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Laura Zanfrini and Massimiliano Monaci

Diversity Management and Immigrant Human Resources

A Booklet for Companies and Other Work Organizations

.......DimiCome

FONDAZIONE **ISMU**
INIZIATIVE E STUDI
SULLA MULTIETNICITÀ

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Contents

This Booklet has originated in the framework of the Dimicome project (Diversity Management and Integration: Migrants' Skills in the Labor Market), promoted by ISMU Foundation and co-financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) 2014-2020, (PROG-2195) – CUP H79F18000400009.

*In the wake of the multi-year commitment of ISMU Foundation's Economy and Labor Department to contributing to the "modernization" of the Italian integration model, the DimiCome project (*https://www.ismu.org/progetto-dimicome/*) intends to promote the emergence and valorization of the potential of immigration by favoring the growth of immigrants' participation in the labor market and – at the same time – their productivity levels, in the perspective of a more equitable, inclusive and competitive economy.*

By means of a wide array of actions, DimiCome aims to make the skills of which migrants are bearers (often unconsciously) real resources for both individual employability and companies and local economies' competitiveness. This is pursued by improving knowledge and awareness among all actors involved – migrants themselves, the business system, actors in the wide world of integration and intermediation activities – and by providing the necessary tools for capacity-building processes that also ensure dissemination of successful experiences.

As one of the project's outputs, this Booklet is primarily aimed at enterprises and other work organizations, but it is also intended to represent a relevant resource for all their main stakeholders. In particular, it is based on what emerged from a field study exploring a wide range of significant experiences that were made by a selected group of Italian organizations. The goal is to contribute to an inclusive transformation of work organizations in the labor market. This hoped-for evolution requires recruitment processes that are more attentive to migrants' specific skills and competences (and based on increased awareness of their value), as well as an ability to strategically favor the expression of the "diversity" of human resources, first of all by strengthening knowledge and competences in the field of Diversity Management as a practice aimed at the integration and valorization of migrant personnel in the workplace.

While having been launched shortly after the refugee crisis (with its implications for the need of a paradigm shift in thinking about immigration and about the role of companies in this context), the project underlying this Booklet takes on a further meaning today. In fact, "thanks" to the pandemic and its consequences, we are and will increasingly be in a position to understand with unprecedented immediacy how strategic and mindful organizational choices can contribute to pursuing the common good, long-term sustainability of development models and the creation of new forms of governance of global interdependencies. Also in light of this, we really hope that this Booklet can offer useful insights and ideas to companies, both those having already embarked on the path of Diversity Management and those that are only now beginning to deal with the "diversity" related to the migratory background. All this, also taking into account that – based on projected trends – it is likely that the multi-ethnic character of Italian society will be strengthened, making the incidence of people with a migratory background and their presence in companies' staffs more and more relevant. And this, at the end of the day, means being aware that – with ever more evidence – the destinies and problems of immigrants are doomed to overlap with those of Italian society. .

Milan, November 2021

The current landscape
and future
scenarios

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1. The current landscape
and future scenarios

This Booklet was conceived within the framework of DimiCome *(Diversity Management and Integration: Migrants' skills in the labor market)*, a project explicitly based on a clear strategic and value perspective: encouraging businesses and other work organizations to adopt initiatives and management models openly aimed to valorize the "diversity" related to the migratory background. The project aims to contribute to the goal of promoting **an inclusive evolution of organizations in the labor market**, through recruitment practices that are more attentive to the specific skills and competences of migrants (and more aware of their value) and **the ability to strategically favor the expression of the "diversity" brought by human resources, with particular regard to immigrant personnel**.

The starting point is the awareness that we are not in "year zero". The last thirty years have seen an extraordinary – and, in many ways, unexpected – transformation of both Europe and Italy into a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society. Within this process, **companies have been not only one of the main channels for migrant integration, but also** (together with school) t**he main laboratory for experiencing – and building – practices of coexistence**. Furthermore, through their personnel management choices and their initiatives in other areas such as CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), businesses – sometimes intentionally and quite often in an unconscious but equally valuable way – are playing a key role in defining the outcomes of inclusion of migrants in the labor market (with obvious consequences for the overall economic impact of immigration) as well as the balance of inter-ethnic coexistence itself. In other words, enterprises are contributing to redesigning the scenarios of today's and future European and Italian society.

It is therefore necessary that not only large companies (which are most exposed in terms of institutional communication), but also small enterprises

(which, particularly in Southern European countries, have "set in motion" the process of occupational inclusion of foreign workers), as well as medium-sized ones (which, in several respects, retain the characters and opportunities of both), gain greater awareness of what is "at stake". A primary objective of this Booklet is precisely to strengthen and strategically enhance this awareness, for example in terms of human resource management (recruitment and human capital development policies), internal and external communication, participation in multi-stakeholder territorial networks, initiatives in the field of corporate sustainability and citizenship, and so on. The Italian experience is here understood as emblematic of challenges and opportunities standing out on the horizon of the whole of European society. In fact, in recent years, Europe has been: *a)* engaged in a process of "metabolizing" its transformation into a multi-ethnic society; *b)* called upon to manage new entries for family and protection reasons; *c)* urged to rethink the schemes for managing economic migration and migrants' occupational inclusion.

It should be immediately specified that, while also drawing on the authors' academic knowledge (developed over thirty years of activity in the fields of organization science, labor market research and migration studies), this Booklet is firstly based on the analysis of Diversity Management (henceforth DM) practices implemented by a large sample of Italian enterprises, which have been the subject of a study carried out within the DimiCome project. The title of the book that discusses the results of this research (*A car in motion with the handbrake on*[1]) intends to evoke the great potential, to dateonly partially expressed, that has been developed by Italian businesses. Our hope is that this potential can be unleashed thanks to awareness-raising and capacity building actions targeted not only at companies, but also at their main stakeholders involved in this issue and – last but not least – at immigrants themselves, who are not always aware of the prospects for usabilityof their human capital.

To our knowledge, the study mentioned above is the most extensive research on DM practices addressed to migrant workers that has been conducted so far in Italy. Aside from t the intrinsic value of this study, its goal is to provideuseful suggestions for guiding the reflection and action of firms and other work organizations with respect to the theme of inclusion and valorization of immigrant human resources. The present Booklet goes exactly

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1   Una macchina in moto col freno tirato: La valorizzazione dei migranti nelle organizzazioni di lavoro: https://www.ismu.org/una-macchina-in-moto-col-freno-tirato/

in this direction, by proposing several "tips" for an innovative management of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, which also include suggestions addressed to the world of institutions, labor market intermediaries and reception and integration actors.

In this perspective, the first observation to make is that the aim of favoring an inclusive and – at the same time – performative management of human resources with a migratory background must first and foremost be pursued taking into account three general factors: a) the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of immigration (and, in particular, of immigrant workforce) and their foreseeable evolution; b) the features and weaknesses of the current model of occupational inclusion; c) the prospects that will open up in the near future – both in Italy and in Europe – as regards the management of human mobility, also in relation to companies' strategies of competitive repositioning and internationalization.

1.1 Immigration: a heterogeneous world that challenges companies

Our starting point is the size of immigration2. The Italian situation, described in this section as a paradigmatic example, well illustrates the need to take into account both the overall volume of the population with a migratory background and its multifaceted composition.

On the eve of the outbreak of the pandemic (January 1, 2020), whose impact on immigration is still difficult to assess the non-resident component – which is given by the sum of undocumented immigrants (562 thousand) plus those with regular stay but not re at the registry office (404 thousand) – must be added to the foreign-born population officially residing in Italy, i.e. 5 million and 400 thousand. To these figures we must then add the number of foreigners who, after acquiring Italian citizenship, have disappeared from the statistics: i.e. a total of over one million and 600 thousand "new Italians". All these components (residents, estimated staying non-residents, new citizens) add up to the figure of **about 8 million people with a migratory background**, which, although certainly approximate and with many limitations, points to the importance of

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2   Data provided by the Statistical Service of ISMU Foundation.

immigration in the Italian demographic landscape. To this figure it would then be necessary to add the number of children born to naturalized Italian parents, who are invisible to any form of statistical reporting. These few data already give an account of how **the "diversity" related to the migratory background is destined (if it is not already so) to become a normal and structural feature of work organizations**, even in those sectors and stages of value chains that have been marginally affected by it up to now. This is even more true if we consider the demographic scenario of a society with more and more elderly people and fewer babies born, where it is precisely immigration that ensures the generational turnover of active age groups. And it is all the more true if we consider forecasts for the next few decades, when immigration will compensate for the drastic population decline that it is already possible to predict due to the progressive thinning of reproductive age groups.

Alongside figures, a second relevant point is therefore the **internal heterogeneity of the migratory world**. This relates to both the biographical characteristics that most influence people's behavior in labor supply (i.e. gender, age, family composition, level of education) and the traits that give shape to their "diversity" (i.e. geographical origin, linguistic and cultural background, religious affiliation).

Considering only some of these aspects, **feminization** has always been a distinctive trait of immigration to Italy (due to the relevance of work for families). Even today women represent just over half of adults residing in Italy, but with a progressive growth of the inactive component, which was much more limited in the past. This trend – which has greatly consolidated in the last year, due to the impact of the pandemic – unites Italy to the experience of the other major European countires of immigration.

Over time, another trait being present since the start of the Italian migratory transition has further consolidated, namely, **the composite nature of immigration from the perspective of national origin.** In all, there are about 200 registered nationalities in total and about fifty of them with at least ten thousand residents. Furthermore, although the first five nationalities (Romanian, Albanian, Moroccan, Chinese and Ukrainian) represent almost half of foreign residents, Italian migration history has not been characterized by the presence of a "dominant" group as in the case, for example, of Algerians in France or Turks in Germany (incidentally, the fact remains that within some companies we find a concentration of workers of the same origin and the tendency to create ethnically homogeneous work teams).

An often underestimated "side effect" of this composite immigration is the extraordinary enrichment of the linguistic landscape. **Today in Italy**, unlike a few decades ago, **dozens of foreign languages are spoken fluently**, which include the official languages of large countries (such as China, Russia or Brazil) as well as a multitude of dialects that make up the linguistic geography of many Asian and African nations.

Finally, **immigration has caused an exceptional increase in the number of people affiliated with all minority religions**. In particular, this refers to the Islamic religion, which – according to ISMU's estimates – has just under one million and 600 thousand followers; and, within the Christian religion, to the significant growth both of the non-Catholic component (primarily the Orthodox one, with just over one million and 600 thousand faithful, according to ISMU's data) and – as regards the Catholic world – of liturgical traditions once almost unknown (e.g. Catholics belonging to the Coptic, Greek and Ge'ez "rites"). All this makes up a rather complex religious geography, which is often the object of improper perceptions3 exactly because it is little known.

In addition, specific aspects of the migrant condition must be considered, such as migratory seniority and legal status, but also entry channels used and – last but not least – the more or less tortuous ways in which migration happens. The last aspect is much more relevant than is usually thought, at least according to one of the beliefs underpinning the DimiCome project; namely, the idea that the lived experience of migration – all the more so when it entailed the need to cope with difficulties, risks and unexpected events – is precisely the ground for the development of specific soft skills: first, **the soft skills related to the necessity to handle new and complex situations** (e.g. those dealt with by many asylum seekers) by solving problems, managing risks and uncertainty, finding alternative modes of action; secondly, **the soft skills developed through "double belonging"**, that is, a familiarity with diverse cultural, communication and value codes that can easily result in linguistic, intercultural and conflict mediation competences. Needless to say, **both these kinds of resources may be strategic today for those companies and production systems** that are increasingly interconnected on a global level, pursuing internationalization, immersed in a plural and changing environment.

