121
ISSN 2611-853X
www.deeuropa.unito.it

Barred from Opportunity? How Newly-Migrated Youth in the European Union Find Access to Vocational Education and Training, or Not

Simon Morris-Lange, Lena Rother

Since 2014, more than five million young people (aged 16 to 25) have fled or immigrated to the European Union, or have moved across borders within the EU. The newcomers[1], represent more than a quarter of total EU migration (Eurostat 2022). Most of them plan to work either right away or after obtaining the necessary qualification. For many, technical and vocational education and training (TVET)[2] offers a practice-oriented gateway to skilled employment (OECD 2019: 42–44; IAB 2019: 8; IAW/ISG/SOKO 2018: 75). In this research, TVET encompasses all formal training programs which provide skills and knowledge for specific occupations – *e.g.*, plumbing, social work or nursing – and which the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012) classifies at ISCED Level 3 and 4. Not included are Bachelor's programs, Master's and other higher education programs at ISCED Level 6, 7 and 8.

In recent years, policy-makers and employers in some EU countries have turned their attention to TVET as a tool for the economic integration of newcomers. Across Europe, unemployment among those who have completed a TVET program is significantly lower than among those who have not (CEDEFOP 2020: 75–76). This is especially true for those economic sectors in which there is high demand for skilled labor, *e.g.*, in the care sector and in technical professions. But it is not only the newcomers themselves who benefit from participating in TVET – so do the economies and social systems of their host societies: educationally disadvantaged adolescents often end up becoming reliant on government transfers as adults and, on average, pay fewer taxes than workers with a TVET credential (Piopiunik and Wößmann 2010).

Simon Morris-Lange, Allianz Foundation, simon.morris-lange@allianzfoundation.org
Lena Rother, Syspons, lena.rother@syspons.com

[1] In this research study, newly-migrated youth, here also referred to as "young newcomers", were defined as persons who after 1 January 2014 have crossed national borders to reside in one of the four focal countries and who by the time of observation were between 16 and 25 years old. Primary emphasis was placed on newcomers from non-EU countries, including recognized refugees and asylum seekers.

[2] Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a term used to encompass education and training programs that provide individuals with the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to engage in specific occupations or fields of work. TVET focuses on practical and hands-on learning, preparing learners for employment in various industries and trades. It can include formal education, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and other forms of learning that are directly relevant to the labor market (UNESCO 2023).

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.13135/2611-853X/7133

Against this socio-political background, we analyzed the situation in four EU Member States, Austria, Germany, Slovenia, and Spain[3], seeking to address the overarching research question: *How accessible is technical and vocational education and training for refugees and other newcomers (aged 16 to 25) in selected European countries?* The following contribution was generated as part of a research project which the two authors conducted for the Expert Council on Integration and Migration (*Sachverständigenrat für Integration und Migration*, SVR) between January 2019 and December 2020[4].

1. Literature Review and Research Design

There is a sizable body of research on adolescents and young adults accessing TVET systems across Europe, spanning from education-to-work transitions (*e.g.*, Ozer, Perc 2020; Bol *et al.* 2019) to youth unemployment and labor market integration (*e.g.*, Nilsson 2010) to TVET access policies (*e.g.,* Scheuch *et al.* 2021) to questions around skills formation and competency development (*e.g.,* Rosenblad *et al.* 2022), to name a few of the more prominent research strands. However, despite the notable attention paid to youth trajectories in TVET both by academics and policy-makers, fairly little comparative research has been undertaken into the situation of young refugees and other newly-migrated populations, particularly when it comes to their on-the-ground experiences of accessing TVET systems. Migration, *i.e.*, the medium- to long-term movement of persons across national borders (IOM 2023), can severely interrupt individuals' educational biographies. This is especially true if migration is unplanned or even forced in nature. Refugees in particular, often do not readily meet receiving countries' requirements for TVET access. Existing research suggests that many have trouble entering training programs because they are either too old or because current migration laws conflict with their individual right to an education (Seeber *et al.* 2018; Granato and Neises 2017)[5]. Therefore, the goal of this exploratory research endeavor has been to identify pattern and roots of TVET (in)accessibility within the European Union. In this area, empirical knowledge about the experiences of newly-migrated youth remains limited, especially when it comes to comparative studies that look beyond more than one jurisdiction (Seeber *et al.* 2018: 55; Granato, Neises 2017: 6).

Access to education is the result of more than just a set of formal access policies (Stauber and Parreira do Amaral 2015; Barberis and Buchowicz 2015; Hodkinsons and

[3] The four countries were chosen based on migration and TVET data sourced from Eurostat and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) as well as contextual geographic, political, and socio-demographic data sourced from national statistical offices. The final country selection was made in accordance with the most different systems design (Rohlfing 2009). The field research was conducted in collaboration with research partners at the University of Vienna, the University of Ljubljana, and the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Perger and Vezovnik 2020; Schnelzer et al. 2020; Jacovkis et al. 2020).

[4] SVR is formerly known as the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (*Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration*). The research project was funded by the Mercator Foundation. Comprehensive findings from the project are summarized in SVR (2020a).

[5] Cross-country studies have so far tended to focus more on access to primary and secondary education (*e.g.*, Köhler *et al.* 2018; PPMI 2012).

Sparkes 1997; Hansson 2005). Especially in the case of migrants, written access rules tend to fall short of providing clear yes-or-no-answers given the aforementioned biographical interruptions and the fact that the previous education does not always match the access criteria put forward by receiving country institutions. Whenever a newcomers' previous schooling is different from that of her or his non-migrant peer, receiving country policies tend to imply that access to a certain school or a specific program is to be realized at the local level where education professionals, administrators, and prospective students and their families are compelled to make such pivotal decisions (Stauber and Parreira do Amaral 2015; Baberis and Buchowicz 2015). How these decisions at a local level are being made, or more precisely, how the professionals involved perceive, exercise, and make sense of their own discretion in granting access has yet to be substantiated by more empirical research, especially for the TVET sector. This investigation seeks to contribute to this empirical base.

Conceptually, the practices of street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 1980; Hupe *et al.* 2015), *i.e.*, teachers, employers, administrators, and other TVET professionals were analyzed via an institutional framework that sees individual and collective action as heavily informed by regulatory and cultural contexts, while also making room for individual agency. Accordingly, when analyzing TVET professionals' reported practices and their reasons behind it, professionals were not assumed to "blindly" follow a taken-for-granted script of rules, norms and deeply-held beliefs, as is often the case with neoinstitutional research designs. Nor were their rationales and actions regarded as completely "unleashed" from such institutions, as is often hypothesized by scholars of institutional entrepreneurship (for a theoretical overview see Powell and Colyvas 2008). Instead, teachers, employers and other TVET professionals were seen as capable of navigating the many written and unwritten rules governing newcomers' access to education, while at the same time being susceptible to these and other institutionalized rules, norms, and beliefs (Powell and Colyvas 2008). These include country-specific access rules just as much as the cross-country differences in the TVET systems in question, *i.e.*, the more work-based TVET system in Germany, the somewhat equally work- and school-based system in Austria, and the more school-based TVET systems of Slovenia and Spain (Eichhorst *et al.* 2015; CEDEFOP 2020). In accordance with previous research, "street-level bureaucrats" do not only encompass public servants, but also non-state groups of professionals who are involved in shaping and granting access to education and training and to other public goods (Darrow 2015; Hupe and Hill 2007).

The empirical research sought to capture this 'balancing act' via three sources of data. First, the analysis focused on the written rules national and sub-national policies relevant to newcomers' access to TVET, including but not limited to school laws, migration laws, and administrative communiqués. Second, the investigation compared the practices, experiences, and rationales of TVET professionals in eight municipalities, based on 82 semi-structured expert interviews (Table 1). Third, to better contour both the institutional environment and the reported practices of TVET professionals, we conducted an additional 40 interviews with young newcomers. Their perspectives and

experiences have helped us gain a more well-rounded picture by addressing potential blind spots and guarding against professional biases.

Interviewees were identified via a mix of gatekeeper sampling and snowball sampling. This allowed the most suitable and knowledgeable interviewees to be found and quickly contacted. Since an over-reliance on expert referrals can potentially result in bias, the approach was supplemented by the purposive sampling of additional interview partners who were identified based on their (assumed) roles in shaping and granting young newcomers' access to TVET (Kruse 2014; Friebertshäuser and Langer 2013). The expert interviews were conducted between July and December 2019 and therefore do not cover the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Since refugees and other newcomers were interviewed in the receiving country language or in English, the sample was limited to newcomers who had already entered the formal education system in their receiving country or at least preparatory courses designed to lead to formal TVET programs.

Table 1, Interviewed newcomers and TVET professionals

Place		TVET professionals	Newcomers
Austria	Innsbruck	7	4
	Vienna	8	3
Germany	Chemnitz	21	8
	Munich	15	8
	Federal level	1	
Slovenia	Koper	3	3
	Ljubljana	5	4
Spain	Barcelona	10	6
	Terrassa	12	4
Total		**82**	**40**

Note: TVET professionals include teachers and other professionals who prepare newcomers for TVET programs or who teach these programs themselves, as well as professionals who through their work in civil society organizations and public authorities (*e.g.*, employment agencies) affect the TVET pathways of newcomers in the four countries under study. Source: SVR 2020a

The interviews were partly transcribed and underwent a qualitative content analysis (Mayring 1993). Categories and codes were initially developed deductively based on the guiding research questions and the research literature. These categories and codes were adjusted and complemented by new inductive categories, codes and, in some cases, sub-codes. Inter-coder reliability checks were conducted and the findings were validated via two expert workshops with academics and TVET practitioners.

Given the qualitative nature of this inquiry, no claims about statistical representativeness or causality are made. Rather, the diversity of the interview sample and our detailed analysis of their responses seeks to increase our understanding of salient TVET access patterns within the otherwise heterogeneous education systems in the European Union. To illustrate our findings and conclusions, the following part features selected quotes from the interviews, which were translated to English. Although their content remains unchanged, light editing has been done for ease of reading.

2. Research Findings

Newcomers to Austria, Germany, Slovenia, and Spain do not only differ in terms of their migration routes and intentions[6], they also face different national TVET systems with different levels of practice orientation and employment prospects. In Germany, the vast majority of vocational training programs are work-based, meaning that in-company training is alternated with classroom instruction in vocational schools. School-based TVET is more rare than in neighboring Austria, where more than one in two students attend said programs. In Slovenia and Spain, school-based TVET with limited practical components is even more common. Both countries have in recent years expanded options of work-based TVET, but only few companies and trainees have so far taken up this opportunity (CEDEFOP 2020). The employment prospects of TVET graduates are also not uniform across Europe. In Germany, graduates have much better chances of finding work than their peers who do not have a comparable vocational qualification. In Austria and Slovenia, too, TVET graduates have better job prospects whereas in Spain, the added value of a vocational qualification is statistically lower (CEDEFOP 2020: 76).

