

SANTINA EMANUELA RAIMONDI, MARY ELLEN TOFFLE,
DINA CHASHCHINOVA, GIUSEPPE LUCCHESI*

INTEGRATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP:
ESSENTIAL CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING NEEDS
AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Summary: 1. Migration in Italy. – 1.1 Motivation. – 1.2 Migrant Situation in Sicily. – 1.3 Migrant nationalities and placement. – 2. Integration. – 2.1 Cross-cultural Training for integration. – 3. Immigrant Reception Centers in Italy-SPRAR, SIPROIMI. – 3.1 SPRAR. – 3.2 SIPROIMI. – 4. The Research. – 4.1 Objectives. – 4.2 Methods. – 4.3 Questions and results. – 4.3.1 Migrants. – 4.3.2 Migrant center professionals. – 5. Conclusions. – 5.1 Suggested cross-cultural training program. – 6. Bibliography.

Integration and entrepreneurship projects for immigrants require cross-cultural communication skills to be successful. This work investigates the cross-cultural communication training needs of immigrants and the local individuals who work with them. Cross-cultural communication skills are essential to promote integration and guarantee successful entrepreneurship projects. Research methods included interviews and surveys aimed at determining the perceived training needs of migrants and migrant center professionals. Migrant center managers, social workers, logistics managers, educators, counselors, cultural mediators, Italian language teachers were interviewed and carried out a survey. Migrants interviewed included center residents and others who had started the integration process with jobs and private housing.

The article finishes with a suggested proto-type program for training both immigrants and immigration personnel.

1. *Migration in Italy*

The face of Italy has been changing over the last 20 years, steadily and relentlessly.

* S.E. Raimondi, Department of Political and Juridical Science, University of Messina; M.E. Toffle, Department of Cognitive Science, Psychology, Education and Cultural Studies, University of Messina; D. Chashchinova and G. Lucchese, International Relations Office, University of Messina.

Specifically, foreign immigration has been identified as one of the major cultural shifts in the last 60 years¹. From less than 150,000 immigrants in 1970, the number has grown to more than 5 million (5,306,548 as of December, 2019²). However, these are “regular” migrants, regularly residing in Italy who are in different phases of integration. This research deals with a different population: the individuals who have been forced to escape from their home countries, due to war, hunger, political violence, genocide or environmental catastrophe. According to the European Asylum Support Office, Italy has been experiencing a “dynamic migratory situation” in the last years. They summarize the last five years by stating that the “unprecedented influx of migrants to Italy observed in 2014 (170,100 arrivals) and 2015 (153,842 arrivals) continued in 2016 (181,436 arrivals) and 2017 (119,369 arrivals) and considerably decreased in 2018 (23,370 arrivals) and 2019 (11,471 arrivals)”³. And in 2020 the numbers are increasing: 25,920 from January to October, 2020.

1.1 Motivation

Immigration, or migration, are terms which are used interchangeably.

There are many reasons for migrating. Survival is the main reason for immigration. Unbearable economic and political situations, hunger, ethnic and religious persecution and genocide are the main reasons. Immigrants spend huge amounts of money and risk their lives to cross the sea in flimsy boats, rafts, and overcrowded fishing trawlers that often tip over or sink⁴. To quote a well-known African poet, Warsan Shire: “No one leaves home unless home is in the mouth of a shark”⁵. The UNHCR has observed that thousands of migrants trust their lives to smugglers and human traffickers from Sub-Saharan Africa to North Africa, then compound the risk by getting in crowded raft or boat to cross from Libya to Sicily. They face human rights violations, sexual abuse and exploitation, torture and slavery to get into those boats. Many are sequestered and forced into slavery, forced labor, or left to die in the deserts. In a recent project conducted by UNHCR “Telling the Real Story”, individuals confirmed

¹ Pittau, F. (2015). “The Other Side of Italy: Immigration in a Changing Country: Political, Social and Economic Issues”. Nova. New York: 34

² Tuttitalia (2019). Retrieved from: <https://www.tuttitalia.it/>

³ EASO (2020). Retrieved from: <https://www.easo.europa.eu>

⁴ Terranova Cecchini, R., Toffle, M. E., Vitale, R. (2015). “From Libya to Lampedusa: Creating a Cultural Identity Card: Psycho-transcultural Evaluation of Integration”. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 205, 9 October 2015: 329-339.

⁵ Shire, W. (2009). <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/sep/16/poets-speak-out-for-refugees>.

the fact that although they knew the risks were high, they felt they had no other choice. The total lack of opportunities for work and education, plus political problems in the countries of origin pushed them to risk everything⁶.