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3   For example, Coptic Catholics or Orthodox from Egypt are often confused with Muslims, and Orthodox are referred to as faithful of a religion other than "Italians'", so ignoring the common belonging to the great family of Christianity.

1.2 Migrants are not all alike

Even with regard to legal status, migrants are not all alike. First, there is a fundamental distinction between regular and irregular migrants, which, moreover, is not given once and for all. In fact, migrants often transition from one status to another. For example, migrants "become" irregular from being regular when their residence permit or the visa (possibly issued for touristic reasons) they used to cross borders expire, or their asylum claim is denied. At least equally often, migrants "become" regular from being irregular when they are able to benefit from a regularization measure or they obtain the right to freedom of movement (e.g. citizens of new countries joining the European Union). . It can thus be said that employment without a regular contract (a known problem with respect to which foreign workers are "simply" over-represented) is the main form of discrimination against immigrants and unfair competition to the detriment of honest companies. Although present in all immigration countries, this problem is exacerbated in Italy (and in other southern European countries) due to the significant attraction that the country exerts on irregular immigration. This is related to both the extent of its underground economy and the widespread social acceptance of undeclared work.On their part, regular immigrants are inserted in what we can conceptually define as **systems of civic stratification**. These consist in **systems of inequality based on the relationship between the State and different categories of immigrants, and – at the same time – of rights that are consequently recognized to them or denied**. The most direct example is the distinction between EU and non-EU citizens, or better said, between citizens of the European Union (holders of European citizenship in addition to being national citizens) and citizens of Third Countries. This distinction is very relevant for several reasons. In the first place, it has an impact on migration policies, since EU citizens are freed from constraints established by the immigration law. Secondly, it influences policies "for" immigrants, starting with those financed through European funds for integration, whose recipients are usually only immigrants from Third Countries. Finally, it affects the distribution of rights and opportunities, which places EU citizens in a privileged position (not only with regard to the right to freedom of movement and political rights at the local and European level, but also, for instance, in terms of access to some job positions for which there are still legal barriers and obstacles that hurdle the usability/portability of certain welfare services). It is quite evident that all these factors can influence choices in the area of human resource recruitment and management.

Placement in systems of civic stratification also depends on **the relationship between immigration and citizenship regimes**. First, what is often underestimated is that a large number of foreign immigrants (the majority in Italy as in many other European countries), through the development of a certain migratory seniority, have acquired the status of **denizen** (a sort of "semi-citizen"); that is, a condition increasingly similar to that of citizens, reinforced by the right to permanent residence. This category first of all includes holders of a permit issued pursuant to Council Directive 2003/109/EC, which establishes that long-term resident Third-Country nationals are granted the same rights as EU citizens as regards access to work, education, social protection, healthcare and social assistance, freedom of association. Furthermore, these people are protected from any expulsion order, which can only be justified by behavior that constitutes a threat to public order and security and that damages one of the fundamental interests of the community. More generally, in many European countries – including Italy – a large number of citizenship rights (i.e. most of the civil and social rights have been extended to legally resident foreigners holding a fixed-term permit

The migrant status is further enhanced by the **strong anti-discrimination legislation** "imposed" by the Council on Member States through the adoption of two fundamental directives. The first one (Council Directive 2000/78/EC) is aimed at establishing «a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation and combating discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation». The purpose of the second directive (Council Directive 2000/43/EC) is to provide a minimum framework for pro-

hibiting discrimination based on race4 or ethnic origin, as well as a minimum standard of legal protection to be ensured in the European Union for persons being subject to discrimination. The latter covers multiple areas and, specifically, all forms of discrimination that can occur in the labor market, including harassment that produces an intimidating, hostile, offensive or unpleasant working climate. Moreover, it is established that the burden of proof must shift back to the respondent: for example, it will be the employer – and not the worker whose application has been rejected – who must prove that there has been no discriminatory treatment. For anti-discrimination legislation to be applied effectively, the directive provides that victims should have adequate means of legal protection (through the right to judicial or administrative recourse), and it is also established that associations or legal entities can exercise the right of defense on behalf of the victims. The directive also commits Member States to provide adequate information to all interested parties and to encourage dialogue between the social partners in order to promote the principle of equal treatment, also including this in collective bargaining. A further provision concerns the activation, in each Member State, of a mechanism for ensuring an adequate level of implementation of the directive: i.e. a body or set of bodies with competence to analyse the problems involved, to formulate recommendations and to provide concrete assistance for the victims, also acting on filed discrimination suits. However, looking at the experience of these twenty years as it has been reported by special monitoring bodies, **work remains the area most affected by discrimination** and discrimination related to ethnic origin represents the most widespread form of this phenomenon (e.g. more common than that associated with disability and sexual orientation). On the other hand – as will be seen later – thousands of European enterprises, through the voluntary adoption of a "**diversity charter**", have committed to respecting anti-discrimination principles or implementing **positive actions**; this, taking into account that European legislation itself encourages to take such actions if formal equality is not enough to ensure substantive equality. Further indications on this point will be offered in the next section.

Returning to the issue of the relationship between immigration and citizenship regimes, although laws on the acquisition of citizenship in EU countries differ from each other (with the prevalence of elements of *jus soli* or, instead,

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4   The preamble states that the European Union rejects theories which attempt to determine the existence of separate human races; the use of the term "racial origin" in the text does not imply an acceptance of such theories.

of *jus sanguinis*), there is a growth in the number of **naturalized immigrants** everywhere. These are millions of people, who then, in turn, transmit citizenship to their descendants, **thus contributing to making the "body" of the nation increasingly distant from the principle of ethnic, cultural and religious homogeneity on which many European nations were founded**. As is well known, the question of access to citizenship is highly debated and challenging, because it evokes the issue of the **identifying boundaries of a nation** and therefore the principles and values on which this identity must be founded. This has implications for the world of work and business itself, for instance when issues such as gender roles, the status of women or the role of religion in the public sphere are involved. Furthermore, due to both the variety of solutions adopted by European countries and the fact that the laws of countries of origin can "interfere" with those of countries of destination (e.g. allowing or not maintenance of the citizenship of the origin country in case of naturalization), immigrants who are "alike" from a sociological point of view (e.g. with regard to residence seniority, level of socio-economic integration, language skills, plans for the future) find themselves being foreigners or nationals depending on the circumstances. And the same goes for their children.

A final category to consider is that of **dual citizenship holders**. This is the most tangible manifestation of the so-called *transnational membership/ citizenship*, which mostly resulted from the following factors: *a)* legislative changes made by several countries of emigration and immigration (in many cases, renunciation of original citizenship is no longer required for people applying for naturalization); *b)* the growth of mixed marriages and births from mixed couples (since, based on the principle of gender equality, today women can retain their citizenship and pass it on to their children); *c)* the emergence of purely instrumental behaviors, such as acquiring citizenship of countries that present themselves as "tax havens" or can ensure "safety" for scions of the richest families in the Third World (but this does not apply to most European countries, Italy included). From a legal point of view, dual citizenship holders are placed in a privileged position even compared to original residents of a nation, as they enjoy rights in two countries and the benefit of carrying two passports. What interests us most here, however, is that **dual citizenship can be a valuable resource** for the internationalization of companies and local economies, the development of transnational activities and networks, and the penetration of foreign markets.

1.3 The variety of entry channels and its implications

Finally, placement in civic stratification systems and the related positioning in terms of constraints and opportunities deal with the specific entry channels used and its – not to be taken for granted – connection to individual migratory projects. It has already been noted that EU citizens are freed from the legal framework for immigration (despite being subject to certain rules on the right of residence). Therefore, from a formal point of view, they do not fall into any of the categories by which migrants and migratory flows are classified that will now be considered.

When immigration initially occurs, the greatest part of the entries are usually represented by **economic migrants**. These are immigrants arrived through specific migration schemes or agreements with the sending countries, as well immigrants regularized only *ex-post facto* through a regularization procedure, based on different access requirements. These procedures have been far from rare in Italy, as well as the practice of simulating a call from abroad in the context of the planned annual entry caps. Specific categories can then be distinguished among economic migrants, such as **seasonal workers** (holders of a short-term residence permit, which can be renewed or converted under certain conditions), **highly qualified workers** (entered through the *Blue Card*, in accordance with the Council Directive 2009/50/EC) and some categories benefitting from priority lanes (e.g. professional nurses, investors and aspiring entrepreneurs, corporate expatriates).

Until a few years ago, economic migrants made up the majority of entries into Italy. However, since 2011 the clear predominance of economic migration has been replaced by that of family reunification. Furthermore, since 2014 there has been a dramatic increase in the entries of asylum seekers, also linked to the sad phenomenon of migrant "landings". Over the last year (2020), only 9.7% of entries referred to work reasons; the majority (58.5%) were related to family reasons, followed by entries for protection reasons (12.6%), study reasons (8%) and other reasons (11.4). In this regard, it is worth observing that, whereas entries of economic migrants can be planned according to the needs of the labor market, those for family or international protection reasons involve the exercise of a fundamental human right and so cannot be planned in their numbers or in their composition. It therefore goes without saying that the

entries and stays of so-called "non-economic" migrants are less immediately functional in terms of correspondence to needs and expectations related to labor demand. This notwithstanding, or exactly for this reason, they too challenge companies' dispositions and abilities in the field of inclusivity, as will be seen shortly. Regardless of entry channels used, in fact, reunited family members and asylum seekers/refugees represent at least potential workforce to the extent that they are in active age groups.

Also due to the strong limitations imposed on the entry of economic migrants, or even the elimination of admission quotas (the so-called "zero option"), **family members who have been reunited** for several years make up the majority of new entries in all EU countries. Limiting ourselves to considering the impact of this transformation on the labor market, its most immediate effect is an increase in the number of inactive foreigners (i.e. a reduction in the immigrant activity rate), which brings with it a redefinition of the balance of benefits/disadvantages of immigration for the economy, the tax system and the welfare system. For easily understandable reasons, **inactivity mainly involves migrant women**. This is an issue to which EU institutions are paying special attention today, to the point that an increase in these women's labor market participation rate has been identified as a priority to be pursued through specific initiatives. Aside from economic emancipation, what is at stake is the social integration *tout court* of these women (i.e. their risk for social isolation), with implications also regarding the new generations born of immigrant families, their primary socialization and gender role models they experience in their families. The scale of the problem, together with its representation within a discourse combining the arguments of xenophobic nativism and feminist-liberal criticism, have led some countries to adopt specific measures in order not only to encourage women activation, but also to prevent these kinds of phenomena. In the wake of the so-called "integrationist turn", various States have for exampleintroduced stricter selection criteria also for family reunification (e.g. with the provision that those willing to join their spouses must first demonstrate a basic proficiency in the language of the host country). As for Italy, the activity rate among foreign women was, up to 2019, even higher than that of Italian women (which, however, is much lower than the European average). This advantage, however, is declining over time (precisely due to the increasing impact of family reunification) and, above all, it overturns if we take into consideration some national groups – Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India... but also Tunisia and Morocco – in which inactivity

is the norm even among younger women (as shown by the extremely high incidence of Neet, i.e. young people not in education, employment or training). Finally, due to the impact of the pandemic, the activity rate of foreign women fell, for the first time, below that of autoctonous women, bringing Italy into line with what happens in most immigration countries. All this has consequences not only for migrant women and their families, but also for an economy that – just like the Italian one – has a strong need to increase participation in the labor market of all those categories that today remain excluded from it, in order to withstand the impact of demographic aging.