These systemic differences notwithstanding, our exploratory analysis sought to identify pan-European patterns in TVET accessibility. That is why the following findings place less emphasis on country specifics and cross-country differences, and more on the similarities observed for the barriers that young newcomers face when trying to enter TVET and how access to TVET is realized at the local level.

2.1 Barriers to TVET for Young Newcomers in the EU

Instead of solely comparing TVET access policies across Europe, we chose to triangulate our policy analysis with the reported experiences of newcomers pertaining to both the regulatory and non-regulatory barriers to education. While some barriers are very specific to a certain country context, many were found across all four countries. The following findings place emphasis on the latter. Country specifics are only included to serve as examples for broader European trends.

- Regulatory barriers: In their efforts to design TVET pathways for young newcomers, the legislatures in EU Member States are required to take account of international and EU rules. There are, for example, several international agreements and EU legislative acts which establish a right to *general* secondary school education – regardless of residence status[7]. However, after a newcomer has completed said compulsory schooling, EU Member States are more or less free to grant them access to TVET. Austria, Germany, Slovenia, and Spain have introduced different rules in this regard. Many of these rules boil down to newcomers' residence status which determines their permission to enter TVET. Also, depending on their age they may no longer be eligible to attend.

[6] Asylum seekers (especially from the Middle East) and EU migrants were more commonly found in Austria and Germany, whereas Slovenia was a destination for young people from other Balkan countries, along with some asylum seekers. In Spain, a high share of newcomers originated from countries in Latin America, North Africa, and the Middle East (Eurostat 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

[7] See, *e.g.*, Article 26 of the General Declaration on Human Rights, Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 22 of the Geneva Convention on Refugees, and Article 14 of Directive 2013/33/EU.

In Austria, Germany, Slovenia, and Spain, newcomers can initially access school-based TVET regardless of their residence status. That is, if they meet a school's entry requirements. Access to work-based TVET is more restricted. It is in all four countries largely dependent on newcomers having a work permit. The reason is that as soon as the training includes a certain share of practical elements which form part of the contract with a training company, trainees need legal permission to be able to work. However, work permits are usually restricted in the case of asylum seekers or those whose deportation has been temporarily suspended[8]. In Austria, official interpretations of the legislation referring to asylum seekers have changed several times in recent years and were still in flux during our research. At the time, given specific preconditions, asylum seekers were usually granted a work permit and were therefore able to begin work-based TVET. By contrast, those whose deportation had temporarily been suspended were generally not permitted to work and were therefore effectively banned from such opportunities. In Germany, both groups could technically gain access, albeit only after prior approval from the foreigners' registration office (*Ausländerbehörde*). In practice, such an approval could take up to nine months to process, a time by which many employer had found other candidates.

The national and sub-national TVET access policies in Austria, Germany, Slovenia, and Spain can only be touched upon tangentially here (for a more detailed analysis see SVR 2020). In practice, the complexity of these rules were found to be further exacerbated by the regulatory obstacles introduced by the sometimes-necessary recognition of foreign educational credentials. Among young newcomers, it was refugees in particular who had problems presenting the necessary documents when trying to enroll in a TVET program. Even if they were able to present educational qualifications and other necessary documents issued in their countries of origin, these were then subject to time-consuming and expensive recognition procedures, as interviewees in all four countries confirmed. In Austria, newcomers and the professionals working with them reported that it was difficult for the migrants to find out who was responsible for their credential recognition. Sometimes getting their qualifications recognized was very expensive, for instance, if translations needed to be certified by a notary or if additional documents had to be obtained from the country of origin. In Slovenia, the state reimbursed these expenses to recognized refugees and other newcomers with a residence permit, but not to asylum seekers. Such lengthy recognition procedures can have negative consequences. According to interviewees in Germany, the long waiting times meant that the TVET position they were previously offered had sometimes been withdrawn in the meantime. Interviewees in Spain reported that a lack of recognition of their qualifications led to competitive disadvantages when schools filled available spaces, especially in TVET programs that were in high demand.

[8] Asylum seekers usually have a statutory right of residence during their asylum process (referred to as "*Aufenthaltsgestattung*" in Germany). In Germany, Austria and Slovenia, those whose asylum application has been rejected but who stay in the country because of legal or factual (sometimes long-term) obstacles to deportation have their deportation temporarily suspended. Spain has no explicit residence status of that kind.

In sum, TVET access policies across Europe are complicated to begin with, even for local youth. However, when combined with countries' rapidly-changing migration laws and the large post-2014 influx of newcomers, these systems were found to have reached a level of complexity that almost inevitably required newcomers to seek extensive professional counseling and support prior to even applying to a TVET program. The personnel providing such services were often required to take case-by-case decisions about whether or not or how a newcomer could access TVET or receive adequate support while preparing for such programs.

- Non-regulatory barriers: In addition to these regulatory obstacles, interviewees stressed the additional difficulties caused by financial constraints, a lack of knowledge about the receiving country's TVET system, the workload in the language and academic courses required to meet TVET prerequisites, along with psychological, social, and housing pressures, among others. The interviews give reason to assume that it is not only regulations that bar newcomers from entering TVET, but also a plethora of more informal barriers:

  I work as a cleaner and it was too much for me […], *my batteries were empty. I kept falling asleep in school, in class* [language course in preparation of TVET]. *And I still studied at home.* (Bulgarian woman, age 23, Chemnitz).

  And here in school I have a language class, but it is, I don't like it because it is so fast. All the students are from Bosnia, Serbia and they know a lot and the teacher speaks with them in Slovenian, and I have to learn the language! (Palestinian man, age 16, Ljubljana).

  When I arrived [at the school], *I was the only one. And I don't think it happens to everyone, but I was bullied in school. They* [the other students] *picked on me for my* [Bolivian] *accent* [...] *I think they* [the teachers] *helped me a lot, but I didn't know how to take advantage of it.* [...] *We should improve how we teach people to treat people who come from outside.* (Bolivian woman, age 18, Barcelona).

  I had problems because of my headscarf. After [secondary] *school I applied to several* [vocational] *schools, but they all said 'no' because of my headscarf. I stopped wearing my headscarf and everything was okay.* (Afghan woman, age 22, Chemnitz).

As the third and fourth quotes show, some of the interviewed newcomers noticed different and at times discriminatory behavior towards them coming from fellow students as well as staff in schools, public authorities, and other institutions. While such behavior alone was not cited as a reason to abandon or change educational plans, it was described as particularly problematic in cases in which newcomers faced multiple access barriers at once, *e.g.*, financial pressures plus too much work plus problem with the housing situation. In this instance, which many interviewees described as the norm rather than the exception, newcomers were found to rely on continuous guidance and support to be able to remain persistent and eventually access the TVET system. When asked about who it was that had been most helpful during difficult times like these, many of the interviewed newcomers pointed towards teachers and social workers, but also other professionals were mentioned, such as case workers in public employment services.

While some of these professionals were hailed for their helpfulness others were singled out for being particularly obstructive. Several newcomers reported that they could not always understand how these personnel arrived at different decisions for similar types of TVET applicants, *i.e.*, in terms of their educational backgrounds, residence status etc. In their mind, some simply seemed to receive more help than others. And some saw themselves as the beneficiaries of such differential treatment:

> *Then I didn't pass the admission to the compulsory school qualification because I wasn't that good at Math and English. But because my German was so good, the teacher said that if I promise to work hard and carry on studying then I have two months to complete it. If I pass the exams by then, I'll be able to carry on.* (Afghan man, age 20, Vienna).

> [My training company] *was found a man for me at the Jobcenter* [*i.e.*, employment agency]. *One day he came to our school because he wanted to talk to our class about what we want to do*. […] *The man explained how difficult it was to become a tailor in Saxony. But he said: 'I'll look for you.' After two months he contacted me and had found a company*. (Afghan man, age 20, Chemnitz).

> *Yeah, around two and a half years ago I had my first interview at the BFA* [Federal Office of Immigration and Asylum] […]. *Everything's up in the air because the official keeps contradicting himself.* (Afghan man, age 20, Vienna).

> [The staff at the employment service] *say that I should get a job, any job. When I say to them 'I need training, I'm still young. If I do this training will you help me with funding?' then they say I can forget it* […] *'go cleaning or temping'* […] *with my education and my skills*. (Somali woman, age 23, Vienna).

The pivotal impact of these discretionary decisions was reiterated by many of the interviewed professionals as well. The following part focuses on the question of how access to education is shaped by TVET professionals in education institutions, public authorities, and civil society organizations.

2.2 How Access to TVET is Shaped at the Local Level

As mentioned above, our research shows that en route to TVET young newcomers almost inevitably come across professionals that help them navigate the oftentimes complex regulatory and non-regulatory barriers to TVET. These TVET professionals were found to have a significant influence on whether the door to TVET would open or remain closed. As 'gatekeepers', they are mostly found in one of three types of institutions:

- Public authorities: Staff in public authorities, such as employment agencies, are tasked policy implementation, for example by referring those who seek to enter TVET to a language course or a preparatory course.
- Education institutions: Teaching staff in secondary schools, vocational schools, adult education colleges, and private educational establishments such as companies either prepare young newcomers for TVET or teach these programs themselves.

- Intermediary organizations: Staff in social enterprises, charities, chambers of trades and crafts, and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) support young people in navigating the education system. Volunteers working in intermediary organizations were frequently mentioned by the interviewed newcomers as being particularly important during their integration process.

Overall, the empirical findings confirmed the conceptual notions from the research literature: In all four countries, local professionals possessed a relatively high level of discretion that allowed them to effectively (re)shape access routes to TVET and thereby, the educational biographies of newcomers. Given the aforementioned complexity of regulatory barriers, many professionals found themselves in a position in which their job required them to take case-by-case decisions that would affect access to TVET, for instance with regards to the question of whether they can admit a newcomer to an oversubscribed preparatory course (Barberis, Buchowicz 2015).

While some interviewees reported to be rather restrictive and tended to stick close to their job description and the access rules in place, others shared how they and their colleagues went beyond what was formally required of them, usually by providing very close one-to-one support to newcomers, cooperating with other institutions or by outright developing new support services or raising additional funds to pay for needed support. These types of discretionary decisions varied across the three groups of gatekeepers. Professionals in public authorities tended to be rather cautious while social workers and other staff members in NGOs showed an exceptionally high level of commitment. Teachers and other educators could be found somewhere in the middle:

- Professionals in public authorities: by and large moved within the bounds of their job remits. While some professionals conveyed a more restrictive interpretation of TVET access rules (first quote below), others confirmed that they tried to use their discretion to maneuver between different sets of rules in order to achieve a result that they deemed more desirable, albeit always within their job remits and salient regulations, as the second quote illustrates:

  [My decision to grant access or not] *is a question of standards and order – not bureaucratic barriers, but bureaucratic facts.* (Male staff member, employment agency, Ljubljana).

