



EUROPEAN UNION

European Fund for the Integration of
Third-Country Nationals



**MIGRANT MEN'S
WELL BEING IN DIVERSITY**



POLICY BRIEF

Young Migrant Men, Integration and Well-being

Psychoanalytic Institute for Social Research (IPRS)

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

In public debates, young migrant men frequently feature as a problematic group, failing in the education system, potentially upholding sexist attitudes, violent and criminal behaviour. According to a recent study, the experiences of young male migrants are influenced by negative stereotyping and they face discrimination significantly more often than their female counterparts. At the same time, young male migrants have to cope with high expectations of their families to succeed. The various expectations and preconceptions contribute to gender-specific risks of marginalisation of Young Male Migrants (YMM). Counteracting discrimination and marginalisation of young migrant men and implementing policies to support their well-being constitute significant European challenges.

The project “Migrant Men’s Well-Being in Diversity (MiMen)” seeks to evaluate the life-realities of young male migrants by in-depth interviews in the seven European countries. In each country, approximately 40 young migrant men have been interviewed, with particular attention on the gender-specific challenges and the expectations from their families on the one hand, and from the respective societies on the other. The in-depth interviews serve to understand how integration and diversity policies can support the well-being of young migrant men.

In Italy, Mi.Men Project represents a particularly relevant research opportunity as Italy is the only Mediterranean country in the project partnership. Additionally, the project gains particular relevance at national level in that it is one of the very few existing studies with a male-oriented gender perspective. In fact, while the gender approach has been frequently used in social research including migration-related issues, gender studies focusing on males are still a rarity in Italy. Such lack of specific knowledge extends at the policy level, where the absence of specific initiatives aimed at young male migrants confirms the lack of awareness about the difficulties that this category of migrants is susceptible to encounter throughout their integration process in Italy.

MiMen is co-funded by the European Commission in the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals. Implementing partners are: Ministry of Justice/France, Finnish Youth Research Society/Finland, The Integration Centre/Ireland, University of Manchester/United Kingdom, RILSA – Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs/Czech Republic, IPRS – Psychoanalytic Institute for Social Research/Italy, CJD Hamburg + Eutin/Germany. Project runtime is 18 months until June 2015.

http://www.iprs.it/projects_current.asp

CURRENT STATUS

- According to the 2012 data of the Italian Statistics Institute (ISTAT), migrant males between 16 to 27 years of age regularly residing in Italy are 369,192, accounting for 17.92% of the entire male migrant population in Italy and being slightly less numerous than its female counterpart (377,634). The main nationalities are Moroccan, Albanian, Chinese and Indian . In 2011 men accounted for 55.9% of the new entries in the country: 4 out of 10 were between 18 and 29 years of age and 7 out of 10 were unmarried.
- Gender specificities start from Visa typology: For men, the main reasons for requesting a residency permit in Italy are work and humanitarian reasons, whereas women mostly require a permit for family reunification or study purposes. The typology of employment also involves some gender differences: while the majority of migrant women are employed in the service industry (8 out of 10 women), nearly half of migrant males work in the industrial sector (industry and construction) and only 31.6% in the service industry. As for the rest, 13% migrant men work in the business field and 6% in agriculture.
- Italian media mostly depict immigrants in negative terms (i.e., thieves, drug dealers, illegal street trading, etc.) and, when doing so, implicit reference is to *young, male* individuals. By use of a discriminatory vocabulary and other communication strategies, the Italian media have largely contributed to transferring stereotyped ideas of immigrants to the overall public. In recent years, however, national media have started to pay a greater attention to immigration-related issues. As a consequence of this, a shift in attitude amongst public opinion has also been registered (see the 2012 Report by the European Observatory on Security).
- No specific policies in Italy address young migrant males. Integration policies on the one hand, and youth policies on the other, are insufficient and have a very low impact in terms of anti-discrimination and overall well-being of the immigrant population. The gender approach, frequently applied to migration-related areas by the Third Sector and sometimes local authorities, is normally tailored to women exclusively.
- There exist however few cases in Italy in which young migrant males are paid a particular attention. Examples of this, respectively at the policy and academic level, are:
 - Unaccompanied minors: 93,5% of the 8.655 unaccompanied minors reported in Italy in 2013 were males;
 - Domestic male workers: they represent a peculiar case as their work challenges traditional gender roles and questions the idea of “masculinity” and have thus been the object of a few gender studies.