An equally challenging issue regards the occupational inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers. While criticizing an "economicistic" approach to refugee management (which must first and foremost be oriented towards responding to real protection needs), it should be recognized that participation in the labor market is – according to all experts – the most effective way to foster integration into host societies, so making the long-term impact of entries for protection reasons sustainable or even beneficial. However, many factors concur to hinder the work integration of persons migrating for protection reasons. Among the main ones, we find poor language skills, the lack of qualifications that can be spent in the labor market, the long duration of the procedures for the recognition of qualifications, as well as housing difficulties and health problems (which these migrants often have, especially when having behind them traumatic events, experiences of violence and persecutions). Past experience suggests that, even in countries where employment services work best, it takes years to integrate a significant proportion of refugees or beneficiaries of other forms of protection into the labor market. This explains why, in recent years, resources for integration have been in large part directed to this specific target. Although the perception of a part of European public opinion is that refugees represent a cost for host societies, it is precisely by channeling resources into interventions for their employability – literacy programs, skills assessment, professional training, but also recovery from certain physical and mental health conditions – that it is possible to transform this cost into an investment. Furthermore, according to our approach, people migrating for protection reasons represent a sort of archetype of the contemporary worker and the challenges s/he faces. **In fact, they testify – emblematically – to some of the fundamental needs that current support policies for employability have to deal with**. Actually, these migrants are more exposed to the risk of job instability, they are the protagonists of

itinerant life trajectories (which often involved costly adjustments in terms of family affections and responsibilities), but they are also inherently open to the possibility of professional re-conversion and mobility. In other words, they embody challenges that are looming on the horizon of all citizens. By virtue of the cumulative disadvantages that often characterize them, but also of their extraordinary resourcefulness and flexibility, they are those who most decisively urge public institutions and civil society to provide responses that allow each individual to convert her/his unique and unrepeatable personal resources into real life and work opportunities. And it is exactly this characteristic that makes them **a strategic component in the process of redesigning support and protection systems.**

In the awareness of how crucial it is to speed up the labor market integration of asylum seekers, many countries have removed the legal barriers that in the past prevented them from working. While being useful in combating the illegal exploitation of these migrants, this type of provision can however encourage the practice of resorting to improper requests to asylum or even push them towards the area of under-qualified and under-paid work. As the Italian experience suggests, a quick autonomization of asylum seekers is certainly aligned with their expectations of immediate earnings, but it can jeopardize their professional development, as well as the long-term outcome of the integration process as such. By the same token, the need to maximize the positive impact of immigration and to contain reception costs can easily deviate towards a purely functionalist approach, thus subjecting also the management of this component of immigration to the so-called **paradigm of complementarity.**

1.4 Looking beyond the idea of complementarity

This last expression evokes the main perceived advantage and, at the same time, the main limitation of the current European – and Italian – model of immigrant integration. This is a very relevant point, both as regards the overall relationship between Italy and foreign immigration, and with specific reference to how enterprises approach the issue of immigrant human resources. It is therefore worthwhile to delve into it. Particularly in the case of local production districts in Northern Italy – the most advanced component of the na-

tional production system –, **immigration has been carrying out a structural function for several years now, related to misalignment between labor demand and supply**. The use of foreign workforce was initially (in the 1980-90s) interpreted as an entrepreneurial "reaction" to widespread disaffection with "the factory", which also involved the less educated components of youth labor supply (a phenomenon then described as "voluntary unemployment"). Differently, **this use appears today as being increasingly linked to the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of indigenous labor force**. In fact, on one hand this workforce is constantly decreasing in size (turnover rate is now almost permanently below replacement level); on the other hand, it is more and more educated in the face of a labor demand in which, instead, blue-collar and low-skilled jobs continue to be relevant (that is, enough to cover about one third of new hires). All this explains why, even in areas and sectors where regular and stable work clearly prevails, the ideal-typical representation of the migrant remains that of the blue-collar worker.

The so-called **ethnicization of the labor market** – namely, the concentration of immigrants in occupations that are mostly low-skilled and entailing manual or even menial tasks – is therefore an almost inevitable result of needs mainly concerning those jobs that Italians "no longer want to do"; that is, jobs they are no longer willing to take on the basis of their increasing levels of education. At the same time, however, **ethnic stratification is not extraneous to some critical aspects of Italian economy**. In the first place, this refers to permanence in inactivity and unemployment of a large proportion of local workers, especially those with the lowest education and qualification levels (i.e. workers who, in principle, could carry out many of the jobs for which immigrants are recruited). The second aspect is stagnation of aggregate productivity, which is also linked to the survival of low-tech productions surviving thanks to low labor costs. Finally, we must consider the spread of "bad work" in large sectors of the national economy. These issues and problems go beyond the objectives of this Booklet, nonetheless they are somehow intertwined with its main focus. In fact, **business organizations' approaches to immigrant work are a sort of litmus test of their competitive strategies**, with these being distributed along two possible poles: the first refers to a strategy based on mere labor cost containment (also by means of questionable outsourcing and subcontracting practices); the second involves a strategy focusing on innovation, quality, and above all on "taking care" – in the broad sense – of workers, regardless of their employment status and qualification level.

In Italy, about three out of four foreigners are classified as blue-collar workers (compared to less than one third of Italians), while their presence is drastically reduced, to almost zero, in correspondence with employee (less than 1 in 10), middle management and top management levels. **If this is the structure of job opportunities opened up to foreigners, it is clear why Italy attracts low-educated migrants**: not by chance, the education level of about half of all foreign workers does not exceed lower secondary school. It is also clear that, at least in the short term, practices aimed at valorizing immigrant human resources will have to focus on skills acquired through experience in informal and non-formal contexts even more than on educational and training credentials. In this perspective, the indications stemming from our study and – more generally – from our project refer in particular to medium/low-skilled personnel. In other words, they introduce **greater complexity and realism** when compared to standard DM textbooks, which mainly focus on highly qualified human resources with attractive entry profiles for businesses. The added value of the present Booklet also lies in this point.

On the other hand, however, highly qualified foreigners are highly **exposed to the risk of overqualification**. This is attested by a differential between the overqualification rate of immigrants and that of natives equal to 34 percentage points (compared to 12 points of the OECD average). Furthermore, this differential remains decidedly negative, albeit to a smaller extent (15 vs 23 percentage points), even after applying a methodology that takes into account the levels of linguistic and mathematical competence and the demographic characteristics of the two populations[5]. The problem of the dissipation of human capital even affects holders of STEM degrees (i.e. in scientific, technological, engineering and mathematical studies), which are considered as the most expendable in the labor market (as well as the most easily transferable from one country to another). Whereas over 90% of Italians holding these qualifications do jobs directly related to their degrees, the percentage drops to 26% among foreign workers; as a matter of fact, nearly one in two non-EU immigrants is employed in low-skilled jobs[6]. Aside from its consequences as regards migrants' access to opportunities, **this phenomenon produces an evident waste of human capital, which reflects and amplifies one of the main weaknesses of the Italian economic system**.

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5   Oecd, *International Migration Outlook 2018, Oecd Publishing*, Paris, 2018.

6   Directorate-General for Immigration and Integration Policies (ed.), *Eight Annual Report. Foreigners in the Italian Labour Market*, Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2018.

It can be understood that, in this context, on one side immigrant employability is largely due to their willingness to perform manual tasks and cover low-skilled roles. On the other side, **this very readiness ends up being regarded as the main – and most appreciated – "diversity" of immigration**. Although this kind of job placement can still represent for many foreign workers the culmination of their migratory project (and ensure levels of income and stability that are unattainable in their countries of origin), it also results in modest salary levels and poor career prospects. If pushed to the extreme, this approach almost inevitably generates tensions with less skilled indigenous workers (and with immigrants with greater migratory seniority themselves), fueling the perception of a wage dumping effect precisely linked to the hyper-adaptability of newcomers. But, above all, **this shortermist logic** – i.e. oriented towards maximizing short-term benefits – **undermines the economic and social sustainability of immigration**. In this respect, it is enough to consider the high number of immigrants with such low incomes as to be included in the so-called "no-tax area": that is, a relevant component of the wider phenomenon of the increasing number of "poor workers", which, in turn, represents one of the most worrying aspects of current accumulation regimes. Moreover, the pandemic has made evident – or embarrassing, we might say – the gap between the value of many immigrants' work, who have risen to the rank of essential workers, and their working conditions and wages. **And this offers itself as a challenge that is emblematic of the need, currently emphasized by many, to embrace a new paradigm based on inclusive growth**.

1.5 Scenarios for the future: an increasingly multi-ethnic labor market

What is certain is that the composition of future workforce will be increasingly impacted by immigration, if only because of demographic scenarios that herald a progressive growth of the part of the population exiting from active age groups. The growth of the component with a migratory background will depend on both births within immigrant communities and new flows from abroad (as well as on the volume of Italians emigrating abroad, a phenomenon which increasingly involves immigrants themselves). In this regard, it is worth observing that migratory flows are much more difficult to predict than natural population dynamics, as they depend on socio-econom-

ic and political factors that are both internal and external to the destination country. In any case, **a positive balance from abroad can be basically taken for granted at least until the middle of the century**. Furthermore, we can easily foresee two concomitant processes: a progressive decrease in flows from Eastern Europe, a region affected by problems of population decline that are similar to those of Italy; and the **increasingly central role of arrivals from Africa**, a continent where multiple expulsive factors are concentrated (e.g. low income and well-being levels, population growth, political instability, risks related to climate change) and where, above all, the working-age population will increase by several hundred millions over the next few years. Ultimately, the contribution of immigration will not suffice to resolve the imbalances caused by the "demographic trap" that Italy – together with many other European countries – will have to face in the coming years, which is determined by a reduction in the cohorts of potential parents. Nevertheless – based on projected trends – **it is likely that the multi-ethnic character of Italian society will be strengthened, making the incidence of people with a migratory background and their presence in companies' staffs more and more relevant**. This makes the country, once again, an emblematic "setting" for grasping the processes of profound transformation which involve contemporary European societies. And this means that, with ever more evidence, the destinies and problems of immigrants are doomed to overlap with those of Italian society. Issues and problems such as occupational segregation, human capital under-utilization or pay discrimination take on a new light from this perspective. But this implies that their consequences should be taken into account in terms of contribution to GDP, the tax system and welfare financing, as well as in terms of enlargement of the area of social exclusion and vulnerability, therefore with important impacts on the overall "quality" of social coexistence (e.g. concerns about cultural and religious diversity, which are accentuated when migrants suffer from a condition of structural disadvantage). In other words, **the "quality" – in a broad sense – of work inclusion paths will play a key role for the very quality of social cohesion**.

What has been said so far is even more important if considering **" second generations"**. This expression has now become commonly used, although it is not always appreciated by those to whom it refers (due to its possible stigmatization effects). Once again, we are dealing with a heterogeneous category, which includes both children born in the hosting country from migrant parents and those who arrived for family reunification at an early age or during their

schooling. In several cases – in Italy as in many other European countries – second generation members suffer from a condition of structural disadvantage, as they often belong to families that are economically fragile and, not rarely, at risk of poverty. In addition, they have to grapple with this condition using blunt weapons (e.g. low levels of education, absence of the advantages associated with possession of citizenship, low social capital).