  We cooperate well with the foreigners' registration office, which uses its degree of discretion whenever it can, within the bounds of what is legally possible. They cannot go beyond that. They can't ignore it, of course. But at least they say: 'We have some degree of discretion and use it whenever we can, as best we can.' (Female staff member, social benefits authority, Munich).

- Professionals in education institutions: Teachers and educators in (vocational) schools, training companies, and other public and private education institutions differed significantly in the ways they chose to exercise their discretion. On the one hand, numerous teachers reported to offer additional language and preparatory courses for newcomers, in some cases to an extent that went well beyond

the remits of their regular job. On the other hand, teaching staff were also described as passive or outright opposed to helping newcomers (first quote below). In companies that offered work-based training, some training staff were found to refuse admission to applicants without a residence permit, thus using their discretion in rather restrictive ways, while others employed expressly generous admission practices (second quote below).

I think that we – the schools – are absolutely insufficiently involved. We hear something [about migration] *on television* […]. *I am being hindered by the lack of motivation of others* [*i.e.*, other teachers] *to do anything.* (Male staff member, school, Ljubljana).

The impression I get is that our company is highly accepting of migration. We're very proud of that, that we have this great diversity. […] *Of course, at the start some had reservations, that's something where I think that everything that's new, the unknown, of course people are skeptical at first. But then you realize that the more contact you have, the more the barriers are broken down.* (Male employee, training company, Innsbruck).

- Professionals in intermediary organizations: In the four countries, the interviewed staff members and volunteers in non-profit organizations, social enterprises, charities and other intermediary organizations showed a clear pattern: All interviewees reported to use their resources in a way that would support as many young newcomers as possible. Many reported to assist the migrants outside of their regular work hours. This commitment was echoed by the interviewed newcomers as well:

  What we do is hold them [newcomers] *so they don't fall, so they don't fall, because the system is very complex and their parents are not in a position to do it, because they are not here or because they don't have the knowledge* [about the system]. (Female staff member, intermediary organization, Barcelona).

  At the beginning, it was really hard [after turning 18], *although our advisers had prepared us really well.* […] *But the most difficult thing were the applications we had to fill in, the laws, the deadlines.* […] *Afterwards we went back into the shared accommodation* [for unaccompanied minors] *and asked for help there. They were really nice, although we'd already moved out.* (Afghan man, age 20, Chemnitz).

These patterns may not come as a surprise. The work and professional norms of bureaucrats tend to be more rule-bound than that of NGO professionals, hence their different willingness and ability to exercise discretion and affect TVET accessibility. However, given the large migration flows of the late 2010s – and the complex interplay of migration and education legislation – our findings illustrate that almost all the interviewed TVET professionals had become acutely aware of their role in shaping access to TVET on the ground. Their awareness and their actions underpin the notion that access to TVET is also a result of local negotiation processes among gatekeepers in public authorities, education institutions, intermediary organizations, and the newcomers themselves (cp. Stauber and Parreira do Amaral 2015). This begs the questions: What is behind the interviewed professionals' reported actions?

The extent to which TVET professionals feel responsible for and motivated to (not) grant access to young newcomers is, of course, specific to each individual person. While assessing their personal motivation would go beyond the scope of this research, the institutional research design and therein, the documented interactions between TVET professionals and their institutional environments provide some preliminary insights into the kinds of circumstances that have influenced their discretionary decisions. Beyond the aforementioned professional norms, TVET professionals were found to be affected by

- Perceived legal uncertainty: Our findings show that whenever access rules and structures were perceived as complex and when there was a general uncertainty as to how to 'correctly' apply them, then the interviewees in public authorities used their margin of discretion strictly in line with the remits of their position. The situation was different in intermediary organizations and many education institutions in which the 'legislative jungle' was reported to encourage numerous professionals to go above and beyond in order to guide newcomers on their path to education and training.
- Scarce resources: Many of the interviewed staff members – especially in intermediary organizations and education institutions – reported to feel that their institutions' material and staff resources were insufficient and restricting. Many felt limited in what they could offer and repeatedly emphasized that this meant that were unable to meet many newcomers' needs.
- Sensitivity to newcomers' lived realities and needs: Our findings offer an empirical bridge to other policy implementation studies which show that professionals in public authorities, education institutions, and intermediary organizations were frequently influenced by their deeply-held beliefs about whether an individual newcomer is deserving of a given opportunity or not (Barberis and Buchowicz 2015; Will 2018). In the research at hand, professionals who had frequent contact with newcomers were found to be more willing to provide newcomers with more equitable education opportunities than those who met them only on rare occasions.

3. Implications for Future Research, Policy, and Practice

This research sought to shed empirical light onto the question of TVET (in)accessibility for young newcomers in the European Union. The empirical findings show that for many newcomers, the path to education often resembles an obstacle course. Despite the available access routes, newcomers can be excluded on account of their age, residence status, and other complicated regulations. In addition, many newcomers found the 'maze' of language courses, preparatory programs, and support measures confusing and, depending on where they lived, these were also often in short supply. Given the complexity of these (interrelated) obstacles, bureaucrats, education professionals, and other local gatekeepers played a pivotal role in shaping access to TVET as their actions were found to either improve or impede the educational opportunities of young newcomers.

The findings provide ample room for discussion and further research. As mentioned above, this paper sought to explore and put primary emphasis on pan-European patterns. Cross-country differences, although aplenty, were only touched upon tangentially, and should be subject of further (institutional) research which takes into account how different institutional norms of work-based and school-based TVET systems impact accessibility. Furthermore, due to the lack of longitudinal data, this research has been limited in its ability to observe the very processes through which gatekeepers and prospective students (re)negotiate educational access and opportunities. This line of research promises to be a compelling area for future investigations, particularly for comparative studies with an ethnographic design.

For policy makers and practitioners, the empirical results of this study serve as a reminder that the very existence of access routes and support services is a necessary, yet insufficient prerequisite for achieving equitable opportunities for young newcomers. In order to make TVET more accessible for these and other vulnerable groups, existing structures and services should be interlinked more in order to provide "one-stop" training preparation and a clear path to TVET. Not only should future (EU) initiatives invest in the professional development of gatekeepers (*e.g.*, diversity-sensitive service provision) and the resources at their disposal, but they should also strengthen and expand existing multi-professional education networks which link the oftentimes still disparate and disconnected stakeholders in many municipalities across Europe.

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De Europa
Vol. 6, No. 2 (2023), 123-140
ISSN 2611-853X
www.deeuropa.unito.it

The Blurred Lines of Intercultural Mediation: Professional Recognition through Formal and Informal Practices in Italy

Gloriamaria Avolio, Claudia Cavallari, Elena Cecchini

1. Introduction

> When I was a child [...] I thought I'd become a teacher. Growing up and only being able to attend the first year of high school, at the end of which I was forced to flee, I imagined myself as a journalist. Such dreams have faded away… how did I become a cultural mediator? Randomly by chance! (C3)[1]

The profession of mediator in Italy has over time remained rather unregulated. Despite the presence of the role for decades now, training and performing as a mediator unfold in a process of fragmented practices and unharmonised educational paths, with practitioners referring to sub-state institutional frameworks rather than to a national or European integrated professionalisation of the role. Professional recognition is an aching aspect: the text approaches mediation from such an angle, reflecting on its theories and practices.

This article aligns with the proposal that intercultural mediation serves as a systemic response to facilitate migrant participation and coexistence in a space of reciprocity and responsibility sharing (Arvanitis, Kameas 2014). The authors pursue a normative agenda that they make explicit: mediation is presented as an instrument capable of favouring constructive convivence among persons, promoting mutual learning and negotiating differences, rather than imposing an alleged homogeneity or indulging in assimilatory attempts.

The analysis started from the following research question: how is intercultural mediation both regulated and practised at the European and Italian level? Yet, as the study unfolded and a puzzled framework began to emerge, the authors challenged this basis and reasoned backward at an earlier stage: rather than how, is intercultural mediation altogether regulated and practised at the European and Italian level? The text retraces the contours of the profession and its extent. It further deepens the observation of the practice by enquiring: how does intercultural mediation in migration-related contexts intersect with the accommodation of cultural diversity? The objective is to investigate the distance between law in books and law in action through the combination of an analysis of the regulative context enriched and spoken through qualitative data from interviews. Observing such a distance imposes to con-

Gloriamaria Avolio, University of Urbino Carlo Bo, g.avolio@campus.uniurb.it
Claudia Cavallari, University of Urbino Carlo Bo, c.cavallari1@campus.uniurb.it
Elena Cecchini, University of Urbino Carlo Bo, e.cecchini16@campus.uniurb.it

[1] See interviewees' identification at page 126.

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.13135/2611-853X/7048

sider every law and policy of interest not as imperatives causing social change but as elements with a solely "potential" influence on society (Cottino 2019: 21-23): with this in mind, the article combines intercultural mediation theories and instances from practitioners to reflect on normative inefficiencies and their consequences. What ultimately guides the text is the query as to whether cultural diversity is approached as the widespread norm that permeates society or rather treated as limited to circumscribable occasions exceptionally occurring in otherwise homogeneous interactions among people. The role of mediation and what the practice is (and is not) devoted to inevitably change depending on the answer to such a question.

In a recent publication, Busch (2023) defines as "second and new generation of researchers on intercultural mediation" those currently addressing this field of study, after the initial enthusiasm the matter triggered in Western societies in the 1980s (ibid: 2). Since then, paradigms have shifted in research and policy. In Italy, mediation has witnessed different phases: early experimentation, development of the educational dimension, dissemination and isolation, pursuance of autonomous actions towards the professionalisation of the role (Balsamo 2006; Luatti 2021). As of 2005, it entered a phase of pluralisation of operational environments and of institutional disinterest towards recognition; this was followed by the progressive decline of the practice, no longer present in the institutional agenda and allocation of resources (ibid). This article nestles in this very stage: it enters the gap left by a progressive disengagement with the role of intercultural mediation – not counterintuitive to the authors, when placed against the broader background of identitarianisms, increasingly restrictive and "defensive" migration policy measures and cuts in the welfare systems (Caponio, Donatiello 2017; Luatti 2021).

All elements compounded in mediation and their political dimensions, from culture to religion and so on, are seen as having to do with power, how this is designed and contested (Abu-Nimer, Seidel 2023). Working on an understanding that policy is a concept or cultural phenomenon rather than a given (Shore, Wright 1997) and that as such the system does not address "problems'' that just exist out there but rather problematises situations (Bacchi, Goodwin 2016), the authors criticise migration management as being transnationally narrated as a security threat, an easily escalating conflictual situation, an irresolvable wealth distribution issue stained with humanitarianism. Along the same lines, cultural diversity management is too often similarly represented. Reification and homogenisation are ignored and a "dominance paradigm" translates difference into "conflictual, unhealthy, and unimprovable [...] relationships" (Abu-Nimer, Seidel 2023: 113). The hope is in a revived interest in the centrality of mediation and in a paradigm shift, which the new generation of researchers may be proof of. The auspice is that a renewed vision on mediation may whelm decision-making (-mak*ers*) too and the regulatory frameworks they produce.