1.2 Migrant Situation in Sicily

Sicily has always been a landing point and first destination for immigrants from Africa, Asia, and Mediterranean Europe throughout history⁷. Over the last 20 years, Sicily has become a popular landing point, first in Lampedusa, then in other areas of Sicily. The general situation of the Middle East with the ongoing Syrian Civil War, the onset and so-called defeat of ISIS, the Iraq-Iran conflict, conflicts in Afghanistan, to mention a few, have all played their part in the increase of migration.

1.3 Migrant nationalities and placement

The nationalities of the migrants vary somewhat from year to year, often dependent on various political situations. For example, Syrians predominated in 2014, followed by Eritreans⁸; in 2016 the majority were of African origin from Nigeria, Eritrea and Sudan⁹; in 2020 as of October the majority groups are from Tunisia, Bangladesh and Algeria¹⁰. The number of migrants currently housed in migrant reception centers as of May 2020 amounts to more than 80,000¹¹.

2. Integration

There are many studies on how to promote integration, how to measure it, how to train for it. The Common Basic Principles (CBPs) for Immigrant Inte-

⁶ UNHCR (2020). Retrieved from: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/node/25684>

⁷ Damigella, D. (2015). "Dall'ipotesi del contatto ai suoi sviluppi: riferimenti teorici per una progettualità d'inclusione ed integrazione sociale. In: Giuseppe Santisi (Ed.) Quaderno N. 3 "Ricerca in Formazione". Roma-Acireale: Bonanno: 37-57.

⁸ IOM (2014). Retrieved from: [https://www.iom.int/news/migrant-arrivals-sea-italy-top-170000-2014#:~:text=Syria%20remains%20the%20top%20sending,\)%20and%20Somalia%20\(5%2C756\)](https://www.iom.int/news/migrant-arrivals-sea-italy-top-170000-2014#:~:text=Syria%20remains%20the%20top%20sending,)%20and%20Somalia%20(5%2C756)).

⁹ UNHCT (2016). <https://www.unhcr.org/5d1327ab7.pdf>

¹⁰ Refugee Portal, 2020

¹¹ Statista (2020). Retrieved from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/624866/top-immigrant-nationalities-declared-upon-landing-italy/>

gration Policy in the EU¹² defined integration as a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States. It proposed various principles for immigrant integration policy, which include employment, cultural, linguistic and institutional knowledge of the host culture, education, institutional access, and finally frequent interactions with host nationals.

Obviously education, training, the ability to speak the language, and employment are key factors in integration. The purpose of the migrant reception center is to enable the migrants to become self-sufficient and survive on their own in their new country. However, if migrant center workers are not able to communicate with the residents, and the residents are not able to communicate with either the migrant center workers and their employers, teachers, then HOW can effective integration take place? It may be too simplistic to claim to have the answer, but there is something that can facilitate the transfer of information and skills from center worker to resident, from resident to center worker, and to employer: cross-cultural communication skills with intercultural competence.

Intercultural competence has various definitions. It has been defined as “the complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself”¹³. It is the “ability to step beyond one’s own culture and function with other individuals from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds”¹⁴.

2.1 Cross-cultural Training for integration

Cross-cultural communication is a process of creating and sharing meaning among people from different cultural backgrounds using a variety of means¹⁵.

Cross-cultural communication training promotes intercultural understanding and sensitivity; it facilitates interaction between diverse cultures and builds skills for dealing with communication breakdown and misunderstandings. This

¹² Council of Europe (2004). Retrieved from: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal>

¹³ Fantini, A. (2006). “87 Assessment tools of intercultural competence. Brattleboro, VT: School for International Training. Retrieved from: http://www.sit.edu/publications/docs/feil_appendix_f.pdf

¹⁴ Sinicrope, C. Norris, J. & Watanabe, Y.(2006). “Understanding and Assessing intercultural competence: a summary of theory, research and practice” (Technical Report for the foreign language program evaluation project. Second Language Studies, 26(1), 2007: 1-58.

¹⁵ Sage Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods (2017). Retrieved from: <https://methods.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-communication-research-methods/i3766.xml>

training addresses the areas of cross-cultural communication factors such as behaviors, motivations, attribution of behavior, use of a foreign language, listening, body language and gestures. It builds cultural sensitivity¹⁶. As will be seen later, both target groups of this research expressed the need to receive this type of training.

3. *Immigrant Reception Centers in Italy-SPRAR, SIPROIM*

This study investigates the state of cross-cultural training present in the resident centers. So it is necessary to introduce the immigrant reception models used in the very enormous project of receiving and housing migrants.