At the same time, the descendants of immigrant families are bearers of a competitive advantage that is linked exactly to their "diversity"; that is, to aspects such as their family migratory history, their ethnic-religious affiliation, their condition of double belonging, their familiarity with transnational action fields, their dual citizenship. It is certainly no coincidence that many of the most interesting – and accessible – job and professional development opportunities for "children of immigration" are represented by highly internationalized firms and areas (where career processes tend to be "denationalized"), by sectors whose goods and services are addressed to foreign communities themselves and their countries of origin, by sectors – e.g. catering, the leisure industry, promotion of cultural events – where ethnic identity can be "commodified" (through its incorporation into goods and services and marketing and communication strategies), by companies and business networks willing to implement relocation processes or to establish commercial relationships with foreign partners, by interpreting and linguistic-cultural mediation activities, and by social and personal care services (where there is a growing need for new professional skills to deal with increasingly diverse users).

Furthermore,those features that today appear to be typical of young people belonging to immigrant communities, also creating specific opportunities for them, are going to become increasingly strategic traits and skills intrinsically linked to the condition of young people as such. Today's youth, in fact, have internalized the needs for mobility, versatility and reversibility characterizing current production paradigms; they grew up in much more heterogeneous societies than those in the past (this is particularly true for Italy, where those on the way to becoming adults represent the first cohort to have been born and brought up in a fully multi-ethnic society); they express a high propensity to move abroad, not only due to a lack of alternatives but because they perceive and imagine themselves as global citizens, and it is exactly this characteristic what gives them "an edge" over the generations that came before them (notwithstanding all the vulnerabilities affecting young people today).

In light of this scenario, it could be said that immigrant second generations – in intense and anticipated ways – experience globalization-related transformations, early exposure to internationalized work contexts, participation in transnational networks, the possibility of communicating in different languages and drawing on different cultural repertoires, the opportunity to combine and negotiate elements borrowed from multiple socio-cultural settings, familiarity with cosmopolitan life or working environments and with digital technologies, a willingness to move, the need to manage risks and uncertainties, and a propensity for self-reflection that is typical of those living "divided between two worlds" (to quote Robert Park, an influential sociologist of the past). All these dispositions are highly appreciated nowadays, so much so that they are openly sought after by the main companies and public organizations in European countries; and this, also considering that it is precisely the presence of immigrants and their descendants that has contributed to making these societies increasingly cosmopolitan and connected with other worlds.

1.6 Companies as laboratories of social innovation

The discussion above should make us understand that what proposed in this Booklet looks beyond the world of immigration as it is currently known and depicted. **Gearing up for managing "diversity" is, in fact, one of the fundamental challenges that global economy and society have now to face. And it certainly is an unavoidable challenge for Italian companies (and all other work organizations), when considering their urgent need for competitive repositioning and greater openness to international markets**.

This said, the issue is not mainly related – as is often simplistically claimed – to the backwardness of the Italian business system and its management models. Rather, a real global challenge is involved, which regards many irreversible changes (in workforce demographic composition, in the s of social division of labor, in cultural attitudes, in the balance between productive and reproductive systems) and entails countless economic, political and ethical implications. Furthermore, diversity related to the migratory background – on which the project underpinning this Booklet is focused – is but one of many manifestations of an increasingly heterogeneous workforce in both labor markets and organi-

zational staffs. Nonetheless, it is also likely to be the one that **paradigmatically synthesizes all the potential problems and resources, challenges and opportunities brought by that complexity**.

Thanks to the "mirror" function performed by immigration in relation to the characteristics of reception and integration contexts, looking at how companies deal with immigrant workforce's diversity allows us to view them as "miniature" socio-cultural systems that condense broader context dynamics and trends. In this way, at the same time, we are led to appreciate organizations as laboratories of social innovation; that is to say, **microcosms where it is possible to experiment and anticipate "something new" capable of generating change in and around firms**, as well as **within the wider territories in which they operate**.

Moreover, in the unfolding post-pandemic scenario this Booklet appears to be unexpectedly timely. In fact, the underlying project of contributing to the promotion of an inclusive and – at the same time – performative management of migrant human resources was launched shortly after the refugee crisis, with its implications for the need of a paradigm shift in thinking about immigration. Today, this project takes on a further meaning: "thanks to" the pandemic and its

consequences, we are and will increasingly be in a position to understand with unprecedented immediacy how **strategic and mindful organizational choices can contribute to pursuing the common good, long-term sustainability of development models, as well as the creation of new forms of governance of global interdependencies**. With this also in mind, in the following sections we will dwell on Diversity Management practices addressed to immigrant human resources.

Including migrant human resources
in the perspective of
Diversity Management

2

2. Including migrant human resources in the perspective of Diversity Management

As previously said, the design of this Booklet draws on the authors' research skills and experience, as well as on the main findings stemming from the study conducted – as a part of the DimiCome project – in five Italian regions (Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy, Piedmont, Puglia and Veneto) with the aim of exploring processes of migrant integration in the workplace. This field research paid particular attention to the presence and effects, in the observed organizations, of **human resource management practices adhering to the principles of DM**.

As detailed in the analysis of the results of regional studies[7], in general the research not only found the presence of DM practices in the selected sample of organizations, but also led to identify specific and original trajectories, facilitating factors and possible critical aspects, positive impacts on organizations, workers, local communities and social stakeholders (such as public and third sector entities operating in the area of the social and work inclusion of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers). In the next section a set of indications – directly or implicitly suggested by the research – will be offered, which we consider useful, also from a practical point of view, for companies and stakeholders intending to take action in the valorization of migrant human capital or to strengthen commitments already undertaken in this field. In view of this, however, we first must **outline some key points relating to DM**. These "cornerstones" are mainly based, on one hand,

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7   *Una macchina in moto col freno tirato: La valorizzazione dei migranti nelle organizzazioni di lavoro*: https://www.ismu.org/una-macchina-in-moto-col-freno-tirato/

on real-life organizational experiences that are now numerous at the international level, and, on the other hand, on a considerable amount of scientific studies in the last decade, which in Italy have been significantly promoted by ISMU Foundation (i.e. the lead partner of the DimiCome project).

2.1 What is DM? Diversity, managing diversity and inclusion

Diversity Management is an approach to human resource management aimed at the **development of inclusive organizations**, i.e. capable of: a) **recognizing – and favoring the expression of –** the different predispositions, abilities, needs, experiences and identities of workers; b) **valorizing** and integrating **these differences** also **to the benefit of organizational goals and performance**.

The potential of DM as a management model or style is clearly suggested by the role of "diversity" in today's workforce and organizational action, as well as in everyday social life. We need only consider phenomena such as:

- **globalization**, with its impacts on the redefinition of markets and internationalization of business;

- the **weakening of traditional organizational boundaries**, both internal (between functions and activities) and external (with respect to customers, suppliers and other stakeholders), with the emergence of new and changing forms of network collaboration and contamination between different professional knowledges;

- **demographic changes in employment dynamics**, resulting in four or even five generations now working alongside each other for the first time in history, the growing participation and qualification of women in the labor market, the presence of first- and second-generation immigrants employed in firms;

- the **development of new needs and expectations** – relating to well-being, self-actualization and work-life balance – which individuals bring to work;

- growing **diversification of clients and users' needs** and the resulting necessity to be able to grasp and satisfy such a variety of needs;

- increased public attention (on the part of markets, government institutions and consumers) to the **socio-ethical and sustainability impacts of organ-**

izational activities, based on which firms are expected to take an explicit commitment to promoting employee quality of life and combating discrimination in the workplace.

In other words, diversity in and around organizations is now a fact of life. This acknowledged, the point is: are organizations and managers prepared to handle it? And how can this (unavoidable) condition and challenge be turned into a "strength", by obtaining benefits from it for both organizations and those who live and work in them?

From the DM perspective, diversity refers to an organization or a part of it (e.g. a work team) where differences between people exist on one or more relevant dimensions. These dimensions, besides including typical organizational aspects (tasks, hierarchical level, internal department etc.), relate to aspects such as gender, age, ethnic and/or national origin, marital and family status, religious belonging, sexual orientation, educational background and professional experience. In individuals, these diversity dimensions can tend to be "given" and not modifiable (e.g. gender, ethnic origin) or "acquired" and changing throughout one's life (e.g. family status, training or professional background). They can also be directly visible (such as gender and age) or not visible, that is, made visible only by a specific choice of the involved person (such as sexual orientation and religious values).

Diversity is therefore primarily a characteristic of heterogeneously composed organizations or groups, rather than a characteristic of specific persons or categories of persons. In this sense, it seems inappropriate to refer to individuals or groups in the organization as "diverse", although this happens quite often (especially when considering people belonging to minorities or so-called "disadvantaged groups"). On one hand, people evidently bring their own peculiarities and "differences" to work, so concretely contributing to the heterogeneity of organizations. On the other hand, if one intends to apply the concept of diversity to the individual level, it would be more appropriate to say that everyone is "diverse" by virtue of her/his uniqueness deriving from the combination of multiple characteristics. What is more, this distinctive combination is constantly changing, since within it we find a dynamic interaction between the aforementioned dimensions, including aspects that are strictly individual (e.g. personality traits) and influenced by social belongings and identities. For instance, in the previous section we have already highlighted how multiple factors related to both individual biographies and social influences intertwine and intermingle in the immigration phenomenon itself.

Whereas diversity relates to the composition of an organization's staff, "managing diversity" refers to the way – and to what degree – an organization creates conditions and opportunities to utilize the potential of diversity. This is exactly the meaning of "inclusion" from the DM perspective: i.e. the ability to empower people by respecting and valorizing what makes them different, starting from the phase of access to the organization through recruitment and selection processes. In other terms, inclusion is the effective management of diversity and it is accomplished by creating a work environment where everyone has an opportunity to fully participate in the development of the organization and its success. From this standpoint, not only are "diversity" and "inclusion" not synonyms, but an organization can be diverse and still not be inclusive: despite the way in which organizations sometimes represent themselves, the mere presence of diversity (employing women and men, young and senior workers, people of different nationalities etc.) does not in itself amount to implementing DM and inclusion. More profoundly, the latter involves further work on diversity in the sphere of knowledge and awareness (of differences, challenges, opportunities) and, above all, in the area of practices, which should be capable of integrating and exploiting diversity in organizational life and action.

2.2 The advantages of DM under a win–win logic

The integration and the valorization of differences in the workplace **allow organizations to create value**, transforming the possible barriers to collaboration that are undoubtedly inherent in diversity – if not managed – into resources for improving organizational performance. In particular, as now highlighted by a considerable body of research and management experiences, we find three key levels at which DM can generate value according to a win-win logic, i.e. **a set of benefits to all parties involved**.

The first level refers to the **advantages for people (individual employees)**. In fact, being put in a position to express oneself and participate in organizational activities "for who you are" (with one's own specific needs, aspirations, predispositions and identity) enhances human resources' satisfaction and quality of life, improves individual effectiveness in task accomplishment and so employees' self-esteem and self-confidence, and favors opportunities for professional growth and career progression through greater visibility and recognition for one's contributions.

The second level deals with **teamwork**, especially in the case of highly structured organizations. The choice of making "diverse" human resources cooperate in work teams, in fact, contributes to bringing different perspectives to the table and facilitating critical analysis, promoting creativity and outside-the-box thinking, and leading to better problem-solving in the accomplishment of complex tasks and so to more thoughtful decision-making.