This article thus introduces the experiences of intercultural mediators, here approached as social workers (Etzioni 1969; Fargion 2008), joining the debate on the recognition of the profession as a pivotal resource in current times. Indeed, the "post-multicultural era in which we are now entering" (Zapata-Barrero 2019: 347) requires

new concepts at the epistemological and policy-making levels: the text aims at offering a 'call to context', to reflect on "culture of diversity" (ibid) as a suitable option to respond to the limitations of alternative prevailing narratives. Through the process, the ideas of cultural diversity and of a culture of diversity were played with as a guiding compass in those exploratory attempts to answer the research questions. This contribution joins the discussion surrounding the gap produced by the observed governance direction taken, which progressively disincentivized the development of mediation with reverberations on scholarship and the reception system.

2. Structure, design, and methodology

The article begins by introducing the background of ideas behind accommodating cultural diversity and the role of intercultural mediation. It then offers an analysis of essential legal and policy tools regulating migration, cultural diversity management and mediation at the European level, indicative of an alleged common direction of states towards the pursuance of a European knowledge-based society. Instruments belong to the Council of Europe (CoE) and European Union (EU). Mediation at the Italian national level is then explored before offering concluding reflections.

Qualitative research methodology, and in particular the use of interviews, suited the collection of data on individuals' views and lived experiences, which the article considers to expand on the study of the practice and the variety of formal and informal 'professionalisation' paths. Samples of mediators' observations operating locally accompany the data retrieved from the reviewed state of the art and legal framework with a glimpse over practitioners' direct experiences. The idea is to present the system not only as framed in theory but to also offer a sense of how this is perceived by practitioners themselves, showing the discrepancies between a multi-layered and often contradicting normative design and social realities. The article attempts to address the relation between law in books and law in action by focusing: at a macro-level, on the regulatory framework of mediation, offering a descriptive documental analysis; at a micro-level, on the subjective, embodied experiences of the interviewees. The approach intends to stress the tension, the distance and yet the interconnection between norms and social practices in the specificity of the Italian context. The stylistic choices of the article attempt to visually reflect such an unresolved interdependence: the text combines the analysed regulative aspects of mediation with the accounts of those performing it, in an effort to create a narrative that accompanies the reader through an uninterrupted spectrum of theory and practice, with frequent reminders to how the latter drifts apart from the former and vice versa. Adhering to the cultural effort of interfering with the monological narrative of states' limited-migration carrying capacity, the contribution touches upon the European vision of an integrated system among neighbouring countries, the gaps in such a vision and offers input from the practice.

Data backing-up the policy and scholarship analysis was gathered in 2021/2022 through nine in-depth and semi-structured interviews with privileged interlocutors

who worked in different geographical and migratory contexts in Italy: the regions of Campania (in the South, "S"), Marche (Centre, "C"), Lombardia and Piemonte (North, "N"). This segment of the study adds value to the contribution through a brief exploration of the meanings attributed to the operational role of the intercultural mediator, observing professionals' daily challenges and structural and institutional limitations. Interlocutors were:

- four mediators: a man from Afghanistan (C3) and three women from Cameron, Senegal and Nigeria (C4, C5, N2) working in Marche and Piemonte;
- the coordinator of the anti-trafficking service of a local association, a woman in Marche (C1);
- two anthropologists, both women, working in Campania (S1) and Marche and Emilia-Romagna (C6);
- one psychologist, a woman, with expertise in transcultural clinic in Lombardia (N1);
- the project manager of a reception centre, a woman in Marche (C2).

Participation was voluntary, anonymity and privacy issues addressed. Extracts of interviews hereby included were translated from Italian to English, keeping register as truthful to the original as possible.

3. Accommodating cultural diversity

Migration management as administered so far has shown its limits, highlighting lack of cohesion among European states, unable to act as a united bloc for the adoption of common policies to safeguard migrant persons' lives and ensure non-citizens' rights access and accessibility.

> Multicultural societies [...] need to find ways of reconciling the legitimate demands of unity and diversity, achieving political unity without cultural uniformity, being inclusive without being assimilationist, cultivating among their citizens a common sense of belonging while respecting their legitimate cultural differences, and cherishing plural cultural identities without weakening the shared and precious identity of shared citizenship (Parekh 2000: 34).

In the context of accommodating and operationalising diversity, approaches vary depending on policy orientation. The article touches upon multiculturalism and interculturalism as strategies predominantly adopted to address cultural diversity and meet social and political ends within European societies. Given the variety of meanings behind the notions, the debate is open, often confused and confusing (Grillo 2009).

> [...] whereas multiculturalism seeks out and seeks to protect difference, interculturalism seeks out and seeks to enhance commonalities, what is shared, principally by getting people to talk to each other and co-operate in common enterprises, with a view, for example, to tackling xenophobia (Grillo 2009: 94).

According to Zapata-Barrero (2017), recent decades have been dominated in Europe by the multicultural policy paradigm (MCP), the narrative of which essentially adheres

to equality and human rights principles with a normative conception of justice in the background. The author observes that the inclusion of immigrants into society by embracing differences and appreciating their unique cultural practices, faiths and languages summarises the MCP core; fundamental blocks of the theory are also wealth distribution and political engagement. Depending on the context, the term multiculturalism has different meanings: it can indicate the presence, within the same political, social and legal space, of a diversity of religious and cultural groups, or refer to a political response to such reality. In social and political sciences, it is intended as a more normatively oriented framework determining "the extent to which minority cultural, ethnic, religious or linguistic groups deserve special acknowledgment of their differences within a dominant political culture and system" (Foblets, Vetters 2020: 83).

> Liberal multiculturalism [...] was theorized for situations in which immigrants were seen as legally authorized, permanently settled, and presumptively loyal. In an age of securitization and super-diversity, these assumptions are put into question. Early theories of multiculturalism now seem at best incomplete, and at worst outdated, resting on assumptions and preconditions that may no longer apply (Kymlicka 2014: 244).

The model, historically influenced by neoliberalism and often associated with a liberal approach, emphasises the protection of the rights of minority cultures and individuals and it is seen as a response to assimilation in Western societies (Kymlicka 2016). The approach however appears inadequate to the challenges of cultural diversity (Kymlicka 2016) for it increases essentialism, reifies groups' differences and stereotypes and risks eliciting resistance in a majority that can feel threatened by minorities (Yogeeswaran *et al.* 2021).

The concept of interculturalism is on the other hand understood as a framework addressing issues ignored by multiculturalism, especially failure of cohesion, by emphasising negotiation, dialogue and interaction. In fact, a criticised aspect of multiculturalism is the proposal of creating distinct and separate enclaves, seen as parallel spheres of lives; contrary to that, stressing populations' fluidity is fundamental against essentialism, highlighting that the existence of enclaves is not unilaterally demanded by minorities but rather depends on majority's actions (Zapata-Barrero 2017; 2019). Interculturalism is often associated with a communitarian or dialogue-based approach, emphasising exchange between cultural groups (Zapata-Barrero 2019). Intuitively, the prefix 'inter' underlines the intent of policies to encourage interactions among individuals of different backgrounds (Catarci 2016; Portera 2011; Rey-von Allmen 2011): cultural identities are not static but rather constantly evolving and shaped by relations with others.

> I eat with my hands, you eat with a fork. I say: "Oh, this person is using a fork? Why!" and the other: "But… this person is eating with their hands, gross!". No one is wrong in their habits - it is just different (C3).

Interculturalism is often seen as a response to the challenges of social fragmentation and cultural isolation faced by minority cultures, providing a more positive and

dynamic framework for diversity and promoting more social cohesion than traditional multiculturalist models (Kymlicka 2010; Zapata-Barrero 2017).

The idea of pursuing interculturality within the European context has an institutional history. Wood and Landry (2008) theoretically articulated the notion of interculturalism and then influenced the CoE's intercultural city programme (ICC) introduced in 2008 during the Year of Intercultural Dialogue. Since then, an ICC index has been used throughout Europe and abroad to benchmark implementation. The programme self-portrays as supporting local authorities in the design and implementation of integration policies and declares to endorse the development of institutional capacity, participation and power-sharing. Italy participates in the ICC programme with about 30 cities belonging to the "Città del Dialogo" network established in 2010.

Engaging in dialogue between host societies, immigrants and people with migration background bridges cultures and languages and requires specific competences to mediate situations, especially in areas such as welfare provision, education, the health and judicial system. A strategy of mediation however does not imply neutrality nor absence of disagreement: to the contrary, mediation operates in a space of conflict between different economic, political, moral and cultural codes (Catarci 2016).

> Oftentimes we are not aware that when you switch contexts, dynamics are altered too. We started from this and realised that mediation was not only an act of translation but the ability to explain from the other side, to communicate in order to be understood: as they say "these black people (*'sti neri*)", so others say "these white people (*'sti bianchi*)". It generalises, essentialises. Acknowledging this was important (C5).

4. A European vision

> Different welfare regimes have produced varied regulative frames and different implementations to enforce fundamental rights for migrants, thereby bringing about different incorporation outcomes. [...] Despite the principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect towards diversities being central to social work, the issue is how these principles are enforced in social workers' everyday (Genova, Barberis 2018: 909).

Within the regional context, intercultural mediation rests within a broader framework of reference defined by the CoE and the EU.

The CoE human rights system is established around the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Social Charter. The latter explicitly refers to the rights of migrant workers and their families to protection and assistance, including facilitating the teaching of the receiving state's language and the migrants' mother tongue (article 19). The article also reads that parties undertake steps against misleading propaganda relating to emigration and immigration.

Additional instruments addressed a shared cultural heritage: the 1954 European Cultural Convention, the 1992 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (specifying however that "regional and minority languages" do not include "languages of migrants") and the 1994 Framework Convention for the Protection of Na-

tional Minorities. The CoE furthermore issues guidelines and reference tools to support states in language education and migration governance, such as the 2020 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR), indicating descriptors on mediation and plurilingual and pluricultural competence. 'Mediation' thereby describes a social and cultural process of creating conditions for communication and cooperation to face and defuse tensions (CEFR: 91). The mediator is an intermediary between interlocutors unable to understand each other. Byram (2009) observes that mediation in the CEFR is an element maintained from the concept of "intercultural speaker", someone who has knowledges (*savoirs*) of intercultural competence (see the work of Deardorff 2006, 2009).

At the EU level, the human rights framework is *inter alia* complemented by the Charter of Fundamental Rights, foreseeing the EU shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity (article 22). In 2006, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) issued an opinion on immigration and integration policies; it defined integration as a two-way process and not "a question of the integration of immigrants into the host society, but rather with the host society: both sides must integrate", noting this does not entail immigrants' cultural adjustment. Identified objectives to be pursued included assistance of intercultural mediators, professional training and cultural programmes recognising cultural diversity. The proposal also highlighted the need to promote "learning to coexist" at the local level by encouraging all to a process of enrichment and lifestyle adjustment.

