

# THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANTS IN ITALY

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# THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN GENERAL

What it is: a collection of actions that allows – directly or indirectly, individually or in a group – to execute the right of “political power” (right to take decisions binding for the community)

The forms:

- direct (referendum, citizens’ initiatives)
- indirect (the right of voting)
- within institutions of political representation (parties, trade unions, movements)
- of consultative organisations (associations, councils, consultative referendum)

# THE REASONS FOR MIGRANTS POLITICAL PARTICIPTION

Migrants' political participation depends only from the structure of offered political opportunities.

It is worth to offer opportunities of political participation to long term resident migrants?

# THE REASONS FOR MIGRANTS POLITICAL PARTICIPTION

## Cons:

- ethnic arguments: minorities are foreigners and thus difficult to accept them as part of the local population.
- concept of “guest worker”,
- no extension of political rights at local level
- difficult procedures for naturalization
- democratic arguments: migrants are not refused as part of the population, but political participation is bounded to the citizenship.
- theory of the contract: citizenship = to prove the adequacy of the new comers to the political system

## Pros:

- the political system should reflect the society and its transformations;
- the political system that excludes a big part of the population turns to be a non democratic one;
- increasing the number of electors will increase the opportunities of enlarging the parties and reducing the risk of closed communities;
- the principle of no taxation without representation

# How can the State interfering with opportunities of political participations?

- Giving or refusing the right to vote to migrants at national and local level
- Favouring or obstacol the access to citizenship
- Favouring or limiting the freedom of association (parties, trade unions, opinion groups, social movements)
- Favouring or not the consultative politic

On the other end, migrants will profit from:

- Ideas and political values
- Previous experiences of political participation in the country of origin
- Sense of belonging to the society of the hosting country
- Knowledge of the political system and institutions
- Increasing of migrants networking

## OPPORTUNITIES OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN ITALY

According to the research “Index of policies for integration of migrants (Mipex)” that measures policies and practices of integration in 25 EU member states plus Norway, Switzerland and Canada, Italy had good performances but very bad results in two sectors: **political participation and access to citizenship**

# Which are the actual opportunities of political participation?

## ***RIGHT OF VOTING FOR MIGRANTS AT NATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL LEVEL***

- The right of voting, active and passive, is refused to migrants both at national and local level:
- - In the Constitution (artt. 48 and 51) is linked to the citizenship
- - Any international treaty is binding Italy to it
- - Resolutions from the European Parliament and from the Council of Europe are not received

# RIGHT OF VOTING FOR MIGRANTS AT NATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL LEVEL

- In the last years, some actions have been carried out at local level for the right of administrative voting, also against the central State institutions
- Several Statutes of municipalities (Genova, Ragusa, etc) foresee the right of voting for long term residents
- Some regional Statutes (Toscana, Emilia Romagna) foresee precise programmatic declarations for the right of voting
- These initiatives have only a cultural and political value, as they have been judged as unconstitutional

# ACCESS TO CITIZENSHIP

- The procedures for acquiring Italian citizenship are still linked to the *ius sanguinis*.
- The minor born in Italy should prove legal and continuous residence in Italy
- The procedure for naturalization after 10 years of residence is long and very bureaucratic
- Citizenship is still an instrument of exclusion rather than inclusion
- The Parliament is presently discussing an important proposal of reform (d.d.l. Amato del 30/8/2006).

# THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION THROUGH THE FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

## *The political participation in political parties*

- Very few migrants belong to political parties
- Some parties, the link ones, foresee in their statutes the participation of migrants but there isn't any real involvement
- In political parties we can see some resistances in involving migrants, above all in leading roles
- Migrants can represent the interests of other migrants and not those of Italians
- On last 15th of October we had a positive change: all regular migrants could vote showing their permit to stay and their ID in the primary election for the new Democratic Party

# THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION THROUGH THE FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

## *The political participation in trade unions*

- We can say that trade unions favour a lot the political participation of migrants
- The Italian trade unions show always a big attention and opening to migration issues
- Migrants belonging to the three big trade unions (CGIL-CISL-UIL) are constantly increasing (from 2003 to 2005, +57,6%) and today 9,1% of enrolled workers are migrants
- There is a good access to leading position
- Limitation: a migrant syndicalist is almost dealing with issues related to migration.

# THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION THROUGH THE FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

## *The political participation in self organisations*

- Self organisations react mainly to the need of mutual help, sustain and recognition
- In few cases they are a real tool of political participation or political demand
- Difficulty in reaching a unitary position towards the choices of the political system in Italy
- Difficulty in reaching a real negotiation action with the political institutions

## THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION THROUGH THE FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

### *The political participation in traditional association*

- The participation in associations dealing with issues other than migration is very limited, almost unexisting

## ***THE PARTICIPATION IN THE CONSULTATIVE ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTING MIGRANTS***

The opportunities of political participation foreseen by the law are only consultative

They are:

- National council for migrants and their families (is not working since 2002);
- National organisation for connection (few migrants represented);
- Local council for migration at Province level (few migrants represented);
- Regional councils for migrant workers (few migrants represented);
- Migrant counsellors in the City Council
- The City Migrant consultation

## Short conclusions

- The opportunities of political participation for migrants are unsatisfactory
- It persists a paternalistic approach that considers migrants as weak and marginal actors in the socio-political contest, also at local level.
- There is the risk of frustration and lack of trust in a system that seems to be inclusive but in reality doesn't offer possibilities to speak out.
- Considering this situation, the hope of everybody is to obtain the right of voting at least at local level.

# RECCOMANDATIONS

- Extension of the right of voting (active and passive) at local level to the long term residents: the residence and not the citizenship should be the criteria for the right of voting
- Modification of the regulations for the citizenship acquisition, in order to become instrument of inclusion (favouring minors born in Italy and long term residents)
- Sustaining the inclusion of migrants in associations working on issues other than migration
- Sustaining migrants self organisations
- Sustaining the actual elective representative organisations with accompanying measures, in order to reinforce the institutional competences of their members and giving concrete and logistic support.

# EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES

- Consultation for the constitution of the Democratic Party at national level ([www.partitodemocratico.it](http://www.partitodemocratico.it));
- Migrants municipality council in Pontedera (Pisa): good examples of supporting and valorising the organism ([www.comunepontedera.pisa.it](http://www.comunepontedera.pisa.it));
- Project for recruiting new volunteers within migrant communities carried out by AVIS (Prato): one of the few projects aiming at including migrants in associations working on different issues than migration ([www.avis.it](http://www.avis.it))
- Committee “vote and democracy” ([www.votoedemocrazia.org](http://www.votoedemocrazia.org)): established for sustaining the proposal of right of voting at local level



**THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR ATTENTION**

**THE END**