The third crucial level regards **the overall performance of organizations investing in diversity**. In this respect, a commitment to valuing diversity and exploiting its potential can in turn result in multiple advantages for organizational strategies and objectives, such as:

- **reduction of costs and risks**, such as those related to employee turnover and absenteeism or legal disputes (an inclusive organizational climate has greater possibilities to prevent situations that can give rise to sanctions in equal opportunity matters as well as "psycho-social risks" – e.g. mobbing – in the workplace);

- **advantages in recruitment policies**, through increased access to new human capital and a broader range of competencies;

- **benefits in marketing practices and the delivery of services**, to the extent to which the presence of a diverse staff leads to the extension of an organization's customer or user base, allowing better understanding and satisfaction of specific and diversified needs;

- **an increase in resources for internationalization** (we need only consider the global reach of many business activities but also the growing participation of non-profit and public entities in projects funded and conducted on a European scale);

- **an increase in resources for innovation**, through the combination of different knowledges, perspectives and professional and personal experiences;

- **improvement of organizational "intangible assets"**, mainly linked to greater **employee involvement** – and productivity – and enhanced levels of **trust** and **legitimacy** among social and market stakeholders (since being attentive to their workers usually allows organizations to build **a good reputation** in the territories and sectors where they operate, as well as in the eyes of public institutions and citizens-consumers).

Finally, in a broader and medium-long term view, stress must be placed on the

positive effects that DM processes in the workplace can generate **to the benefit of the social context**. Depending on their diffusion, these practices are expected to contribute to social cohesion, the creation of shared well-being and the development of human capital and sustainable economies in the communities where their organizational promoters are embedded. Furthermore, no less significant is the way in which organizations' commitments to DM can play an awareness-raising or even educational function in the emergence or reinforcement of inclusive models of social life (e.g. with respect to gender roles, the presence of people with a migrant background, the value of all different "ages of life").

2.3 DM and equal employment opportunity

DM actions are **essentially voluntary, going beyond what is required by Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) regulations**, which represent the most traditional way of dealing with the issue of diversity in organizations. As regards the Italian context, here we may refer not only to the laws that, as already mentioned, prohibit any form of direct or indirect discrimination, but also to the possibility of resorting to affirmative action when this is required by goals of substantive (i.e. not merely formal) equality. For instance, this is the case of the legislation on the "targeted placement" of people with disabilities or on the so-called "pink quotas" to be reserved to women on management and supervisory boards of certain types of companies; more generally, it is the case of the influence of European directives on equal treatment and protection against discrimination in the workplace.

The logic of equal opportunity, which is based on public intervention, is external and binding; it is primarily aimed at removing discriminatory barriers in the workplace; and its beneficiaries are basically given by groups or minorities that are presumed to be socially disadvantaged. Differently, diversity policies are activated mainly by – and from within – organizations (although sometimes following specific requests from public authorities); they aim at developing conditions for worker participation and well-being (rather than remedying negative conditions), with explicit attention also paid to benefits to the organization; and they are expected to have all organizational employees, not just certain categories of people, as their recipients.

In the awareness of those basic differences, **it is however appropriate to conceive the relationship between EEO and DM in terms of continuity and interdependence**. On one hand, in fact, institutional and "top-down" constraints often tend not to be so effective if they are not rooted from within, that is, being based on the involvement of those in positions of responsibility and on a process of common understanding and cultural sharing of such measures in the whole organization. For example, we may think of the difficulty of going beyond a purely bureaucratic application of the regulations on the integration of people with disabilities, if this does not involve a commitment to researching and implementing innovative solutions (e.g. in the organization of production) that are advantageous for both workers and organizations. On the other hand, ethical and social justice-based principles underlying EEO remain fundamental, as it is rather clear that people belonging to certain groups continue to suffer from discriminatory treatment at work. This is linked to **the diffusion and use, in organizations, of stereotypes**: i.e. oversimplified – and usually inaccurate – beliefs about the typical characteristics of a specific group of individuals (e.g. referring to senior workers as resistant to change or to women as prone to put family first), which, often subtly, contribute to producing conditions of disadvantage for these people in both access to work and career. It therefore appears necessary to maintain a high level of attention to such situations. In this regard, aside from autonomous organizational initiatives, explicit pressure from the public actor continues to play a key role. Significantly, in many countries, **debates and actions in the field of DM have developed by intermingling with the traditional EEO "discourse"**. This is exemplarily shown by the EU platform of *Diversity Charters*, aimed at increasing European organizations' commitment to diversity and inclusion. In Italy, the initiative was launched in 2009 by encouraging voluntary adherence to the

"Carta per le pari opportunità e l'uguaglianza sul lavoro" ("Charter for equal opportunity and equality at work"), which today involves about 900 organizations employing over 700,000 workers.

2.4 DM practices and tools

On a practical level, an extensive body of studies, institutional recommendations and good practices made available in Italy (and even more internationally) up to now may allow us to identify **a wide range of possible tools to implement DM action successfully**. This is **a "repertoire"** that a given organization can draw on for selecting practices suited to its specific conditions and needs, possibly combining several types of interventions.

The first key area of intervention obviously deals with **human resources recruitment**, through non-discriminatory selection practices, targeted candidate search in non-traditional pools, initiatives for favoring insertion into organizational life that are addressed to newcomers belonging to groups regarded as "disadvantaged".

A second relevant sphere of action consists in **personnel development, and in particular training**. Aside from basic awareness training initiatives (for a realization of stereotypes and cognitive distortions affecting the relationship with the "other"), this domain can include more ambitious interventions to facilitate learning in several competence areas related to diversity (cross-cultural communication, conflict management etc.), as well as dedicated training and career-development programs addressed to high-potential employees belonging to "categories" - such as migrant workers – that are not normally considered in talent management practices.

As for human resource development practices, it is also worth stressing the importance of **mentoring/coaching programs** and **the use of "mixed" work teams**: by the former senior organizational members provide support, accompaniment and guidance to less experienced co-workers; the latter favors mutual contamination towards innovative solutions, to the extent that diversity is consciously managed (e.g. by circulating information on the skills of participants and ensuring all "voices" are heard).

Another area of commitment in the practice of DM is **the re-designing of workspaces and production or service processes**, by means of innovations and

technological investments capable of making them more consistent with people's needs (e.g. mature workers and people with disabilities), and so increasing employees' quality of working life and, at the same time, their performance. While such interventions are also dependent on the characteristics of specific activity sectors, it is likely that their relevance is accentuated today by the medium to long-term changes fueled by the Covid-19 pandemic. In this regard, we may think of the renewed debate and the "collective" experience that are unfolding in the field of so-called **"smart working" or "agile working"**. Here, in fact, attempts to find a virtuous balance between in-person and remote work processes are ultimately based on the necessity to include, in new emerging organizational architectures, the "diversity" related to the specific (professional and individual) prerogatives, conditions and needs of people, so as to make them consistent with the achievement of organizational objectives and projects.

What just said is more widely linked to the role, in DM, of **work-life balance and "employee welfare" initiatives**, i.e. practices aimed at promoting employees' well-being in the interaction between work and the other elements of one's life. This especially takes place to the extent that these actions are not adopted or designed – as, for instance, still occurs mainly in the Italian reality – with chief reference to female needs and the sphere of family responsibilities (although, clearly, these aspects remain significant today).

Two further fields of action to be considered worthy of attention regard **the evaluation and the communication of DM practices**. As will be reiterated below, the monitoring and assessment of the impacts of DM initiatives still represents one of the main critical and challenging points in the experience of many organizations committed to inclusion. However, nowadays we may detect a somewhat increasing role, particularly in medium-to-large companies, of **performance evaluations for those in management positions** that are also focused on the level of achievement of pre-established DM objectives. Not only does this show the importance of explicit incentives (also related to compensation) addressed to managers as a lever of DM strategies, but more generally it also can act as a driver for the development of an evaluation culture directly applied to the results of organizational policies aimed at valorizing diversity.

For its part, **communicating DM actions and outputs to organizational internal and external stakeholders** is a crucial step to obtain benefits from inclusive practices: on one hand, this creates greater internal understanding and sharing; on the other hand, it is conducive to reputational advantages, network-

ing opportunities and dissemination of positive practices in the local or broader socio-economic context. Here, it is worth stressing the usefulness of formal internal and external communication tools (e.g. values and mission statements, newsletters, press releases and *ad hoc* events, dedicated sections on the company website and intranet), as well as the basic – and even more pervasive – role of informal interaction and "socialization" processes developed in daily contact with internal and external interlocutors (employees, suppliers, sector associations and competitors etc.).

Finally, and more generally speaking, indications from research, field experts and real-life organizational experiences lead to underline **three essential "rooting mechanisms"** in the implementation of effective DM practices:

a) **integrating DM endeavors and attentions into organizational strategy**, so making the business case for diversity explicit (i.e. the link between managing diversity and certain goals or desired competitive advantages, for example in terms of acquisition of specific skills or opportunities to open up new customer segments);

b) **alignment with the human resource management system in its entirety**, as suggested through previous references to personnel recruitment and development;

c) **the effort and ability to develop a truly inclusive workplace culture**, by promoting and stimulating – if necessary – change and new processes of learning.

2.5 Managing diversity as a participated endeavor

The recognition, integration and valorization of diversity in organizations tend to, or should, ultimately take shape as **a "participated endeavor" based on the contribution of multiple parties**.

This applies, first and foremost, to internal organizational life, with respect to which we already hinted at the decisive role of **professionals operating in the area of human resource management, but also of those involved in organizational strategies devoted to social responsibility and sustainability issues**. The latter actors, in fact, are often called upon to coordinate with personnel specialists in the launch and management of social innovation initiatives and interventions in favor of workers "as stakeholders" (e.g. employee welfare policies implemented in collaboration with local actors). This said, direct involvement of other parties appears equally key:

- in the first place, **organizational top managers**, through their sponsorship, and even more their personal commitment and example, in openly communicating the relevance of both a new inclusive vision and specific initiatives, and in motivating people to change;

- **managers in line and "technical" functions and, in general, middle managers and supervisors**, i.e. those who often have the greatest impact – for better or for worse – on people's daily working conditions and well-being;

- **trade union representatives**, who can provide a potential for consensus and collaboration that (at least in the Italian context) is still significant for decision-making processes regarding workers.

Emphasis must also be placed, more broadly, on **the mechanisms of internal dissemination, socialization and sharing of an inclusive culture**. Since these result not only from more or less formalized communication processes but also from people's interactions and interpretations in everyday working life, they necessarily require an active role by the majority of the organizational community's members, i.e. one that cuts across different professional and hierarchical positions. It is only in this way, in fact, that DM can be accomplished not as something that "is done on people" but as a practice that people understand and they themselves "do".

On the other hand, the definition, implementation and – at the end of the day – the success of DM actions **are inevitably also linked to the involvement, support and initiative of other actors in the organizational environment**. This **"external" dimension of the participatory character of DM** refers to the key role played by various stakeholders such as public institutions (at multiple levels: local, national and supranational), business and trade associations, third sector and civil society entities, trade unions, and citizens themselves (first of all, through their decisions as customers and users).

In the first place, emphasis should be placed on **the direct role of public actors in incentivizing organizational policies to support diversity**. In Italy, for example, this occurs through recent national regulations on tax concessions linked to the implementation of employee welfare plans and, in a more binding way, on non-financial reporting as mandatory for certain types of companies (which, based on the national transposition of an EU Directive, are required to communicate their commitment to social responsibility in several domains, including social policies to the benefit of employees).