3.1 *SPRAR*

The ‘NAP’ - National Asylum Program- was formed in 2001 by a memorandum of understanding to establish a program to accommodate the flood of migrants that were beginning to arrive on Italian shores. The Ministry of the Interior, Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration, the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) all signed this memorandum. So the first public system for the reception of asylum seekers and refugees in Italy was created. It involved central and local institutions, according to a shared responsibility between the Ministry of the Interior and local authorities¹⁷.

The SPRAR (Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees) was institutionalized by Law 189/2002 in 2002. The Ministry of the Interior established the coordination structure of the system – with central services to local authorities. These services included information, promotion, consultancy, monitoring and technical support, managed by municipal governments.

The main objectives of the SPRAR were to guarantee assistance and protection measures for the individual; to empower individuals to become autonomous.

The goal of the SPRAR was always to assist individuals to construct a new life, develop their potential and integrate. Consequently, the reception model proposed by SPRAR is considered to be an “integrated” reception model. This

¹⁶ Moran, R., Harris, P., Moran, S (2007). “Managing Cultural Differences. Global Leadership Strategies for the 21st Century”. Elsevier. Boston: 25-28.

¹⁷ Ministry of the Interior (2017). Retrieved from: https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/rapporto_annuale_buone_pratiche_di_accoglienza_2017_eng_web_rev1.pdf

means that the basic living accommodations went along with the goal of assisting individuals to become autonomous.

The following services guaranteed by the SPRAR system were:

- Linguistic-cultural mediation
- Insertion in collective structures, where accommodation, food, clothing are guaranteed
- Orientation and access to local services
- Italian language instruction
- Professional training and retraining
- Orientation and assistance in job placement
- Legal guidance and assistance (for example, asylum cases, judicial protection and related rights / duties any protection recognized)
- Orientation and assistance for social integration
- Psycho-socio-health protection

Immigrants signed an agreement to respect residence rules as well as Italian laws.

The Italian system of protection offered three layers of protection:

- Refugee status: Resulting from article 1 of the 1951 Geneva Convention, amended by the 1967 Protocol, the status is assigned to “everyone in the justified fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, citizenship, belonging to a particular social group or political opinion, who is outside the State of which he or she is a citizen and cannot or, for this fear, or does not want to apply the protection of that State; or whoever, being stateless and out of his country of residence following such events, cannot, for the fear indicated above, return”¹⁸.
- Subsidiary protection: it was introduced by the European directive (n. 2004/83/Ce); it is a second level of protection at the EU level. It applies to people who, while not qualifying as refugees, “would run a real risk of suffering serious harm” if they returned to their country of origin. This includes the risk of the death penalty or execution, the risk of torture or inhumane treatment, and the risk of life-threatening indiscriminate violence during an armed conflict.
- Humanitarian protection: Humanitarian protection is a national legislative instrument and is accompanied by the two forms of protection recognized internationally: refugee status and subsidiary protection in Italy. When there are no conditions for granting international protection, but there are still “serious reasons, in particular of a humanitarian nature or resulting from constitutional or international obligations of the Italian state” to offer protection, humanitarian protection can be requested.

¹⁸ Geneva Convention (1951). Retrieved from: <https://www.unhcr.org/4ca34be29.pdf>

3.2 *SIPROIMI*

The Italian Law of 4 October 2018, n. 113, converted into Law 1 December 2018, n. 132 (the so-called ‘Salvini Decree’ or ‘Security Decree’), renamed the system of protection for asylum seekers, refugees and unaccompanied foreign minors. The name was changed from SPRAR to SIPROIMI - Protection System for Holders of International Protection and for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors. Access to the system is now restricted to holders of international protection and to all unaccompanied foreign minors. Furthermore, the new legislative provision provides that holders of residence permits can also access the SIPROIMI integrated reception services for: victims of violence or trafficking, victims of domestic violence, health reasons, victims of labor exploitation, calamities, acts of particular civil value. The principal changes are significant:

- Abolition of humanitarian protection. The new legislation provides for new forms of permits
- Only the holders of international protection (therefore asylum and subsidiary) and unaccompanied minors can be the guests of the small reception centers.

On 5 October 2020 the Council of Ministers approved the modification of the so-called safety decrees or ‘Salvini decrees’. The changes reintroduce the “humanitarian protection” that had been canceled by Salvini’s decrees. The SPRAR/SIPROIMI reception system changed its name once again and became the Reception and Integration System (SAI), in fact the widespread reception system managed by the municipalities has been restored as a priority system which serve asylum seekers in addition to the most vulnerable cases, minors and beneficiaries of international protection.