> I used to teach languages and mediate at times in tiny and isolated [school] realities that were not aware of anything… I remember this one time, several kids asked me if I tasted like chocolate! They were innocent questions - I felt softened in a way, it is something that resonated with me with a sense of tenderness (*tenerezza*) (C5).

Along the same lines, in 2007, the Committee of the Regions expressed its opinion on the situation of migrant women by referring to integration as "sharing and respecting the fundamental rights and duties of the individual, which are part of the European legal *acquis*". The opinion favoured targeted measures to capitalise on cross-cultural dialogue, pursuing linguistic and cultural mediation.

The instruments so far included were reported in a rather uncritical manner to offer room for the reader's own considerations and space for practitioners' direct experiences. Mediators better than anyone express the challenges the system presents, acknowledging the distance between governing instruments and the social reality they regulate.

> The 2020/2021 public tender foresees about 60 hours/month of mediation for 50 beneficiaries. The 2015 tender [...] foresaw 200 hours for 50 beneficiaries. The reduction is insane… and still this was the result of long lasting negotiations: others have even less resources [...]. Yes, it is [about an hour of mediation per month per person] and there no longer is Italian language teaching nor psychological support (C2).

As a concluding reflection, while policies refer to social cohesion, mutual learning and respect for EU's *acquis* rights, the position of EU's and states' institutions on

migration management shall not be forgotten. Patrolling Europe's alleged geographical and cultural borders is a filter one cannot omit when reflecting on the regional vision of convivence and knowledge-based society that this contribution analyses.

5. The Italian context: migration and intercultural mediation

In Italy, institutions have engaged in late and inconsistent migration policy amidst securitarian concerns, humanitarian claims and functionalist perspectives (Barberis, Boccagni 2014; Genova, Barberis 2018). Migration and coexistence between host societies and persons on the move have been framed in terms of social conflicts; migrants' rights have been limited; migration, poverty and solidarity efforts have been subject to a process of criminalisation (*inter alia* Alterego - Fabbrica dei Diritti 2019).

In a context of differentiated migration flows and resident population with a migratory background, cultural sensitivity and competence are crucial to social work (Gordon, Gill 2013). What appears to be lacking at the national level is a consistent and adequate professionalisation framework.

The intercultural mediator is generally positioned between the social operator and the interpreter. The 2014 guidelines of the Italian Ministry of Interior (MINT) read mediators shall be confident with cultural and linguistic diversity. The role is to favour communication, dialogue and comprehension between foreigners and territorial administrations, decode stereotypes and facilitate the deconstruction of misunderstandings from both sides. A mediator eases the expression of migrants' needs while considering characteristics and resources of the welfare system (Catarci 2016).

> The mediator is an intermediary between one culture and the other, a language and the other. [...] Everything you say… you have a responsibility. Maybe what they tell you may involve personal matters. It's important (C3).

The lexicon used to define the mediator is heterogeneous: terms are employed interchangeably (cultural, intercultural or transcultural mediator, interpreter, translator, etc.), blurring otherwise different competences.

> If you want to be an interpreter or a cultural mediator… it is different. [...] A mediator doesn't just have to speak the languages, they have to explain to the people, help them, ask everything, even see all the documentation from the country of origin. Maybe many who come from remote villages, who don't even know what an identity card or date of birth is... they have to explain what it is (C3).

Although the Italian Constitution grants legislative powers to both state and regions, the Constitutional Court's jurisprudence recognised the state responsible for identifying professions and qualifying titles and regions responsible for aspects connected to more local realities (see *inter alia*: sentences 355 and 424/2005; 153 and 424/2006; 57 and 300/2007; 93/2008). This outlines a regulatory framework on professionalisation that does not depend on lower administrations' initiatives.

Against this background, in the late 1990s and early 2000s the professional role of the intercultural mediator emerged. It initially developed as a spontaneous bot-

tom-up practice involving associations, immigrants and volunteers in response to the need for assistance (Luatti 2021). While issued legal and policy instruments did not establish occupation-specific features, reference was made to the role of the mediator in the relationship between foreigners and the public administration in the justice, education and welfare systems (see *inter alia*: law 40/1998; legislative decree 286/1998; presidential decree 394/1999; law 328/2000; presidential decree 230/2000; law 7/2006). Lower administrations also issued early legislation foreseeing the employment of "experts and qualified immigrants" as mediators (*i.e.*, L.R. Marche 2/1998; Casadei, Franceschetti 2009).

Despite positive premises, the professionalisation of the mediator did not follow a linear path. Courses promoted by local entities are as heterogeneous as the level of competence of mediators working in different territories (Fabrizi, Ranieri, Serra 2009). Mediators often move throughout the country to compensate for the lack of resources and expertise in one area rather than another (C4, S1).

The first experimental mediation training took place in Milano (1990) and Torino (1992), prioritising mediators who had themselves migrated (Luatti 2021). Progress of initial years was followed by insufficient attention to training and assessments (Balsamo 2006) until a later revival of interest and development of courses (Luatti 2021). Overall, the latter have been promoted by NGOs, charities, social cooperatives, universities (Youmbi 2011), regional and local authorities. The level of education and training and the extent to which courses are beneficial to the actual practice vary, indicative of the lack of standardisation of career paths:

> They called me to attend the training, if they didn't have enough people attending the class, it was not going to begin [...] Honestly, I don't think I have learnt anything [...] I could do several other things in other fields, like psychology [...] how to manage or defuse a situation with a person with a certain attitude (C5).

> Because the trainer, their perspective [...] they tell you what's written in the book, the theory… afterwards you take such a theoretical teaching and have to move onto the field and put it into practice. But theory and practice are not the same. This is what's missing (C4).

Mediators are often not hired as part of institutional and civil society associations' work teams, with repercussions in terms of economic stability and engagement with the équipes; the latter often adopt condescending and paternalistic attitudes towards a role that may, at times, lack a formal or higher educational background and remains barely relied upon (C1, C4, C5, C6). It was also observed that for migrants without a stable resident permit, ties to a mediator position could be of "existential" importance, albeit professionally unfulfilling (C6). Mediators do not receive psychological support, despite it being a wearing job in which they are accountable for sensitive situations and asylum applications' processes (C1, C2, C4, C5, C6, N2). They furthermore often do not receive specific training in areas of intervention such as in the health or legal contexts (C2, C3, C5, C6):

> A cultural mediator, also when they are just translating, is supposed to respect the privacy of their interlocutors and hold professional secrecy. [...] Let's talk about the

> legal aspect of this… a person has to appear before the Territorial Commission, right? It's something very delicate and important. [...] And if you are not, the applicant's whole journey, all of the sacrifices made up to here, blow up [...] (C3).

In 2019/2020 the Ministry of Education (MIUR), with EU financial support (FAMI, 2014-2020 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund), set up a European Intercultural Mediator advanced course. It offered professional training targeting intercultural mediation activities in the educational, socio-medical and legal spheres, with a minimum number of seats reserved for non-EU participants. It was an interdisciplinary course with teachings in law, history, sociology, linguistics, psychology, anthropology, cultural and religious mediation, conflict management and resolution, plus internship. Despite the initiative attempted to offer a standardised training path, courses have not been reconfirmed so far.

In terms of education, interviewees were of the opinion that holding a formal education or university degree in this discipline is not crucial. While some complained about the lack of an official register for qualified mediators (C1, C2), other positions emerged. C6 for instance argued it may be too early for the establishment of a register, as training are too heterogeneous and the initiative would not necessarily ensure harmonisation, while N1 focused instead on how crucial the mediator's role is:

> Mediators are called by the [juvenile] court as well, they work for the quaestorship (*questura*), they work wherever they are required, including family counselling and social services [...]. There is no professional register but our mediators nonetheless have whole curricula and recognised competence; but above all they respond to the right of people to speak their own language (N1).

Selection criteria to be hired and practice as a mediator vary widely (Youmbi 2011). Linguistic competences are pivotal, especially intercultural communication (Tonioli 2016), but selection only on such a basis is unsatisfactory, especially in situations of heightened vulnerability and trafficking in persons cases (N2).

> We make the request exclusively on the basis of language [...]. Only for some interviews, especially in psychiatric services, Prefecture, thus for sessions that are a bit more complex [...] we always call the same mediators. Then, we make a specific request, for we notice that mediators have different skills. There is someone who's unfit for a psychiatric interview, someone else is suitable (C2).

Interviewees acknowledged a nonfunctional system of informal networks and word of mouth-based recruiting involving civil society and institutions, including Territorial Commissions competent for asylum application auditions:

> [...] He (Commission intermediary) said "get up, we have been looking for a Gambian-Mandinka speaking interpreter for a week. The Commission is almost blocked because of this, we can't go on, we don't have an interpreter. [...] We have the same problem in Bologna, Bari, Foggia, Lecce, Milan… get ready!". I said "listen, I'm scared of this job, psychologically I'm not ready…" [he said:] [...] "I'll buy you a train ticket right away [...]". And that's how I arrived at the Commission (C4).

The Health and Immigration Commission established a working group on health

professions and cultural mediation to develop standardisation strategies for facilities hosting foreigners and its 2007 final report highlighted the need to focus on mediators' professionalisation (Luatti 2021). In the same year, the *Associazione professionale italiana dei mediatori culturali* called for legislation recognising the profession and in 2008, the mediators' union was established within UGL General Labour Union (ibid). In 2009 a further legislative proposal (2138/2009) called on the government for an official register. The role of the intercultural mediator was also considered in the 2010 National Plan on integration that, amidst general securitarian tones, recognised the profession in relation to foreigners' access to job market, reception, social and health care services. Overall, during the first decade of 2000, scientific contributions shared good mediation practices in health and education from a dialogic and interactionist perspective (Baraldi 2012; Baraldi, Gavioli 2007), a theoretical approach yet to be comprehensively studied and empowered by workers and scholars (Luatti 2021). Further references to intercultural mediation are found: for the health sector, in the 158/2012 decree recognising the National Institute for Health, Migration and Poverty as the public entity with transcultural mediation functions; for the educational sector, in the 2014 MIUR's guidelines on foreign students. In the same year, the MINT, co-financed by the EU, developed a report on the professional qualification of the mediator referring to decree 13/2013 on the promotion of lifelong learning and equality in recognition of one's cultural and professional heritage; it recommended authorities to agree on shared minimum qualification standards and define the role's professionalisation. A 2017 National Integration Plan on international protection referred to the involvement of mediators in integration processes. Between 2018 and 2020, additional legislative proposals were brought forward concerning mediation and its professionalisation (C.464/2018; C.555/2018; C.2397/2020). As for a 2019 decree, "linguistic-cultural mediation" was one of the mandatory minimum services offered within the reception system.

