

Integration challenges of non-European immigrants in Europe: study case of Albanian immigrants in Italy

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ABSTRACT

The analysis of integration problems for non-European immigrants in Europe is a research priority and a difficult challenge for European integration policy, immigrants and host societies. Non-European immigrants have migrated to Europe through asylum applications for security, political or economic reasons, illegal routes, work and employment applications and student visas. They have subsequently faced legal difficulties, barriers to integration in the labor market, segregation and marginalization, ethnic and racial discrimination and stereotypes and obstacles in building social networks with locals.

This paper uses qualitative methods and discusses sociological approaches and theories that explain integration problems of non-European immigrants, based in the study case of the Albanian immigrant's integration experience in Italy. According to Eurostat, Italy is ranked as one of the European countries with a high number of immigrants, especially after 1990, that constantly reassessed its fragile integration policy and multicultural practices, and also faces big challenges in the integration of non-European immigrants. Meanwhile Albanians are among the largest economic and poor immigrants in Europe, especially in Italy.

Among the factors hindering the integration of Albanian immigrants in Italy, based on the experiences of interviewed immigrants cross-referenced with literature findings, are: experiencing discrimination and stereotypes, the perception of Albanians as criminals, traffickers and savages by locals and public opinion through the media, the long process of naturalization and obtaining Italian citizenship, problems with renewing the residence permit, the difficulty of finding work, performing low-skilled and poorly paid jobs, the inclusion of Albanian children in Italian schools, the challenge of separation from the family of origin, the lack of ethnic and cultural identity, experiencing cultural confusion and the sense of 'non-belonging' and difficulties with mastering high levels of the Italian language.

Keywords: integration, non-European immigrants, challenges, Albanian immigrants, discrimination