As mentioned before, one of the goals of the SPRAR and subsequent centers is to assist migrants to become autonomous. The skills to become autonomous are defined by the CBPs previously mentioned. But there is a great challenge to arrive at these goals, and effective cross-cultural communication is the first step. This research aimed at investigating the state of that communication for both the migrant professionals and migrants themselves.

4. *The Research*

The idea to research this area came from the joint experience of the authors, two who are migrants themselves, and two with extensive experience in the international field.

4.1 Objectives

The first objective of this research was to investigate how migrants, both current and former residents of centers, viewed the service rendered in cross-cultural terms and what they felt was lacking. The second objective was to investigate the cross-cultural communication training needs of professionals working in migrant reception centers in Sicily.

These objectives were investigated using various survey tools to detect opinions, assessments, testimonies and suggestions from the different actors (immigrants and the local individuals who work with them), involved in cross-cultural communication.

4.2 Methods

This survey was carried out through two main research activities:

1. Structured interviews with migrants who have lived in migrant centers (SPRAR/SIPROIMI) in Sicily.
2. Interviews and a survey with professionals who work, or have worked in migrant centers (SPRAR/SIPROIMI) in Sicily.

4.3 Questions and results

The interviews and survey with results are reported below.

4.3.1 Migrants

Structured interviews with migrants (22) were conducted with migrant individuals living in the Lombardy, Sicily and Foreign regions.

We conducted structured interviews via video call because of the Covid-19 problem; we administered the questions and noted the responses of the interviewees.

Table1 – The participants

Gender	Age	Nationality	Time spent in Italy	Region Where You Live	Qualification	Employment
Men: 18	Up to twenty-years: 2	Bangladesh: 2	1 YEAR - 3 years: 6	Lombardy:4	Middle School: 18	Worker: 16
Women: 4	From 21 to 30 years:18	Ivory Coast: 3	3 - 5 years: 15	Sicily: 14	No title: 4	Unemployed: 6
	From 31 to 40 years:2	Gambia: 7	More than 5 years: 1	Foreign region:4	*Other: 2	
		Guinea Conacry: 1				
		Nigeria: 6				
		Senegal: 3				

*Other: cultural mediator courses

Table 1 shows that 4 women and 18 men were interviewed, a clear majority of men and people of working age (especially with the age between 21 and 30 years). Out of a total of 22 subjects interviewed, 6 different nationalities were detected (the majority of those interviewed are nationals from Gambia and Nigeria). Only 1 of the interviewees has been in Italy for more than 5 years. More interviewees have been in Italy for short term periods: from 3 to 5 years (15) or from 1 to 3 years (6). The Italian regions where the interviewees live are Lombardy (4) and Sicily (14). Some of them live in a foreign country (4).

The majority of the sample holds a secondary school diploma. Two (2) of the interviewees held university degrees in cultural mediation. Four (4) have no diploma or degree. Sixteen (16) of the interviewees declare that they have a job, and six (6) that they are unemployed. The characteristics of the immigrants interviewed (gender, age, nationality, time spent in Italy, qualification, employment) were analyzed and tabulated.

(The survey and interview questions can be found in the appendix.)

Table 2 – When you arrived in Italy, how were you able to communicate with the people (operators) who wanted to help you?

Answer	Number of answers
○ I communicated with the African cultural mediator who spoke my dialect and the English language	2
○ I communicated with the African cultural mediator who spoke the English language	12
○ I communicated with the African cultural mediator who spoke the French language	6
○ I was communicating with a friend of mine who acted as an English language interpreter	1
○ I couldn't communicate with anyone, there was no mediator present	1

From the answers obtained in Table 2, it emerges that 20 interviewees communicated with an African cultural mediator.

- 16 interviewees said that “the operators of immigration center they met spoke only Italian language, (they spoke neither French nor English), except the African cultural mediators”.

- 6 interviewees stressed the importance and need to attend a language course Italian to be able to communicate better.

Table 3 - Did the professionals of the immigrant centers you met know the political, economic and cultural situation of your country of origin?

Answer	Number of answers
○ They knew little about the political, economic and cultural situation of my country of origin	6
○ They have no knowledge of the political, economic and cultural situation of my country of origin	16

Table 3 shows that most migration center professionals did not know anything about the countries of origin of the migrants. However, some profession-

als knew about the situation in Nigeria (the 6 were all from there)¹⁹: they knew about the political events, some cultural traditions and the terrorist actions of Boko Haram.

The 16 interviewees report that the operators become aware of the situation of the country of origin only after the fact-finding interview supported by the presence of the mediator.