A second point regards **the importance – especially at a symbolic level – of reward mechanisms for good DM practices**, as in the case of special prizes awarded not only by public entities themselves, but also by civil society actors or business associations and networks. These forms of recognition can increase, in both the market environment and society, the reputation of organizations that display relevant efforts and results in promoting inclusive workplaces. As for the Italian context, at least two awards can be mentioned which today enjoy considerable visibility. One, specifically referring to practices aimed at migrants and refugees, is the "Welcome. Working for Refugee Integration" project, whose logo is annually awarded (since 2017) by the Italian branch of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to companies that have contributed significantly to the integration of beneficiaries of international/humanitarian protection into the labor market. The second award, referring to the more general field of sustainability, is the "Sodalitas Social Award", by which Fondazione Sodalitas gives public recognition to initiatives and organizational actions in several areas of social responsibility and sustainable innovation related, among other things, to employability, equal opportunities and social inclusion issues.

A third key mechanism is **collaboration with stakeholders in the planning and implementation of targeted interventions, as well as in the development of functional guidelines for these steps**. This co-construction of DM practic-

es is mainly carried out – and should be pursued – through the development and consolidation of **project-based partnerships between companies, public bodies and third sector entities**, taking into consideration also the specific resources and "skills" that can be activated by social stakeholders (e.g. resorting to their own networks and their detailed knowledge of social problems and needs in the local community). This collaborative action can or should also develop through institutional and/or sector initiatives aimed at **promoting explicit and shared forms of communication and evaluation of DM policies**, possibly within the framework of guidelines or "standards" which are already codified at national and international levels.

Furthermore, virtuous partnerships and multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms, once again, **may involve a major role played by trade unions**. Aside from what suggested above about their relevance for "internal" management (e.g. in company-level bargaining), at the territorial and supra-local levels trade unions can perform **a broader propulsive function for DM practices, also in terms of critical debate and even beyond the negotiation of specific agreements**. For example, this happens by developing an openness to the idea that, in certain cases, a different treatment for different categories of workers can result in a condition for greater "substantial equality".

Finally, it is necessary to underline the centrality of **recognition processes from citizens-consumers/customers**, who, through their response and firstly their purchasing choices, can **support and encourage organizations' development or innovative experimentation of management models based on the strategic and ethical principles of inclusivity**. This evolution of "collective attention", in turn, requires **awareness-raising activities and dissemination of information addressed to the wider public**, by both work organizations and other actors in the social context. All this should be accomplished with particular regard to the meaning and objectives of those DM practices that involve **"delicate" dimensions of diversity in terms of social experience and perceptions** (migrants' inclusion at work being a good case in point).

Tending to **an (inevitable) "extended management" of actions in favor of workplace diversity** should, ultimately, be underpinned by three types of awareness. The first deals with the fact that, at least in the light of the current Italian situation, there is now **a need to strengthen or further consolidate** processes as those just mentioned. Secondly, while – as already noted – organizations are expected to promote DM initiatives also in the context of their social responsibility policies, on the other

hand, it is necessary to emphasize **the key role of their stakeholders "in society" in supporting these commitments**. In other words, social stakeholders not only are, in several respects, possible beneficiaries of organizational practices for creating an inclusive work environment, **but they also have a distinctive responsibility to contribute to the development and success of diversity-focused initiatives in the workplace**. Finally, based on this **systemic view of organizational DM strategies, it is at the same time necessary to recognize factors and issues influencing them – i.e. facilitating them or not – that fall outside the sphere of organizational control and engagement**. In this regard, we need only think, for example, of the impact of governmental policies and measures that regulate the inflows of migrants and refugees and their presence in host communities.

2.6 DM as a challenge

In a nutshell, the previous points should suggest that **managing workplace diversity is a complex and challenging endeavor for several reasons**. In a more explicit way, it is possible to identify **a set of criticalities** that may slow down or hinder the development of good DM initiatives. At an organizational level, the following are among the main problems that can arise:

- **the inertia of entrenched work and management styles that are not open to diversity**; this occurs, for example, when the rigidity of production processes and expected models of professional conduct (e.g. organizational scheduling practices) leads to considering the response to specific employee needs as a derogation from normal organizational functioning, with possible repercussions on the internal career prospects of people regarded as deviant from traditional "appropriate" work models;

- **the effort and time required to internally develop inclusive cultures**, especially when this involves processes of new learning and significant changes in collective maps of meaning;

- **the investments in financial, human, planning and time resources** that are involved by managing diversity;

- **the constraints of today's dominant shortermism in management**, which can conflict with the medium to long term horizon required by both investing in diversity and the achievement of related benefits;

- the difficulty of designing and implementing DM initiatives according to a "systemic" perspective, which is ultimately essential for acting effectively in this field (by involving multiple internal processes and participants, building partnerships with stakeholders, combining operational and cultural interventions);

- the tough issue of evaluating the impacts of DM actions, which - as anticipated – often remains a poorly cultivated area even in advanced organizational experiences in managing diversity;

- the risk that DM initiatives may result in mere window-dressing and image marketing efforts, that is, conformism to a new management fashion or external expectations and pressures.

It is also necessary to point out the possible unwanted – or even perverse – effects of DM actions, when they are implemented without the required attention and preparation. Two not so uncommon situations are emblematic of this:

a) the risk of creating structures and practices detached from everyday and real organizational life, which is usually connected to inadequate analysis and knowledge of internal reality and employees' experience and needs (an almost textbook case is offering company kindergartens where, instead, work-life balance needs of employees mainly concern taking care of elderly parents or, as for many immigrant workers, of children who remain in the country of origin);

b) the risk of accentuating, if not creating, internal divisions or inequalities through an excessive emphasis on characteristics attributed to certain categories of people, which can result in a further strengthening of stereotypes and processes of "role encapsulation" (e.g. by placing immigrant workers of a certain nationality only in jobs or departments with respect to which it is believed that it is possible to gain advantages from the skills and predispositions they are supposed to have).

When focusing on factors that may affect the modalities and outcomes of organizational trajectories in DM, the Italian situation deserves separate mention. As is well known, the economic and entrepreneurial fabric of this national context is distinguished by large numbers of small and medium-sized companies, that is, a reality quite distant from that of large (often internationalized) companies around which DM practices in other contexts – in particular, the Anglo-Saxon one – mainly revolve. It is therefore not surprising that a pecu-

liar feature of Italian DM experiences consists in **the generally limited use of structured and targeted tools for designing and implementing diversity-focused interventions**. Quite significantly, this condition extends beyond the case of small businesses, as it is suggested by some exploratory researches in the recent past as well as by analyses conducted over time by ISMU Foundation[8], and further documented by regional studies within the DimiCome project.

The fact that in this scenario DM practices **often develop informally or even in tacit ways** is not in itself negative, but rather **a signal of ambivalence**. On one hand, in fact, this path may easily reflect **an openness to differences that is already inscribed in the organizational history, culture and climate** (typically based on the personal sensitivity and initiative of entrepreneurs or "enlightened" leaders), so favoring **very direct forms of employee listening and involvement**. On the other hand, the modest diffusion of more formally planned and targeted mechanisms for managing diversity tends to **hinder the development of elements of awareness and systematicity that appear to be fundamental** to the consolidation of DM commitments and endeavors (e.g. bringing to light implicit resources, or opportunities not yet explored, which may prove to be strategic). Accordingly, it is reasonable to think that **an effective "Italian way" to DM actions** – including those addressed to immigrant human resources – can or should exactly have, among its distinctive features, **a virtuous combination and balance between two types of drivers**: on one side, maintaining **spontaneous diversity-oriented forces and resources that are linked to the "natural" evolution of organizations and to their internal life**, also through a constant relationship of co-belonging with their specific socio-cultural environments; and, on the other side, **adopting more deliberate and explicit policies and measures for managing diversity**, whose presence is simply increasingly needed.

Knowledge of the problems and challenges entailed by the practice of DM is **a crucial step in initiating or strengthening significant and sustainable efforts in this field**.

For instance, as regards impact evaluation, it has already been noted that, especially in large businesses, **assessment tools relating to expected DM goals are slowly taking hold** (e.g. through 360-degree assessment processes applied to managerial performance or regular climate surveys in the workplace).

Furthermore, problems concerning resource availability, which are particularly relevant for small companies, can be addressed through the creation of

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8   https://www.ismu.org/ismu-e/settore-economia-e-lavoro/

collaboration networks between different firms to share both the planning and implementation costs of interventions and the benefits resulting from participated investments. This "inter-organizational" option has proven promising in recent Italian experiences in employee welfare, especially when involving the participation of larger companies (whose contribution is key, firstly, for project management).

As a final example, and referring again to the Italian case, the ability to recognize both strengths and weaknesses of informal or implicit DM mechanisms – for preserving the former and overcoming the latter – **can lead to integrate and support these "spontaneous" dynamics through the introduction of more formalized practices** (e.g., at an early stage, by joining external projects and multistakeholder partnerships, adopting codes of conduct, promoting internal initiatives - such as social events - aimed at fostering mutual knowledge and exchange between workers of different backgrounds).

Directions
to companies and other work organizations

3

3. Directions to companies and other work organizations

As discussed in the first section, the Italian labor market – as also happens in other European countries – has undergone an extraordinary transformation in its composition. The substantial homogeneity – in ethnic, religious and linguistic terms – characterizing it until a few decades ago has now been replaced by a situation of increasing pluralism. Diversity related to a migration background has therefore emerged as a further and significant variable in the composition of labor supply, within a scenario where the issue of "diversity at work" (based on gender, age, sexual orientation or disabilities, even those possibly acquired in working life) is becoming increasingly important both as a challenge to be managed and as a resource to be valorized. In many respects, **in fact, perceptions and behaviors towards immigrant workers are emblematic of the attitude of firms towards the reality of "diversity" incorporated in their staffs**. This is what we are going to dwell on in this third section. Drawing on the rich empirical material provided by the above-mentioned study on Diversity Management practices addressed to immigrant human resources, several areas of concern will be identified which are likely to become more and more crucial if we are to seriously consider the prospect of valorizing the immigrant presence in firms and other work organizations.

3.1 Recruiting and onboarding

The first testing ground is represented by recruitment strategies and reasons underpinning them. What seems to emerge is that, in rather limited cases, hiring a "different" employee – i.e. one characterized by visible ethnic-cultural markers (type of skin pigmentation, religious symbols in clothing etc.) – can derive from a specific internal or external communication strategy, especially when this is aligned with expectations and pressures concerning inclusivity and cosmopolitanism that today are directed to certain types of organizations. On the other hand, and more generally, this recruitment choice often ends up supporting a tendency towards the ethnicization of employment relationships and the logic of complementarity, in particular when there are specific recruiting difficulties or an expectation of greater adaptability from immigrant resources. This tends to generate results that conflict with the principle of equal opportunity, with consequences both on a "moral" level (as a regulatory constraint is undermined, albeit unconsciously) and for the effectiveness of selection processes (due to the limited recruitment pool to draw from). Furthermore, paradoxically, an organization risks depriving itself of the advantages of diversity, whose generative potential is released precisely within work teams as heterogeneous as possible. Setting up recruitment and selection processes coherently with the principle of equal opportunity is therefore a first fundamental step to maximize the benefits of diversity in contemporary labor markets.

The second major area of concern consists in the practices of onboarding – insertion and accompaniment – of newly hired immigrants. In practical terms, these processes firstly require a certain investment in initial training and in experienced members of the organization to be entrusted with the task of introducing newcomers to organizational life. A key figure in this regard is that of the internal mentor, who basically supports the new hire in gaining knowledge about the context where s/he will have to move, so with attention devoted not only to technical and operational aspects, but above all to relational ones. Experience shows that mentors of the same ethnic-national origin, or at least from a migration background, can be essential for their ability to empathize with the main problems faced by newcomers and prevent/tackle cultural incidents. The use of this type of mediator, however, should not encourage the formation of mono-ethnic work teams that are prone to self-isolation. Although these may appear effective in the short term – e.g. to overcome language barriers – in

the long run they lead to rigidity in personnel management and the dissipation of advantages related to heterogeneity in work teams. In more general terms, as crucial conditions for successful onboarding processes, companies should be careful to choose the persons who best fit this role and recognize, at least symbolically, their contribution.