- Migrant males in Italy have greater chances than migrant females to: be detained in prison (about 30 times more: 14.384 males vs. 578 females); (if under 18) be in charge of the Social Services of the Juvenile Justice (88% males vs. 12% females); drop out of school (1.47% males vs. 1.0% females).

KEY FINDINGS

The present findings are based on a total number of 45 interviews carried out with young migrant males (i.e., from Third Countries) aged 16-27 and belonging to three diverse sub-groups of YMM - each group reflecting a peculiar background, reasons for migrating and integration strategies: a) Young men who migrated as young adults a) 2nd generation young males (including those arrived at a pre-school age and young migrant males who arrived as adolescents for family reunification;; and c) Unaccompanied minors.

In Italy, gender studies normally target women and only few migration studies address *male* migrants specifically. According to the latter, migration represents to many young migrant males (YMM) an opportunity to re-negotiate their family roles and ties as well as their masculinity as a consequence. Hence, YMM face additional challenges as their migration may implicitly represent, more often than women's, a strategy to consolidate their role as the family leader and main economic actor, with more pressures and expectations pending on the outcomes of the YMM's migration. Notwithstanding this, there currently exist no specific policies or initiatives in Italy addressing the well-being of young migrant males. The absence of specific initiatives addressing the well-being of young, migrant males confirms the general lack of awareness about the difficulties that this particular category of migrants is susceptible to meet throughout the integration process in Italy.

It should be noted, on the one hand, that while migration reaffirms the role of men as breadwinners, it also threatens other aspects of male hegemony in that it forces them to have to assert their masculinity in new and alternative spheres. In fact, as Sinatti (2013) suggests, in the sphere of the transnational family masculinity is subject to a number of "new" and unexpected challenges. Firstly, exclusion and oppression on the grounds of class and ethnicity are experienced by most migrant men as a challenge to their masculinity. In addition, as immigrant men often share houses with other (immigrant) men, they are forced to perform numerous tasks traditionally reserved to women, such as cooking, doing laundry, cleaning the house. While these tasks can represent a source of complicity in the case of women, it forces men to put their masculinity to the test. Additionally, the lack of daily interaction with their wives and children leads men to trust their relatives who remain in their country of origin, delegating decision-making power to them. Although this may lead to greater complicity in interpersonal relationships it also decreases the authority of the migrant men, in particular of those with a shorter migration history, or those who are still young and

unmarried and are thus more exposed to economic pressures from their respective families in the country of origin.

Our young interviewees confirmed that in this perspective migrant women are advantaged compared to men since their traditional role as wives and mothers provides them with the opportunity to access new networks and socialize with other women and they receive practical and emotional support from such networks. The activities connected to their children's school and leisure activities, the periodical health checks, or the daily visits to food markets and shops, are all examples of the different social environments that immigrant women have the opportunity to access thanks to their traditional roles and this facilitates their overall insertion in, and "emotional integration" with, the host country. Thus, paradoxically, the factors that traditionally limit women's freedom turn to be advantages in the host country, particularly when they have children. Most men, on the contrary, tend to be more isolated and use to limit their acquaintances to their work environment and/or ethnic community.