Table 4 - When you think about the SPRAR/SIPROIMI, who was the person (mediator, social worker, Italian language teacher, project coordinator, educator, legal operator, etc.) you were best able to communicate with? Why?

Answer	Number of answers
<p>○ CULTURAL MEDIATOR:</p> <p>Because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “He understood what I was saying and reported it to the operators; he explained to me what I did not understand”; - “He spoke my language”; - “He explained everything I asked for”; - “He listened to me carefully”. 	16
<p>○ ITALIAN LANGUAGE TEACHER:</p> <p>Because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “She listened to me and helped me understand situations, she was a calm person”; - “She listened to me, she encouraged me, she told me not to worry”; - “She explained what I didn’t understand and accompanied me to school”; - “She was trying to understand”. 	4

¹⁹ Nigerians are the largest sub-Saharan nationality in Italy (residents are 93,915 as of January 1, 2017). If we limit ourselves to 2017 alone, the largest number of people arriving by sea come from Nigeria, not only in Italy, but throughout Europe (about 18,000 people).

Knowledge of foreign languages and the economic, political and cultural situation of immigrants' countries of origin is important for understanding their real needs and requests.

From the interviews collected, other aspects also emerge such as kindness, smiles and empathy. Although these elements are secondary to linguistic communication, in reality they deeply affect the understanding of the needs of immigrants as well as the immigrants' motivation to integrate.

4.3.2 Migrant center professionals

16 structured interviews and surveys were conducted with those who work, or have worked in immigrants centers (SPRAR/SIPROIMI) in Sicily region.

We conducted structured interviews which, due to the pandemic (Covid-19), were done via video call; we administered the questions and survey and noted the responses of the interviewees.

Table 6 – Migrant center professionals

Your position	Time in your current position	Gender
social worker	More than 6 years	Female
social worker	1 year-3 years	Female
coordinator	4-6 years	Female
coordinator	Less than 6 months	Female
cultural mediator	4-6 years	Female
cultural mediator	4-6 years	Man
Educator	1 year-3 years	Female
Educator	1 year-3 years	Man
Educator	1 year-3 years	Female
Italian language teacher	1 year-3 years	Female
Italian language teacher	4-6 years	Female
Legal assistant	1 year-3 years	Female
other - social operator	1 year-3 years	Female
psychologist	1 year-3 years	Female
volunteer	6 months -1 year	Female
volunteer	4-6 years	Female

Table 6 shows who the operators interviewed are: 2 social workers, 2 coordinators, 2 cultural mediators, 3 educators, 2 Italian language teachers, 1 legal

assistant, 1 social operator, 1 psychologist and two volunteers. The table shows a clear prevalence of women (14) and a minority of men (2).

Seven (7) of the interviewees have been working for a period of 1-3 years, 4 for a period of 4-6 years and 1 worked for a period of 6 months -1 year.

After analyzing position, time in a current position and gender, we collected data from surveys administered to migrant center professionals (SPRAR/SIPROIMI).

We obtained the following somewhat disconcerting results from the interviews.

Table 7

I received useful training for communicating with clients at the beginning of this job.
○ NO:16

All the professionals interviewed declared that they had not received any training on communication before starting their work.

Table 8

I have received ongoing training for communicating with clients during this job.
○ NO: 14 professionals interviewed declared that DID NOT receive ongoing training to communicate with clients during this job.
○ SI: 2 professionals interviewed (1 social worker and 1 cultural mediator) declared that they received ongoing training to communicate with clients during this job.

- The one social worker claims to have followed highly specialized training courses in several cities: Rome, Milan, Turin, organized by the central service²¹ and held by mediators who worked for international or regional organizations (Frontex). She states: "The training received has improved communication, mutual confrontation, breaking down borders, finding a meeting point between our cultures".

²¹ The Central Service was established by the Ministry of the Interior, Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration and entrusted with an agreement to ANCI (National association of Italian municipalities).

- The cultural mediators state that they have received training on communication during their work, especially improving the aspect of the problem solving.
- All the other professionals comment that they have followed specialized training courses for the role they hold, but no courses concerning communication with migrants. They also point out that they had been asked to take training courses on communication but could not pay for it themselves.

Table 9

Have you had situations of conflict when you felt you needed to communicate better?
o SI:16

All the professionals interviewed mentioned they had been in conflict situations where they felt the need to communicate better.

It is interesting to know that all the professionals interviewed, except the cultural mediators, state that they solved the situation thanks to the support of the cultural mediator and in some cases, other immigrants of the project.