Practically speaking, it is essential to select persons able to exert **both empathic sensitivity and authoritativeness in carrying out a role which**, it should not be forgotten, **also involves a hierarchical relationship**. In this regard, the need to choose mentors who are masters not only "of the craft" but also in attitudes to be assumed in the workplace, goes well with the increasing attention companies are called to devote to senior employees and the valorization of their distinctive contributions (and this, in turn, interestingly matches well with an attitude of great respect for the "elderly" shared by many non-European cultures). At the same time, selecting female mentors can provide an opportunity to bring out, discuss and manage the tough issue of gender roles in different national and religious cultures.

Furthermore, a truly crucial element is **the ability to ensure and maintain a delicate balance between support/accompaniment actions** (which are pivotal especially when addressed to vulnerable groups and categories at higher risk of occupational marginalization) and **progressive autonomization** of migrant workers. The latter, intended in strictly professional terms but also involving basic citizenship skills (starting from knowledge on how to move within one's own territory), must in any case be the final objective of a real process of social and occupational integration. This twofold consideration applies especially to those organizations that are more "exposed" to inclusivity and social responsibility concerns, which always run the risk of accentuating the philanthropic and solidarity components (including possible assistentialist drifts) of their commitment in favor of immigrants, to the detriment – often unintentionally – of the full development of these persons. Not by chance, companies most inclined to self-reflection do not hesitate to refer to a risk of "infantilization" when empathic orientations prevail over the professional management of human resources. At the operational level, a useful strategy in this regard consists in job rotation policies that allow workers to gradually acquire greater awareness of the entire production cycle, and so to develop not only specific skills, but more generally and above all a sense of belonging to the business community and of sharing its goals.

These types of processes are undoubtedly key for the professional development of migrants. At the same time, **they lay the foundations for a more radical evolution of organizational cultures and, in particular, of the way in which the role of immigrants is perceived and constructed** through task assignments and work shifts. To put it more explicitly, not only is the expectation that immigrants should be assigned less desirable tasks still widespread, but it sometimes even translates – more or less "officially" – into a division of activities considered favorable to native workers. While in the employers' perception this may be a way to legitimize the intrusion of an outsider into culturally homogeneous and cohesive organizational communities, the "cost" of this type of operation is twofold: on one hand, it disavows the principles of equal opportunity and meritocracy that are inherent in organizational cultures firstly rewarding "the desire to work"; on the other hand, it backfires exactly on the search for improved performance and competitive advantage that should guide companies' actions.

Finally, in the onboarding stage assessing linguistic competence – at least as regards listening comprehension and oral expression – is crucial, both for evaluating the actual level of understanding of basic instructions on how to move within the workplace (i.e. tasks to be performed and safety requirements) and for orienting workers towards training opportunities provided by the company itself or available in the surrounding environment. In this regard, work shifts should be organized taking into account course schedules.

3.2 Competences and professional development

As for professional development, it is necessary first of all to get **a picture of new hires' skills and potential**, by mapping their educational/training qualifications and previous professional experiences (if present). At least equally valuable areinterventions that bring to light – and so will allow to certify and valorize – **knowledges and skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts**, including those related to the migration experience and the condition of "double belonging" (on which we have already dwelt in the first section of this Booklet). This type of action must start from the idea that the involved persons are often not aware of the competences they possess. This means that a per-

sonalized intervention is required, possibly through *ad hoc* tools. In this respect, it should be noted that within the DimiCome project specific "guidelines" for the assessment of migrants' soft skills have been developed, which are now available to interested parties[9]. Moreover, the "methodological" value of this form of investment goes beyond its application to migrant personnel. In fact, it can also be extended to the entire community of workers, especially to those with a low level of education and/or an intermittent working career, who are likely to be heavily penalized by the most common schemes for the certification of workers' skills and potential.

On this basis, the next effort is **to explore possible correspondences between the repertoire of individual competences** (or better said, competences availability resulting from the sum of the many individual skills) **and distinctive needs, as well as business opportunities,** linked to the specific strategy of the organization. For example, a mapping of language skills available within the company, due to the insertion of immigrants with different national and cultural backgrounds, can prove to be absolutely strategic for launching new policies aimed to attract an international clientele or penetrate foreign markets. In addition, bringing to the surface skills that were previously hidden – or even unknown to workers themselves – makes it possible to reshape and enrich the tasks initially assigned, with benefits both for the worker (also in terms of personal gratification) and for the company (also with a view to exploring new ways of organizing work and new target markets). Incidentally, this sort of common-sense management of human capital represents a first step to move beyond the idea that competitive advantage implied by having migrant workers simply consists in their hyper-adaptability; that is, to go beyond what referred to above as the complementarity paradigm. By the same token, **even career advancements** – although possibly in the area of production processes – **can be favored by knowledge management mechanisms relating to the broad-spectrum skills and predispositions of human resources recruited from migrants**. A basic example – which, however, is not without ambivalence as regards the risk of ethnicization of work teams – is that of an immigrant being appointed as a foreman or shift supervisor in a team made up predominantly of immigrants, on the assumption that this smoothes operations within the chain of command and favors a non-conflictual management of shifts. More "mature" – and cer-

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9   *Guidelines for the identification and assessment of migrants' soft skills*: https://www.ismu.org/guide-lines-for-the-identification-and-assessment-of-migrants-soft-skills/

tainly more interesting – examples are those where migrant workers perform a "bridging" function to their communities or, more generally, to the world of immigration, especially when it comes to more effectively intercepting these customer targets and satisfying their needs. A third and even more advanced example involves immigrant employees being the focus of new expectations, as they are deemed to be more able to move naturally and resiliently within processes of corporate reorganization (mergers, acquisitions etc.) and business internationalization.

3.3 Needs mapping and employee welfare policies

Still with reference to the mapping of employee characteristics, another key point is **gaining knowledge of their personal and professional needs**, which is essential to targeting – up to the limit of personalization – human resource management practices. As already said, this kind of attention represents one of the main mechanisms for obtaining benefits from DM. Even more so it should be applied to a target group that – as underlined in the first section – is internally heterogeneous and brings needs that, on one side, are specific and, on the other side, are paradigmatic with respect to the objective of creating truly inclusive work organizations.

On a practical level, this translates into using **methods for the identification of explicit and implicit needs that are by now consolidated in the field of mployee**

elfare. Here, for instance, we may refer to tools such as periodic surveys or focus groups, which can prove invaluable in bringing out issues and needs relating to the less central and visible components of the entire company population. In this way, different types of needs brought by newcomers can be addressed: first of all, "basic" needs (starting with language skills-improvement); then, needs related to the migrant status (e.g. the possibility of lumping together vacation days or having travel expenses for periodic returns to the country of origin covered through employee welfare benefits); finally, needs related to a specific "diversity" such as the religious one (e.g. availability of company canteen menus respectful of prescriptions regarding food). The basic value of cultivating openness in this regard is that it leads **to develop a broader – if not all-around – sensitivity towards the multiple components constituting the uniqueness and wholeness of each worker as a person**. As is now widely recognized by professionals and scholars in human resource management, the family sphere stands out among these components, but also important is a factor such as the "spiritual" (not necessarily religious) dimension, which expresses the search for meaning inherent in human nature. It is completely intuitive that all this, firstly, translates into an advantage in terms of individual satisfaction and so of employee commitment and engagement (with tangible positive impactsalso in terms of retention, if not of immediate improvements in organizational performance). Another potential benefit to be "explored" regards positive changes in organizational climate. Finally, it is important not to overlook the opportunity to use investments in employee welfare as indicators within sustainability reports, also in view of the reputational benefits associated with this choice.

To return to the issue of organizational climate, **it is precisely in the light of** the principle of each person's wholeness that we can appreciate **the relevant role of the informal dimension** and, therefore, the convenience of enhancing those spaces and occasions in which dynamics of mutual exchange and recognition can spontaneously emerge. The most immediate case in point is that of lunch breaks, where several intentional management actions (e.g. organizing "mixed" shifts and arranging adequate spaces) may generate opportunities for mutual knowledge, reduction of initial distrust, greater shared awareness of the traumatic experiences many migrants have behind them. In more general terms, "overseeing" the informal dimension and its opportunities for enhancement implies **constant observation of what goes on in the workplace**, the almost daily listening of persons, encouraging moments of sharing across hierarchical levels and functional areas. This kind of attention can also go beyond

organizational boundaries, for example by promoting convivial events, cultural initiatives and other forms of social sharing (e.g. corporate volunteering or employee participation in initiatives organized in the surrounding community).

In this regard, it is worth emphasizing that **conflict itself must be managed**, whether it emerges through the official channels of organizational activities (e.g. in task allocation and task scheduling), or it arises – in a more or less explicit and vehement form – in the informal organization. In the first place, this results in the fact that it is precisely starting from possible conflicts that more conscious mechanisms for managing internal diversity can be identified and implemented (e.g. by exploiting the specific soft skill given by the mediation capacity of some employees). Secondly, it is possible to realize that it is exactly the set of positive actions addressed to certain groups of employees (here, immigrant workers) that can trigger a specific form of conflict related to perceptions of "reverse discrimination" (i.e. to the detriment of majority group members). In some ways, the emergence of this type of conflict could suggest an indirect recognition of the importance of a commitment to inclusion (or, by contrast, a lack of communication and internal sharing). All this invites us to consider how **conflict can play a positive role** in fostering an increased awareness of problems, but also in unleashing the innovative potential inherent in the confrontation/clash between different positions and interests.

3.4 Organizational culture

A further key lever to develop and strengthen DM practices addressed to migrants consists in **organizational culture processes**. On the one hand, as is evident, such processes are involved when a company is in a position to "implant" those commitments and interventions into an organizational tradition that is already formally inclusion-oriented. On the other hand, since in this field (as in any other sphere of organizational action) determinism does not exist, we should consider the role of organizational change and, even before that, of the type of culture necessarily underpinning it in companies that cannot move from a "culturally-privileged" position. Indeed, this last case is emblematic because it reveals the risk that an organization will remain "seduced" by – and prisoner of – its own history (or better said, the way in which this history is represented both internally and externally), therefore becoming unable to seize strategic resources and opportunities to reposition itself (or survive, in extreme cases)

in the new competitive landscape. From this point of view, what may prove decisive is **the possibility of drawing upon expert knowledge to be supported both in the diagnosis of organizational culture and its constraints, and in the development of targeted paths of change**. This also entails overcoming a sort of organizational modesty – especially typical of small and medium enterprises – that can translate into resistance to being "known" and supported in this field in the same way as this more easily occurs in the areas of technical and financial consulting.

The identification of a path of consolidation or change of organizational culture is the first step in a (necessarily) medium to long term process, which needs to be communicated, understood, and shared within the whole organizational community.

When referring to cultural change and the related processes of organizational communication and socialization, stress must be placed on the pivotal role of **both top managers**, who should sponsor – also symbolically and by personal example – DM initiatives, **and middle managers** (e.g. team leaders, department supervisors and project managers). The latter, in fact, are often in a position to affect behaviors and perceptions of individuals in daily work life and, consequently, to significantly influence employees' levels of satisfaction and involvement in initiatives promoted by the organization. It goes without saying that the engagement and contribution of these intermediate management figures are primarily the result of specific information and training actions towards them.