> While before we had a majority of asylum seekers from Nigeria, so almost everyone could understand each other with English anyway, now there is really a need for mediation. This obviously clashes a bit with the national policy trend, which instead has significantly reduced mediation hours. On this, however, the cooperative is not very strict, so we call [the mediator] whenever needed (C2).

Recently, the professionalisation of the intercultural mediator has attracted less interest (Luatti 2021).

The absence of professionals in the formalisation of migrant's asylum applications was moreover denounced at the most basic level: while the MINT's 2020 Practical Guide for asylum seekers foresees the right to be assisted by an interpreter when filling out the written asylum request, this is not always enforced (Meltingpot Europa 2022). Such gap was witnessed by the interviewees too: in the case of S1, responsible in 2016-18 for the mediation services in a reception centre hosting 870 asylum seekers in Campania, workers could not speak any vehicular language but were expected to fill in the relevant documentation due to the absence of other professionals who could assist migrants.

> [...] we managed to involve various staff, including migrants themselves who became our intercultural mediators [...]. It was very complicated to manage things with the social workers of the centre because the operators, migrants included [...], are employed without qualifications, and qualifications are extremely necessary. At that time, former gas stations, farmers, bricklayers (without diminishing their professions) were employed [as operators] in the CAS [emergency reception centre] (S1).

Discrepancies exist between international, national policies and daily practices but "in order to respond to rights, it is necessary to have qualified practitioners" (C6) who benefit from professional recognition, irrespective of formal or informal training paths. Foreigners' enjoyment of rights and their access to state-guaranteed services often depend on effective mediation. As reported by ASGI (Bove, Romano 2021), one of the main obstacles for foreigners in accessing health care services is the language barrier. Migrants' descendants, sharing the language of the medical operators but not the same cultural heritage may also encounter difficulties (Zorzetto 2016).

> [...] in reality similar situations [a trained mediator guaranteed by the health care service] are very rare and therefore maybe you find a pregnant woman talking to the gynaecologist [...] the social operator improvises themselves as a mediator - obviously communicating with a vehicular language that is not suitable to address the case in depth (C6).

Luatti (2021) sees the revival of intercultural mediation as needing a wider boost, depending on the political will to invest in it. Social and territorial cohesion should be central in the political agenda, canvassed in a broader vision intercepting post-pandemic economic resources in combination with bottom-up proposals made by mediators entitled to speak for the future of their profession (ibid). Too many horrors exist in the system controlling migration and flaws in the practice of mediation, highlighting the distance between governing instruments and people's lives.

6. Concluding reflections

> [...] when we use culture theoretically situated in anthropology, then, the notion of cultural mediator gives prominence and weight to cultural and symbolic processes of everyday interaction. But, we should always bear in mind, that all this rich symbolic work is situated in a broader political and formal framework. At the same time, this framework (*e.g.*, legal framework) regulates cultural mediation as a clear defined task, or profession (Papageorgiou 2014: 29).

In the past decades, the European region has witnessed the exacerbations of frictions and conflicts in a multi-level system showing reluctance to move as a cohesive and rights-abiding community; addressing migration, the EU fortressed behind a narrative of securitisation and emergency.

The regional framework analysed on the other hand revealed to stand on an alleged common intention to build a knowledge-based society. Instruments propose an *acquis* of an evolving character foreseeing respect for individuals, in the fulfilment of institutions' obligations, and a purported vision of substantial equality. But equal-

ity for whom? Such proclaimed rights-oriented content shall be filtered through the lenses of current migration and diversity management policies. What is proposed by institutions as "our European way of life" embraces marginalisation, border externalisation and militarisation as "values'' for citizens' "protection" [2]. Amidst such a climate, euroscepticism may either blend with nationalisms feeding on racism and xenophobia or emerge as a disillusioned consequence of the direction taken by the EU, either way dismantling a vision of an integrated system that is not only an economic union.

While 'newcomers' in Italy are portrayed as a threat, persons and families permanently residing in host communities experience the yoke of discriminatory and incoherent policies hindering social cohesion. Decades into migration being at the centre of the public debate, April 2023 saw for instance the Italian government declaring a state of emergency in light of the umpteenth 'exceptional' arrival of people via the Mediterranean. The state remains unable to pass legislation on citizenship for millions born on Italian soil from foreign parents or immigrated at a young age. Obstacles on residency and visas undercut foreigners' possibility to become part of the country's social fabric, have space for recognition and political engagement.

> Margins can be understood as physical borders. Borders, nations, and languages delineate communities. I had been studying the crosslinguistic needs that result from migratory movements. Also, margins can evoke the imaginary lines that define privileged and underprivileged groups within a given country. In the self-recognition as a member of an underprivileged group, there is potential for political action [...] (Garcia-Beyaert 2021: 1).

Despite the existence of a few initiatives to develop a unified framework for the mediators' professionalisation, the landscape remains fragmented and affected by public disengagement. Mediation remains a matter of informal networks and *ad hoc* recruitments to compensate for the lack of professionals with the necessary skills and recognition. Albeit identified by scholarship as an essential element for cohesion and promotion of a culture of diversity, mediation is kept a scattered, secondary competence and service.

In a committed diverse knowledge-based society, those who bridge cultural and linguistic divides would be regarded as fundamental to safe communities and ensured adequate resources. The need for intercultural mediation has always been present in society and the work of mediators does not concern only migrants but the collectiveness as a whole (Catarci 2016).

Does, in light of such policy choices, a system of this sort resonate with a true(r) intercultural paradigm? A framework that relegates cultural diversity to the margins and implements actions that do not recognise the pervasiveness of such an element in reality, negating its widespread manifestation and reducing it to an exception, remains discriminatory, untenable and inefficient (or efficient for a few only). The widespread use of the term 'integration' and *integrazione* in policy documents at the re-

[2] To consult the European Commission priorities, see: European Commission (n.d.), *Promoting our European way of life. Protecting our citizens and our values*. Retrieved from: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life_en.

gional and national level, in combination with predominant securitarian tones, may be one more indicative sign of the mismatch between the theoretical frameworks allegedly endorsed and the actual operationalisation of migration and convivence management.

Mediation does not only concern situations of alleged emergency but should be performed as the norm: not recognising this, hinders the possibility to rethink and advance equal access to the welfare system (Catarci 2016).

Papageorgiou (2014) stresses that "political discourses of interculturalism are often normative and simplistic, stressing values like tolerance, acceptance, dialogue or aiming at principles such as cohesion and integration" but may not consider the "problems" that indeed occur in daily interactions (2014: 37). The asymmetrical relationships produced by current migration governance create and reinforce inequalities, undermining the political goals of intercultural practice. In this sense, intercultural mediation stresses the challenges of connecting policy makers' choices with the experiences of people working with migrants, managing "difference" and coming to terms with it through on-the-ground struggles (DeMaria Harney 2020).

As a new generation of researchers on intercultural mediation emerges (Bush 2023), future interdisciplinary research will be required in different sociocultural settings to assess and develop the effectiveness of intercultural mediation and the operationalisation of learned abilities at the cognitive, affective, and behavioural levels. Every root cause of complex social conflicts where power is expressed will not be addressed by mediation (Abu-Nimer, Seidel 2023) but recognising the centrality of the practice should be a prerogative for a chance to influence policy makers' strategies.

What is the future for intercultural mediation? Interculturalism and intercultural practices do not function in a vacuum but are intertwined with hospitality and convivence management and their assumptions, encumbered now by maintaining a veneer of security and control over interpersonal dynamics (DeMaria Harney 2020). Good opportunities should instead be seized: the hope is that by identifying (mal) functions of the institutions, a movement of readjustment of policy priorities may set forth, giving space to a vision of appreciation of cultural diversity and safe mutual learning. As long as inequality is ingrained in the receiving system's fundamental premises, containing and controlling the spatio-temporal "welcome" of foreigners and exercising sovereignty by keeping alterity in abeyance, prospects are not bright.

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Book Reviews

De Europa
Vol. 6, No. 1 (2023), 143-144
ISSN 2611-853X
www.deeuropa.unito.it

Matteo Antonio Napolitano (2023). *Il Gruppo Liberale e Democratico al Parlamento Europeo. Un profilo politico (1976-1985)*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino,198 pp.

Guido Levi

Non vi è dubbio che tra i gruppi politici presenti nel Parlamento Europeo (PE) quello liberale risulti uno tra i meno studiati, nonostante si tratti di un gruppo politico storico – presente cioè nell'Assemblea comune sin dal 1953 –, della terza forza dopo i popolari e i socialisti, con sovente ruolo di ago della bilancia nella formazione delle maggioranze, e di un gruppo tradizionalmente europeista, come di evince dalle posizioni di alcuni suoi illustri rappresentanti: da Gaetano Martino a Simone Veil, da Gaston Thorn a Guy Verhofstadt.

E il volume di Matteo Antonio Napolitano apporta effettivamente un rilevante contributo alla conoscenza della storia dei liberali nella Comunità Europea, ricostruendo in modo puntuale le vicende del gruppo tra il 1976 e il 1985. Il periodo preso in esame è relativamente breve, ma gli estremi cronologici non risultano arbitrari né, tanto meno, pretestuosi, poiché il 1976 corrisponde all'anno di costituzione del Gruppo dei Liberali e dei Democratici in sostituzione di quello dei Liberali e Apparentati. Si trattò di una scelta quasi obbligata in previsione dell'ingresso di europarlamentari provenienti da formazioni non strettamente liberali, come, ad esempio, i repubblicani italiani e i giscardiani francesi, nonché di un'operazione in perfetta sintonia con la nascita della Federazione dei partiti liberali e democratici europei, avvenuta alcuni mesi prima a Stoccarda. Il 1985 è invece l'anno che precede la loro trasformazione nel Gruppo Liberale e Democratico Riformatore, passaggio anche in questo caso reso necessario dalla prevista adesione alla Federazione liberale, e poi al corrispettivo Gruppo, degli europarlamentari del Partido Social Democrata portoghese.

Si tratta, peraltro, di un decennio molto importante nella storia della Comunità Europea, perché fu proprio in quel periodo che si dovettero affrontare le sfide della creazione del Sistema Monetario Europeo (SME), dell'elezione diretta degli europarlamentari, dell'allargamento della Comunità a Grecia, Spagna e Portogallo e soprattutto dell'avvio delle riforme istituzionali, con particolare riferimento al Piano Genscher-Colombo e al Progetto Spinelli. Com'è noto, i liberali parteciparono attivamente a questa stagione di cambiamento e di riforme, avendo sempre come punto di riferimento quei valori di libertà, democrazia e tutela dei diritti che erano i loro valori costitutivi e caratterizzanti, anche se non certo di loro esclusivo appannaggio. Di qui il sostegno allo SME, che correggeva le storture prodotte dal vecchio serpente mone-

Guido Levi, Università di Genova, guido.levi@unige.it

tario, l'appoggio all'elezione diretta del PE, che rappresentava una prima risposta all'annosa questione del deficit democratico della Comunità, e l'avvallo all'allargamento, perché l'integrazione in Europa rappresentava sicuramente la strada migliore per consolidare le fragili democrazie di tre Paesi che erano da poco usciti dalla dittatura. Il gruppo si collocava pertanto su posizioni riformiste, pur rifuggendo dalle proposte di trasformazione della struttura socio-economica della società.