These responses make us reflect on the importance of communication and mediation in conflict resolution.

Table 10

Do you feel that your knowledge of other languages are at a sufficient level to communicate with the immigrants?
o NO: 14 professionals interviewed, except the cultural mediators, replied that they do not have sufficient knowledge of other languages.
o SI:2 Cultural mediators interviewed declared that they had a more than sufficient knowledge of other languages, with the exception of the Arabic language.

After administering the surveys, we continued our investigation with interviews.

Table 11

In the initial phase of your work, how did you manage to communicate and therefore to work with the migrants? What were the “communication tools” you used?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social workers, project coordinators, legal practitioners and volunteers declared that they have communicated thanks to the support’ cultural mediator. ○ Educators and psychologist stated that they used their own means, working on the interpersonal relationship with the immigrant, in an empathic way. Initially by communicating with gestures and drawing. ○ Italian language teachers replied that they have worked on the interpersonal relationship with the immigrants, in an empathic way, using the Italian language and some foreign terms (contact language)²². ○ The social worker reported to have communicated thanks to the support of a resident migrant project who spoke Italian; the cultural mediator was absent. ○ The cultural mediators declare that they have managed to communicate thanks to the knowledge of the language of origin and the various situations of the immigrants’ countries of origin. “My experience helped me. It was my first training”. <p>Some aspects of non-verbal communication are also fundamental (examples: look a person in the eyes or tone of voice).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyone agrees that work experience has improved communication.

Table 12

In your opinion, is it important to know basic information about the cultural values and practices of the beneficiaries’ countries of origin?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All the professionals interviewed respond positively to the question. <p>Because: (some answers are reported)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social worker: “It’s understood what lies under certain behaviors. For example: many women, in the presence of their husband, do not allow themselves to be checked by a doctor; - Volunteer: “It’s important to know the country of origin to also understand the journey they have faced. For example, to understand if women are victims of trafficking”. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cultural mediators point out further aspects: - Knowing the culture, you understand what can be accepted and what cannot. Some terms also change meaning in various cultures: <p>some examples are given below:</p> <p><i>“During an interview with an Eritrean man, I know that I cannot offer him my hand because he would refuse it, because I am a woman; very different from a Nigerian man”.</i></p> <p><i>“In Mandinka and Bambara some words can be confused: in Mandinka, the word SUNKUTUBA means adult girl, in Bambara it means prostitute”.</i></p>

²² Contact language to mean the coexistence in a place and time of two or more languages.

Table 13

Do you think you have the knowledge and relational skills necessary to communicate and interact in an intercultural environment like that of SPRAR/SIPROIMI?
--

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All the professionals interviewed, except the cultural mediators, reply that they have acquired over the years the relationship skills and, in part, the communication skills, thanks above all to the experience in the field. They have not acquired linguistic knowledge. ○ Cultural mediators declare that they possess the knowledge and relational skills necessary to communicate and interact in an intercultural environment like that of SPRAR/SIPROIMI. |
|---|

Table 14

Do you feel the need for training that can improve and facilitate your work? What kind of training would you like?
--

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All the professionals interviewed feel the need for training to improve their work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “a continuous and circular training, which concerns all the figures, which follows the changes in migratory flows”; - “training that can improve what I have learned over the years”; - “an intercultural and linguistic training”; - cultural mediator: “feel the need to deepen training on mediation” |
|--|

The answers obtained from the surveys and interviews show that there is no training on intercultural communication for the migrant center professionals, especially at the beginning of a new position. Cultural mediators, at the beginning and during their work, draw on their personal experience in order to communicate with immigrants. With the exception of a social worker and a cultural mediator, the training of migrant professionals is aimed at their job role but without cross-cultural training.

5. *Conclusions*

The information obtained from the migrants as well as the migrant professionals converged. Migrants would like to be assisted by professionals who know about their countries, their migrant trajectory and their short- and long-term needs. They would like to be able to communicate better with the professionals, and cite that most of them have an insufficient knowledge of foreign languages, especially English and French.

The insufficient knowledge of foreign languages, especially English and French, and the political, cultural and economic situations of the countries of origin was confirmed by this research.

Misunderstandings and miscommunication that occur are supposed to be dealt with by the cultural mediator. The cultural mediator seems to be the only one who is qualified to settle conflicts from training and/or life experience.

Another significant point came out. Intercultural and linguistic training was requested by the migrant center professionals. But they would like it to be included as regular ongoing training as part of their job, paid by the center. It is important to note that what the center professionals identified as a desire for more linguistic and intercultural training coincides with the recommendations of the migrants/ former residents/residents themselves. The professionals admitted that they fell short in the ability to speak with the migrants directly; these authors suggest ongoing English and/or French language training applied to the work site. And of course the migrants must be supported in learning Italian as well and as soon as possible so as to start the integration process.