Some policy implications resulting from the national workshop with stakeholders are described below:

- Despite a high level of social alarm raised by national/local media, the YMMs do not seem to be affected at all: "It's not about me" is a widespread feeling among them.
- As far as citizenship is concerned and particularly regarding 2nd generation YMM, the interviews revealed that, contrarily to what expected, the majority of the young male migrants (YMM) do not seem to be much affected by the lack of Italian citizenship (which is based on *jus sanguinis*). The majority of them, in fact, assert that they do not "need" Italian citizenship as far as they feel well accepted at school, by friends, and in all their daily environments. Citizenship starts to be a true obstacle, however, when their "invisible status" (not immigrants nor autochthonous) must be translated in bureaucratic terms in order to have access to university, for instance, or a particular job. That is the point when the lack of Italian citizenship starts to be perceived as objectively limiting their access to basic rights and leaving doors open to discrimination.
- Discrimination: with the exception of unaccompanied minors, none of the young migrant males that were interviewed seemed to be concerned at all about the media and public discriminatory discourse against immigrants. In particular, as far as the media are concerned, the YMM act as if such discriminatory practice did not regard them: "Not talking about me". All of the YMM interviewed displayed excellent strategies to cope with inter-personal discrimination. Most of the YMM interviewed tend to diminish discrimination episodes they have experienced either by justifying discriminators ("Everybody may have difficult days") or by labelling those people as "simply stupid" or simply diminishing the importance of discrimination in itself ("It's nothing serious" or "they don't know me personally").
- Language skills as well as larger living environments (cities as opposed to smaller towns or villages) are to be considered as "protection factors" against discrimination. In many cases the young migrants who arrived at school age (between 8 and 15) have reported of being the target of bullying acts when they first arrived but it all was left behind after a year or two, as their language skills became very good.

- According to the stakeholders engaged with young migrants who arrive as teenagers, young males usually struggle more than females to socialize and insert themselves in their new environment: males seem to lack psychological resources and because of frustration want to go back to their countries more often than females.
- in the case of YMM who have migrated as young adults it has been observed a coincidence between migration and adulthood, which in turn can be experienced either in positive terms, as greater autonomy and responsibility; or as negatively, as an additional burden to the migration experience leading to loneliness, frustration, and self-segregation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Security is a highly debated (in the media as well as in political debates) propaganda topic in Italy with regards to migration, with the public opinion being much influenced by such propaganda. Built on an overall “fear for foreigners”, such social alarm can contribute to provoke social tension, particularly at the local level. Local governments should thus take action in order to lower such tension and prevent racist/discriminatory episodes. Cultural and artistic initiatives, as well as culinary exchanges, are tuned to work with local inhabitants so as to enrich their experience as “foreigners”. Stakeholders that are active at local level recommend to take measures in order to “integrate Italian nationals” with migrants through knowledge. This should be done in secondary schools but also among young adults and families. Young males are more disadvantaged since they normally do not benefit from the families network that is spontaneously built in and around children (at school, sports/leisure places, city parks, etc...)
- Successful local practices and initiatives addressing young migrant men’s and their socialization opportunities should be promoted and reproduced. Examples of these are the “integration places” established in neighborhoods by the northern Municipality of Turin, where migrants can spend their free time socializing and meeting other migrants as well as non-migrants.
- Young men seem to face more cultural barriers than women in regards to medical visits. Initiatives - such as media campaigns and free medical checks - should be taken at local, regional and national level to promote regular health visits of male migrants on a regular base.
- Citizenship: concrete measures should be taken to facilitate the adoption of Italian citizenship by the YMM who were born in Italy or arrived as young children; but also by the YMM who arrived later and have studied/worked in the country for a certain number of years uninterruptedly. The YMM’s perception of being trapped into an “invisible status” (not immigrants nor autochthonous) should be

limited as much as possible in that it may lead to self-isolation and marginalization. Basic rights such as housing, education, health, work, should be guaranteed to all YMM.

- Professional training – young men who migrate to Europe are eager to learn new skills and acquire new knowledge in relation to some profession. Along with money, knowledge in a specific professional area is the most important “good” they migrate for and it can even compensate the lack of economic savings upon return to the country of origin. Knowledge represents an essential part of the migration outcomes and it has a highly symbolical, beyond merely economic, power. The new knowledge and skills acquired in the host country raise the migrant’s prestige and makes the hardships experienced meaningful. Access of YMM to professional training courses implemented at local and regional levels should thus be facilitated. Courses should be run also at evening so as to allow attendance by young migrant day-time workers.