Grande protagonista di questa stagione fu sicuramente Simone Veil, presidente del Parlamento europeo tra il 1979 e il 1982 grazie al sostegno di liberali, popolari, conservatori e di una parte dei gollisti. Questa convergenza era il frutto di un abile lavoro "diplomatico" del presidente francese Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, ma fu sicuramente favorito dalla stima unanime e trasversale ai gruppi di cui godeva Simone Veil stessa, una sopravvissuta agli orrori del campo di sterminio di Auschwitz, un socio fondatore della Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, un valente magistrato e, in un passato più recente, un coraggioso ministro della Salute nel governo Chirac che si era distinto per la realizzazione di una moderna legge sull'aborto. Si trattava, insomma, della persona giusta per far sì che l'Europa potesse finalmente fare fino in fondo i conti con il proprio passato più buio e potesse contestualmente inaugurare una nuova pagina di quelle relazioni franco-tedesche che rappresentavano il perno della Comunità stessa.

Sin dai primi discorsi emersero le forti convinzioni europeiste del presidente del PE, accompagnate dalla sua sottolineatura del valore della pace come valore di fondo di una nuova Europa che avrebbe dovuto proporsi anche come modello per le integrazioni regionali degli altri continenti, dalla richiesta di maggiori poteri al Parlamento uniti all'auspicio che esso potesse via via assumere un ruolo più incisivo nella costruzione europea, nonché dalla consapevolezza della necessità di una maggiore solidarietà sociale e di progressi concreti sulla strada delle nuove opportunità. Per questo suo impegno europeista le venne pertanto assegnato ad Aquisgrana, nel 1981, il prestigioso Premio Carlo Magno.

Queste vicende sono ricostruite da Napolitano facendo riferimento alla letteratura esistente e utilizzando fonti archivistiche di prima mano, a cominciare dai preziosi documenti conservati a Firenze presso gli Archivi Storici dell'Unione Europea. Il risultato finale è più che soddisfacente: un unico limite del volume, forse, si può riscontrare nella eccessiva benevolenza con la quale vengono talvolta trattate e interpretate le vicende del gruppo.

De Europa
Vol. 6, No. 1 (2023), 145-147
ISSN 2611-853X
www.deeuropa.unito.it

Vittorio Emanuele Parsi (2022). *Il posto della guerra. E il costo della libertà.* Milano: Bompiani, 224 pp.

Stefano Quirico

Il volume costituisce un'accorata reazione intellettuale alla guerra russo-ucraina da parte di uno studioso di relazioni internazionali che si trova a prendere atto della fine di un'epoca. Dopo quasi ottant'anni, annota Parsi, il conflitto esploso nel 2022 ha riportato la guerra in Europa, che dunque non è più «il posto della pace» faticosamente edificato nel corso del Novecento, ma è tornata drammaticamente «il posto della guerra». Le responsabilità e la portata dello scontro in atto sono chiaramente attribuite al «despota del Cremlino», artefice consapevole di un attacco al cuore dell'ordine liberale internazionale costruito nel XX secolo per analogia con le regole, i princìpi e le istituzioni che da secoli connotano le democrazie mature. La cultura liberal-democratica era felicemente fuoriuscita dall'ambito domestico per trasferirsi, con l'adozione della Carta delle Nazioni Unite, all'intera comunità internazionale, salvo poi ripiegare nel quadrante occidentale con l'avvio della guerra fredda. Ciò non di meno, essa cresceva rigogliosa in una consistente porzione del continente europeo, caratterizzata da decenni di pace, benessere e sostanziale stabilità, giovandosi della combinazione fra la costruzione di sistemi democratici nazionali e la progressiva integrazione fra di essi grazie all'esperimento comunitario, fino allo storico tornante del 1989-91, che ha consentito di coinvolgere in tale sviluppo anche l'Europa orientale.

La democrazia è un concetto-chiave di tutta l'argomentazione di Parsi. Tra i regimi democratici e quelli autoritari egli frappone una distanza irriducibile che impedisce ogni sorta di equiparazione: ciò implica, sul piano del giudizio politico, la necessità di distinguere, anche nella guerra fra Russia e Ucraina, «le ragioni dell'aggressore e dell'aggredito». Secondo questa lettura, la condotta di Vladimir Putin – oltre a riprodurre movimenti osservati all'inizio del secondo conflitto mondiale – si configura come la conferma definitiva della volontà di affossare il processo avviato da Gorbaciov per «democratizzare il comunismo». Trasformando il proprio paese in un'autocrazia, il leader russo contraddice nei fatti la retorica che accompagna le sue azioni e si profila come principale erede del «vecchio Occidente» bellicista e colonialista, esistito nell'età moderna e contrapposto dall'autore al «nuovo Occidente» apparso dopo il 1945, la cui identità è fondata su democrazia, economia di mercato e società aperta.

Facendo perno su questi elementi e tesoro dei tragici errori commessi nella loro storia, gli occidentali si sono sforzati di creare e consolidare un ordine internazionale che oggi sembra minacciato su tre fronti, sorgenti di altrettanti fattori di instabilità: l'Europa sconvolta dalla guerra russo-ucraina, lo stretto di Taiwan e il Medio Oriente

Stefano Quirico, Università del Piemonte Orientale, stefano.quirico@uniupo.it

(ulteriormente scosso dallo scontro fra Israele e Hamas, del cui ultimo segmento il libro di Parsi non può tenere conto). Secondo l'Autore, però, la combinazione di questi elementi non produce la «terza guerra mondiale a pezzi» teorizzata da papa Francesco, ma delinea piuttosto uno scenario di straordinaria incertezza e dagli esiti del tutto imprevedibili. In tale contesto, una delle poche certezze è la consapevolezza della fine dell'«era della convergenza», coincisa con l'estensione e l'accelerazione delle dinamiche globalizzatrici: l'umanità si trova infatti agli albori di un'epoca contrassegnata dalla «divergenza», nella quale declina qualsivoglia illusione di individuare regole comuni della vita internazionale. E si accende, davanti agli occhi smarriti della popolazione mondiale, una feroce competizione per la leadership, innescata dal desiderio di Russia e Cina – temporaneamente ma forse non eternamente alleate – di sovvertire i rapporti di forza cristallizzati alla fine del Novecento, rovesciando l'egemonia americana.

Di fronte a questa prospettiva, sarebbe tuttavia insensato rispolverare metodi e obiettivi della guerra fredda, nata proprio intorno al mutuo riconoscimento della frattura fra le due superpotenze. Benché l'equilibrio del terrore, scaturito dalla minaccia della reciproca distruzione per mezzo dell'arma nucleare, abbia contributo a stabilizzare le relazioni fra i due blocchi del secondo Novecento, Parsi è fermamente convinto che la condizione di pace vissuta dall'Europa tra XX e XXI secolo fosse dovuta anche e soprattutto alla diffusione degli ideali democratici e alla costruzione di un fitto reticolo di istituzioni multilaterali sul piano internazionale. Per comprendere appieno quanto accaduto nel loro recente passato, gli europei sono invitati a riflettere sulla vera causa dei conflitti succedutisi tra l'età moderna e quella contemporanea, ossia l'eccesso di sovranità collocata nelle mani degli Stati. A tale minaccia, infatti, la dottrina dell'equilibrio di potenza – decantata per secoli dai sostenitori del realismo politico e rievocata oggi dagli analisti di geopolitica – ha opposto risposte parziali e inefficaci, travolte dalle repliche della storia. Risultati deludenti sono giunti anche dal tentativo di dare vita a un sistema giuridico internazionale teso a limitare la sovranità statale facendo leva unicamente sul diritto, di per sé incapace di contenere le pulsioni aggressive degli Stati.

Le fortune del secondo dopoguerra, viceversa, sono dipese dalla decisione di fondare istituzioni solide ed efficaci, affiancate dall'evoluzione della sovranità in senso pienamente democratico e dalla trasformazione dell'economia di mercato in chiave sociale, che hanno garantito inclusione politica e benessere materiale a un ceto medio in continua espansione. Tale precedente deve costituire una preziosa fonte di ispirazione anche per la fase in corso, nella quale ogni attore è chiamato a fornire, nel modo che gli risulta più congeniale, un contributo alla rifondazione delle istituzioni internazionali. È in questo quadro che l'Unione Europea può ritagliarsi un ruolo significativo, soprattutto in ambiti – come la lotta ai cambiamenti climatici – in cui molti altri paesi si dimostrano reticenti. Nel contempo, però, l'UE deve prendere coscienza dell'esistenza di sfide politico-militari che trascendono i suoi margini di intervento: per quanto la reazione relativamente compatta allo scoppio della guerra russo-ucraina abbia smentito numerose previsioni, comprese probabilmente quelle della classe

dirigente russa, alcuni nodi restano irrisolti e potrebbero riaffiorare con il trascorrere del tempo, alimentando condotte opportunistiche e divergenze di vedute.

Di conseguenza, Parsi auspica, da un lato, che gli europei riescano a dotarsi di maggiore unità e «soggettività politica», intesa anche in senso esplicitamente militare; ma osserva, dall'altro lato, che nei contesti bellici più complessi e articolati si rende necessaria una «cassetta degli attrezzi» completa, in grado cioè di contemplare un'ampia gamma di scenari, compreso quello della deterrenza nucleare, che all'UE sarà invece lungamente preclusa. Da tale analisi discende un argomento decisivo a sostegno della NATO, la quale – potendo contare sull'arsenale statunitense – resta una componente ineludibile del sistema di sicurezza dell'Europa. Dal punto di vista dell'Autore, l'Alleanza atlantica e l'UE appaiono perfettamente complementari, in quanto protagoniste di un incontro fecondo che produrrà risultati tanto più efficaci quanto più verranno superate le istanze del «pacifismo assoluto», encomiabile in termini etico-morali ma disfunzionale alla difesa dei paesi democratici e, di riflesso, alla tutela della pace mondiale che da essi largamente dipende.