The findings revealed the glaring need for cross-cultural training, from the side of the immigration professionals as well from the side of the migrants themselves.

Therefore we propose the following cross-cultural communication training program which could be followed by migrant center professionals and also migrants themselves.

5.1 Suggested cross-cultural training program

The overall objective is to assist participants in developing the ability to understand what culture is and does; begin to develop cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity; and to build necessary communication skills for problem solving across cultures. Additionally, general cultural information about the various countries dealt with should be added.

Module 1: Cultural Awareness- understand what culture is, what it does, how it affects behavior, cultural values, norms, communication styles, nonverbal communication.

Module 2: Cultural Sensitivity- begin to empathize and appreciate the Other's point of view and feelings.

Module 3: Cultural Skill Building- through a series of exercises, self-analysis, role playing, simulations, put into practice what was learned in the two previous models.

Module 4: Cultural Specifics-learn about the various countries represented in the centers.

If migrants are participating, they will learn about Italy.

Module 5: Study culture shock, and coping strategies. Both migrants and professionals will benefit from learning to recognize the symptoms and implement coping strategies.

It is hoped that this study has revealed the needs felt by both migrants and migrant professionals. More research needs to be done, on a larger base, and effective programs need to be developed and offered free of charge to all participants. The road to integration is long, but with both migrants and professionals dedicated to communicating clearly with each other, it will be a pleasant voyage. Much better than the one that brought them to Italy.

6. *Bibliography*

- Bennett, M. (1991). *American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Intercultural Press: Boston.
- Camilli, A. (2020). Come cambiano i decreti Salvini sull'immigrazione. <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/annalisa-camilli/2020/10/06/modifiche-decreti-sicurezza-salvini> retrieved 13 Oct. 2020.
- Cittadini stranieri in Italia (2019) www.tuttitalia.it/statistiche/cittadini-stranieri-2019/ retrieved 10 Oct. 2020.
- Damigella, D. (2015). "Dall'ipotesi del contatto ai suoi sviluppi: riferimenti teorici per una progettualità d'inclusione ed integrazione sociale. In: Giuseppe Santisi (Ed.) *Quaderno N. 3 "Ricerca in Formazione"*. Roma-Aci-reale: Bonanno.
- Deardorff, D. (2009). *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, Sage: Newbury Park.
- Diadora, P. (2011). *Insegnare italiano a stranieri*. Le Monnier: Milano.
- European Asylum Support Office, 2020. Italy Operating Plan. <https://easo.europa.eu/italy-operating-plan-2020/> retrieved 4 Oct 2020.
- European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2006). *Social integration of immigrants: contribution of local and regional authorities*. http://bancadati.italialavoro.it/bdds/download?fileName=C_21_Strumento_2814_documenti_itemName_0_documento.pdf&uid=59d1b8e2-8f55-4dde-b4db-2d204c07e779 retrieved 10 Sept. 2020.
- Fantini, A.E. (2006). 87 Assessment tools of intercultural competence. Brattleboro, VT: School for International Training http://www.sit.edu/publications/docs/feil_appendix_f.pdf . retrieved 10 Oct. 2020.