Analogously to internal communication of DM commitments in favor of migrant workers, **also external communication can strengthen the process of cultural evolution**, especially with respect to issues – such as that of immigration – that are today under the spotlight of the media. In this regard, however, it is necessary to ensure coherence between what is communicated – both internally and externally – and what is actually put into practice through daily choices in personnel management. In a nutshell, the well-known saying "walking the talk" must become a compass to prevent the absolutely deleterious effects of communication as mere rhetoric (in the wake of the management fads of the moment), which ultimately risks being even perceived as hypocrisy.

3.5 The firm–territory nexus

A further element that stands out among conditions facilitating or influencing the development of DM practices towards immigrants is given by context factors, and more specifically **the relationships a company develops with its external interlocutors**. As with many other organizational practices and strategies, being embedded in the territory – i.e. sharing a common history, being involved in local social issues, supporting philanthropic activities and so on – is a key element that can generate responses also to the new challenges brought about by the multi-ethnic transformation of the local community. Identifying with the evolutionary paths of specific territories – and with their risks and opportunities, if not precisely with the "destiny" of the local society – is a "natural" (and almost taken for granted) response to the implicit expectations of local actors, and at the same time a way by which a firm constantly reaffirms its belonging to the local community. This means that, with respect to a debated and "insidious" issue such as immigration, firms are inevitably affected by a local climate that can be more or less supportive. Furthermore, **firms also possess a capital, in terms of legitimacy and authoritativeness, that enables hem to become promoters of change both at the cultural level and with regard to everyday behaviors towards immigrants and their valorization**. While this particularly applies to companies that are historically embedded in their local territories (i.e. the condition of most Italian firms), it is also true that even international and deterritorialized ones can find in this point – which, by definition, holds together the global and the local levels – the opportunity to express their willingness to contribute to common well-being in the territories where they operate. In other words, even for medium-large and possibly internationalized companies, the strategic management of immigrant personnel tends to represent an almost obligatory point of passage to effectively move "glocally". For instance, this may happen when the inclusion of asylum seekers in the workplace – which is already in itself a kind of attention to local problems – evolves into investment and support initiatives addressed to migrants' sending communities, possibly also by promoting the involvement of local actors in those territories.

As will be further commented on, since the behavior of local stakeholders (primarily local government agencies, but also civil society entities etc.) is decisive for the success of DM practices, companies should get involved in projects launched in their territories or even take on a pro-active role, becoming a

catalyst for new initiatives. Practically speaking, **the creation of more or less formalized partnerships and networks is key not only to ensuring the success of the initiatives undertaken, but also to "inscribing" them in a broadervision regarding the future of local societies**.

What just said finds its natural place within **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs**. Experience shows that the presence of immigrants in an organization's workforce – together with the choice of "taking care of them" through specific DM initiatives– is often a stimulus to strengthen organizational action in the social field. Moreover, this not infrequently involves endeavors undertaken within the framework of so-called **"corporate citizenship"**. In other words, through concrete initiatives aimed at the common good, firms have a valuable tool to take a position on issues that are increasingly central to the social and political agenda. This means that **organizations, entrepreneurs, and managers should gain greater awareness of this "power", in terms of both potential for action and responsibility**, which is in their hands. First of all, a conscious exercise of this kind of power implies an effort to get informed about contextual trends and the role of companies within them. A second key factor is the ability – and, above all, a willingness – to dedicate trained human resources to the development and evaluation of CSR programs. Last but not least, another relevant point regards the readiness to sacrifice short-term advantages linked to an "opportunistic" participation in territorial networks as a means to solve contingent problems (e.g. the recruitment of hard-to-find workers), investing instead in a true **shared value** perspective.

In this respect, it is necessary to bear in mind that immigration management – from the level of the governance of flows to that of workplace insertion of migrants and refugees – is **an issue that must always be read and handled within the context of all the great transformation processes unfolding in Italian and European society, and so of the scenarios that open up**. This clearly emerged during the first stages oftheCovid-19 health emergency. In this situation, on the one hand, immigrant (mainly low-skilled) work proved crucial in guaranteeing daily survival (e.g. workers in the agro-food chain, logistics or cleaning) and, on the other hand, it often appeared to be underpaid and without job protection. At the same time, it became clear how the use of immigrant workforce connects to the complexity and critical aspects of global production and distribution chains. The pandemic has made a rethinking of the regimes of production organization no longer postponable (if only, for the need to make the best use of the resources allocated for recovery). Thus, for companies willing to play a

leading role in this process, **immigration management inside and outside organizational boundaries becomes a litmus test of the sustainability of different choices and action alternatives regarding development models.**

3.6 The role of stakeholders

As we approach the conclusion of this Booklet, a point to place stress on is that – already introduced – of the relationships between enterprises and their multiple territorial stakeholders. This, in turn, evokes the role of these actors in the design, implementation and, in several respects, the success itself of DM practices. Here, it is a question of **reaffirming the participatory character of DM actions,** not only with regard to the internal life of organizations, but also in relation to the external dimension, which is represented by local and sometimes even supra-local actors.

At the operational level, today many companies (or at least medium-large ones) tend to meet expectations and requests from their social and institutional

stakeholders in managing their CSR strategies. A "tangible" tool by which a better alignment is sought between organizational business objectives and stakeholders' expectations is the **materiality matrix**. The basic principle underlying it, which is often shared or can be used also by firms that have not adopted a formal procedure such as the matrix, is the afore-mentioned **necessity for companies to contribute to the promotion of the common good in their territories** (or "shared value", according to an expression much in vogue today). And, as a matter of fact, the adjective "common" exactly recalls the necessity that local actors, in addition to communicating their priorities, act coherently and co-responsibly to achieve them and to support firms in the pursuit of CSR goals. The issue of the inclusion and valorization of immigrants represents an excellent test bench in this regard.

Especially local authorities and third sector entities have knowledge of local situations and the ability to build cooperation networks, which are often essential for the integration and professional development of immigrants. In particular, this applies to categories of people who are not immediately employable due to their biographical characteristics (e.g. low-educated women who arrived through the procedure for family reunification) or migratory experiences (e.g. asylum seekers who have suffered major trauma, victims of trafficking etc.). In such cases, it is in fact necessary to build the matching between the company's professional needs and the attitudes of potential workers, through interventions that bring out skills and development possibilities, facilitate the initial phases of insertion, and make firms aware of the economic and – at the same time – ethical value of this kind of investment.

More generally, these same actors can provide fundamental support for companies in terms of awareness raising, training initiatives regarding specific DM skills, and the "political" legitimation of organizational actions in this field.

Precisely because of their guiding and supporting role, however, it is essential that both public actors and civil society organizations involved in the field of immigration exert perspectival intelligence and succeed in getting out of the mere concept of complementarity. This means being able to combine immediate needs, which can be also dictated by emergency situations (e.g. managing the refugee crisis and the necessity to rapidly ensure economic independence for asylum seekers), with goals related to individual development and the long-term sustainability of integration models.

To grasp the importance of what is at stake, it is useful – once again – to point out the relevance of the population with a migratory background in the de-

mographics of Italian society and, even more so, of what awaits it in the coming decades. On one hand, insisting on a dichotomous representation of Italian society – through the juxtaposition of "us" and "others" – risks being stigmatizing and discriminatory, in some ways recalling a sort of caste system in which "ethnic characteristics" are to determine social and work roles. On the other hand, this stance would also risk turning out to be quite detrimental to the future of an economy in which workers will be a rare and precious resource, despite all the dire predictions about the impact of digitization on employment. Valorizing individual talents, which today are so often dissipated by the predominance of a technocratic paradigm, is the best way to move forward into a future in which "nothing will ever be the same again". Indeed, what this dramatic health emergency should have definitively taught us is that, even in the most technologically advanced societies, **it is people who make a difference**: i.e. their knowledge and skills, first of all, but this goes along with their qualities of sensitivity, empathy, creativity and – last but not least – their ability to cooperate with other people. In a nutshell, their *humanity*, that is, what makes them both unique and diverse.

> *Chinese tradition divides human beings into four classes, each with its own unique qualities: the shi (scholars) are learned and contemplate vision and ethics, the nong (farmers) work the land and can provide for basic human needs, the gong (artisans) are creative and strive for beauty and excellence, and the shang (merchants) have strong ambition and a drive to succeed and to accumulate wealth. According to Chinese ancient wisdom, it is only when one can combine the qualities of all four classes – the vision and ethics of the scholars, the appreciation and respect for basic human needs of the farmers, the creativity and drive for excellence of the artisans, and the merchants' ambition to make a profit – that one can become a successful manager.*
>
> *[…] Indeed, effective diversity management should encompass these four principles: (a) like scholars, managers must adopt an ethical learned approach to diversity, always aiming to "do the right thing"; like farmers, they must respect their employees' unique characteristics; and (c) like artisans, they must introduce creative solutions as they strive for excellence in diversity management. These qualities, combined with the last principle – (d) ambition to utilize diversity to promote business goals and profitability for the organization – lay the groundwork for sound management.*
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> *[Mor Barak, M.E., Managing Diversity: Toward a Globally Inclusive Workplace, Sage, London, 2017, pp. 1-2]*

Fondazione ISMU's Diversity Management services for companies and other actors in the labor market

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ISMU Foundation provides companies and other work organizations with a full suite of services aimed at enhancing work inclusion and valorization of migrants and refugees. This offer is divided into two general lines of service.

The first area regards the ability to **recognize migrants' competences and potential**. In this respect, the following activities are proposed.

- **awareness-raising interventions** in companies and public/third-sector organizations;

- **definition of guidelines for identification, evaluation and certification of skills**, aimed at career consultants, competence assessors and organizational recruiters;

- **design and implementation of training actions on skills identification/assessment/certification**, aimed at entrepreneurs, organizational recruiters, career coaches and certifiers;

- **support for the design and implementation of identification/assessment/certification actions**, aimed at companies, employment agencies and third-sector organizations;

- **support for the creation of a network of qualified professionals** in the area of skills identification/assessment/certification, whose expertise can help organizations in their inclusive efforts;

- **development of a soft skills** repertoire related to the migratory background.

Secondly, awareness-raising, research, training and consulting services are offered for supporting Diversity Management strategies and initiatives in organizations, with a specific focus on the valorization of migrants' potential to the benefit

of a company's performance. Issues addressed in these activities deal with:

- **diversity dimensions** (e.g. national and ethnic origin, gender and age) and **combating discrimination** in organizations;

- **advantages engendered by Diversity Management practices** (e.g. increase in resources for internationalization and innovation, benefits in recruiting and marketing strategies, improvement of organizational climate and external reputation);

- **intervention areas and tools in managing diversity** (e.g. recruiting, onboarding, human resource training and development, performance appraisal);

- **employee welfare policies**, with particular regard to migrant workers' needs;

- framing Diversity Management actions **within a global corporate social responsibility strategy**;

- **building partnerships and collaborative networks** between firms, public institutions and non-profit organizations aimed at implementing multi-stakeholder initiatives for migrant work inclusion;

- **managing organizational internal and external communication about** Diversity Management actions and their results.

For further information: economiaelavoro@ismu.org

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ISMU Foundation is an independent scientific body that promotes studies and research, education and training, and projects on multiethnic and multicultural societies, with particular regard to international migrations. ISMU works with governmental institutions, local administrations, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, companies, international agencies, and Italian and foreign scientific research centers.