Nel ridefinire la propria strategia, gli europei sono invitati anche a diventare più selettivi nella costruzione dei rapporti economici. Se la dottrina liberale classica invitava a intensificare il più possibile le relazioni commerciali internazionali, la lezione degli ultimi anni consiglia di individuare con maggiore attenzione i propri partner, basando la scelta anche su valutazioni di carattere politico. La dipendenza energetica dalla Russia, particolarmente marcata per alcuni paesi europei, si è rivelata una condizione di vulnerabilità nel momento in cui le ragioni politiche hanno determinato l'improvvisa interruzione di quelle forniture. La fiducia illimitata nell'integrazione economica, che ha portato a scelte frettolose come l'ammissione della Cina nel WTO, dovrebbe quindi cedere il passo a un approccio più meditato, che Parsi riconduce al concetto di «ecologia politica» e, in altri termini, alla necessità di subordinare ogni decisione a una valutazione complessiva, in cui le motivazioni politiche ed economiche – ma anche le spinte globalizzatrici e quelle più localiste o regionaliste – trovino un reale bilanciamento. A spostare l'ago della bilancia è, ancora una volta, il principio democratico: solo le democrazie consolidate offrono le garanzie necessarie per dare vita a relazioni politiche ed economiche strutturate, durature e reciprocamente vantaggiose, come del resto il processo di integrazione europea, al netto delle ambiguità e delle inefficienze che lo zavorrano, dimostra oltre ogni ragionevole dubbio.

Book Recommendations

De Europa
Vol. 6, No. 1 (2023), 151
ISSN 2611-853X
www.deeuropa.unito.it

Nancy De Leo (2023). *Choisir l'Europe. Le relazioni tra la Tunisia e la Cee (1969-1987)*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 210 pp.

Basato su una ricerca d'archivio, il volume guarda alle relazioni tra Tunisi e Bruxelles a partire dall'accordo di associazione del 1969. Dopo quella data, le relazioni fra la Tunisia e la Cee si approfondirono perché, da un lato, il Paese nordafricano necessitava di attuare programmi di sviluppo economico e, dall'altro, la Comunità andava elaborando la sua politica mediterranea.

La svolta avvenne nel 1976, nel contesto della Politica mediterranea globale, con la firma di un primo accordo di cooperazione favorito dal nuovo corso impresso alla politica estera francese dalla presidenza di Georges Pompidou, dal ruolo più attivo della Commissione europea e dal contesto internazionale segnato dal radicalizzarsi del confronto fra il Nord e il Sud del mondo nel quadro della Guerra Fredda.

La distanza tra le aspettative e risultati raggiunti, nonché le percezioni del governo tunisino rispetto alle mutazioni della cooperazione con i Nove, delinearono i limiti delle relazioni fra la Tunisia e la Comunità fino alla conclusione dell'era di Habib Bourguiba.

Abstracts and Keywords

De Europa
Vol. 6, No. 2 (2023), 155-158
ISSN 2611-853X
www.deeuropa.unito.it

Surviving crises – through education?
Eduardo Barberis, Marcelo Parreira do Amaral

Introducing the themed issue on Surviving crises through education, this article puts education and youth policy in the EU in focus, as European countries have to face challenges in at least three domains: youth incorporation into the labour market; the political participation of young generations; the management of internationally mobile youth. The collection of articles in this issue shows that coordinated and effective outcomes are yet to come.

Keywords: citizeship, crisis, globalization, representation

Citizenship in Times of Crises – Crisis of Citizenship?
Sebastiano Benasso, Marcelo Parreira do Amaral, Joseph König, Jozef Zelinka

The article discusses recent developments that are impacting the understandings of citizenship in late modern societies. During the past decades, citizenship has been discussed in terms of its contributions to tackling effects of political, social and economic crises. Most prominent are those challenges deriving from processes of Europeanization and globalization, but also, digital technologies are said to impinge new requirements on individuals, thus calling for European, global or digital citizenship. Well beyond simply changing the traditional orientation towards a nation-state, new conceptualizations of citizenship gravitate heavily towards individual dispositions and subjective competencies, while legal-juridical features remain untouched and largely unrelated. This explains the strong emphasis on the role of education in cultivating – global, European, digital – citizenship among individuals. The contribution asks whether and if so, how changed understandings of citizenship may lead to 'performative citizenship', where individuals are burdened with the requirement of constantly enacting 'good' and 'worthy' citizenship. The paper is organized along three sections: First, we revisit the mainstream literature on citizenship and discuss the main elements in historical-systematic manner. Second, based on a thorough literature review we discuss recent developments that call for updated meanings and representations of citizenship, before, third, the paper deliberates on the performative nature on newer conceptions of citizenship by examining recent examples of so-called global universities. The article closes with a discussion of research avenues for the topic, including crucial questions as to the status, role and function of citizenship in times of crises.

Keywords: citizeship, crisis, globalization, representation

Youth political participation and inequalities: comparing European countries and different repertoires of engagement
Nico Bazzoli, Elisa Lello

In recent years, research on Western European countries has shown that younger generations are less involved in political activities than a few decades ago. Several scholars have disputed claims of apathy or retirement into the private sphere of the younger generations, underlining that they prefer to engage in unconventional forms of activism and protest, or associations and voluntary work. Our work investigates the most recent youth political participation dynamics by analysing data from the 9th edition (2018) of the European Social Survey. The first aim is to explore the differences in youth political engagement levels among EU countries. On the other hand, the transformations involving the very nature of political participation also affect the relationship between socio-economic inequalities and political engagement. Notwithstanding the declining importance of the class dimension in structuring processes of collective identification, it may be argued that social class in itself keeps playing a crucial role in determining different degrees of access to political participation. The second objective, therefore, is to assess the impact of socio-economic inequalities on political engagement based on a quantitative and comparative approach, comparing younger cohorts with older ones, and electoral participation with unconventional engagement.

Keywords: youth political participation, European youth, social and economic inequalities, conventional/unconventional participation, social centrality, class

Degrees of hostility towards migrant solidarity: the case of Ceuta and Melilla
Valentina Marconi

While European borders have increasingly hardened and proliferated since the so-called 2015 refugee crisis, practices of migrant assistance and solidarity by civil society actors have become a feature of contemporary border politics. On the one hand, across the European Union, local and international initiatives have often responded to needs of newcomers, by playing a pivotal role in doing humanitarian work; on the other hand, both organisations and individuals engaged in migrant solidarity and assistance have become the target of policies and practices of criminalisation. My analysis takes the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla as a case-study, drawing on data collected during a 2019-2020 fieldwork. The paper argues that in the Spanish enclaves' local humanitarians belonging to a range of civil society actors face different forms of intimidation and indirect pressure, both by governmental and non-governmental actors. I show how the lack of acceptance of the work of local humanitarians among some sectors of the local population lies with feelings of 'fear' and rejection towards some specific groups of migrants, such as unaccompanied minors from Morocco and young male migrants from Sub-Saharan countries. In addition, I describe how, along this EU external border, cases of harsher forms of criminalisation have been recorded as well. The paper concludes that tensions and hurdles that local humanitarians face in these EU border localities partially reflect a broader European trend and are a 'sub-product' of larger process of criminalisation of migrants and refugees travelling through 'irregular' routes.

Keywords: Humanitarian border, Migrant solidarity, Civil society organisations, Ceuta, Melilla, Criminalisation

School integration of refugee children: European challenges, national pathways, and local practices
Gül Ince-Beqo, Yiannis Roussakis, Vittorio Sergi

In recent years, the number of minor migrants, both accompanied and unaccompanied, arriving in European countries increased significantly. The impact of newcomers on the school systems of various European countries has highlighted problems in education continuity and in the accomplishment of educational goals. Relying on the preliminary data from the Erasmus+ KA2 project "Continugee" in Italy and Greece, this paper analyses the current policies and practices used in refugee children education. In addition to policy analysis, interviews with families, teachers and professionals operating in migrant shelters and schools were conducted, aimed to address both institutional and relational dimensions of schooling and to point out good practices in educational incorporation of refugee youth. Research shows that – notwithstanding a common concern throughout Europe, national and local regulations, and local practices do affect their access to quality education. Age limits, gender gaps, location of shelters, lack of adequate institutional educational facilities and of professional training make effective educational placement and continuity difficult. Schools have a very different level of effectiveness and European policy innovation is often jeopardized by lack of resources and staff motivation. Recognition of qualifications and skills, a supported participation into mainstream education, and a participatory approach with families and guardians are essential for effective school integration.

Keywords: refugee, minors, education, training, policy, European

Barred from Opportunity? How Young Newcomers in the European Union Find Access to Vocational Education and Training, or Not
Simon Morris-Lange, Lena Rother

Young refugees and other 16-to-25-years-old newcomers represent more than a quarter of total EU migration. Most of them would like to work and earn money as soon as possible and for many, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) could be gateway to skilled and secure employment. However, little is known about their experiences in accessing TVET across Europe. To help expand our empirical understanding of salient barriers and access dynamics, we compared national and sub-national policies, followed by semi-structured interviews with 40 newcomers and 82 teachers, employers, bureaucrats and other TVET professionals in four countries: Austria, Germany, Slovenia, and Spain. Our findings show that young newcomers face a plethora of regulatory and non-regulatory barriers to education. Unlike their non-migrant peers, newcomers have to navigate not only an education system which they do not yet know, but also an increasingly complex migration system, whose rules and regulations interfere with their individual ability to access TVET. Hence, most newcomers require extensive professional counseling and support en route to their desired TVET program. The teachers, employers, bureaucrats and other TVET professionals they encounter were found to play a pivotal role in migrants' educational biographies as their (in)actions and discretionary decisions were found to effectively (re)shape education access policies on the ground.

Keywords: refugees, eu, migration, TVET, education, regulations

The Blurred Lines of Intercultural Mediation: Practices of Formal and Informal Training in Italy
Gloriamaria Avolio, Claudia Cavallari, Elena Cecchini

Over the past few decades, Europe has been feeding on a narrative of skepticism and crisis that has not spared the discourse on migration, highlighting states' fragmentation over the adoption of common migration management policies. Long-lasting difficulties in regional integration have been heightened and efforts to build a sound knowledge-based European society weakened. European states are meeting migration challenges and in so doing are inter alia confronted with the essential role played by intercultural mediation in the interaction between foreigners and host societies. Within such a framework, this article aims at contributing to the debate on the shortcomings of integrated mediation practices across Europe. It thus analyses the theoretical framework on mediation, with reference to instruments adopted by both the European Union and the Council of Europe, and accompanies such a review with reflections triggered by an empirical study on mediation conducted at a local level in Italy. The country sets an interesting case study, as it faces well-known migration management issues that meet Eurosceptic and nationalist tones. The research explores the regional institutional system in place, or the absence thereof, and touches upon how this is perceived and experienced by mediation professionals operating in the asylum and reception field. It provides instances of how, despite some transnational coordination, those who operate at the national and local level have heterogeneous backgrounds and refer to sub-state institutional frameworks that are rather far from the idea of a regionally integrated professionalisation of the role. Drawing thus parallels between the European and the local context, the contribution suggests the rethinking of the professional figure of the mediator and the possibility of grounding the role on common educational and training paths.

Keywords: Council of Europe, European Union, Intercultural Mediation, Cultural Diversity, Migration, European Social Inclusion

Publisher: **Dipartimento di Culture, Politica e Società - Università di Torino**

Contacts: **redazione.deeuropa@unito.it**

Website: **www.deeuropa.unito.it**

ISSN: **2611-853X**