- Hammer, M.R., Bennett, M.J. & Wiseman, R. (2003). Measuring intercultural sensitivity: The intercultural development inventory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27, 421-443.
- Il Post (2018). Cos'è la 'protezione umanitaria'? [https://www.ilpost.it/2018/09/25/protezione-umanitaria/retrieved 2 Oct.2020](https://www.ilpost.it/2018/09/25/protezione-umanitaria/retrieved%202%20Oct.2020).
- IOM(2014). Migrant arrivals by sea. [https://www.iom.int/news/migrant-arrivals-sea-italy-top-170000-2014#:~:text=Syria%20remains%20the%20top%20sending,%20and%20Somalia%20\(5%2C756\)](https://www.iom.int/news/migrant-arrivals-sea-italy-top-170000-2014#:~:text=Syria%20remains%20the%20top%20sending,%20and%20Somalia%20(5%2C756)).
- Lanni, R. (2019). UNHCR; Cambiamenti del decreto sicurezze e immigrazione. <https://www.unhcr.org/it/risorse/carta-di-roma/fact-checking/2019-gennaio-cambiamenti-del-decreto-sicurezza-immigrazione/> retrieved 29 Sept. 2020.
- Ministry of the Interior (2017). The initiatives for good reception and integration of migrants in Italy. https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/rapporto_annuale_buone_pratiche_di_accoglienza_2017_eng_web_rev1.pdf retrieved Sept 28, 2020.
- Ministero del Interno (2020). Centri di immigrazione. <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/temi/immigrazione-e-asilo/sistema-accoglienza-sul-territorio/centri-limmigrazione> retrieved 9 Oct. 2020.
- Moran, R., Harris, P. Moran, S (2007). *Managing Cultural Differences. Global Leadership Strategies for the 21st Century*. Elsevier: Boston.
- Pittau, F. (2015). *The Other Side of Italy: Immigration in a Changing Country: Political, Social and Economic Issues*. Nova: New York.
- Sage Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods (2017). <https://methods.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-communication-research-methods/i3766.xml>
- Shire, W. (2009). <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/sep/16/poets-speak-out-for-refugees> -retrieved 4 August 2020.
- Sinicrope, C. Norris, J. & Watanabe, Y.(2006). *Understanding and Assessing intercultural competence: a summary of theory, research and practice* (Technical Report for the foreign language program evaluation project. *Second Language Studies*, 26(1), Fall 2007, pp 1-58.
- Sistema di Protezione per titolari di protezione internazionale e per minori stranieri non accompagnati (2020). <https://www.siproimi.it/> retrieved 8 Oct. 2020.
- Statista (2020) number of migrants housed in migrant reception centers in Italy <https://www.statista.com/statistics/620436/immigrants-in-reception-centers-italy/>
- Stranieri in Italia (2020). Cosa cambia del decreto di sicurezza e immigrazione. <https://stranieriinitalia.it/attualita/decreto-sicurezza-ecco-cosa-cambia-con-le-nuove-norme-per-i-migranti/> retrieved 12 Oct. 2020.

- Terranova Cecchini, R., Toffle, M. E., Vitale, R. (2015). "From Libya to Lampedusa: Creating a Cultural Identity Card: Psycho-transcultural Evaluation of Integration". *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 205, 9 October 2015, pgs 329-339.
- Urselli, R. (2018). *Sconfinamenti Linguistici: la lingua Bambara*. <http://www.attraversamentimultipli.it/2018/sconfinamenti-linguistici-la-lingua-bambara/>
- UNHCR (2019). *Global Trends*. <https://www.unhcr.org/5d1327ab7.pdf> retrieved 4 Oct. 2020.
- UNHCR (2020). *Operational Portals Refugee Situation* <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205> retrieved 6 Oct, 2020.
- UNHCR Operational Portal (2020) *Mediterranean locations* [www. Data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205](http://www.Data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205) retrieved 5 Oct, 2020.
- UNHCR *Telling the Real Story*, (2020) <http://tellingtherealstory.org/>). Retrieved 4 Oct 2020.
- Statista, (2020). *Most frequent immigrant nationalities declared upon arrival 2020*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/624866/top-immigrant-nationalities-declared-upon-landing-italy/> retrieved 5 Oct, 2020.
- Villa, M. (2018). *The new irregulars*. <https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/new-irregulars-italy-21813> retrieved 3 Oct. 2020.

Appendix 1

Survey of training needs

The University of Messina is conducting research on the cross-cultural communication training needs of immigration professionals. This survey is strictly anonymous Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Your position:

- Social worker
- Cultural mediator
- Educator
- Italian teacher
- Legal assistant
- Psychologist
- Coordinator

- Volunteer
- Other

Time in your current position:

- Less than 6 months
- 6 months -1 year
- 1 year-3 years
- 4-6 years
- More than 6 years

Region where you work/worked

- _____

Please choose the answer that applies to you.

1. I received useful training for communicating with clients at the beginning of this job.

Yes ○ No ○ not enough ○

2. I have received ongoing training for communicating with clients during this job.

Yes ○ No ○ not enough ○

3. Have you had situations of conflict when you felt you needed to communicate better?

Yes ○ No ○ not enough ○

4. Do you feel that your knowledge of other languages are at a sufficient level to communicate with the immigrants?

Yes ○ No ○ not enough ○

Appendix 2

Interview

1. In the initial phase of your work, how did you manage to communicate and therefore to work with the beneficiaries of the project? What were the “communication tools” you used?

2. In your opinion, is it important to know basic information about the cultural values and practices of the beneficiaries' countries of origin? Why?
3. Do you think to have the knowledge and relational skills necessary to communicate and interact in an intercultural environment like that of SPRAR/SPROIMI?
4. Do you feel the need for training that can improve and facilitate your work? What kind of training would you like?

