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FROM CRISIS TO COHESION. EXAMINING THREE DECADES OF ALBANIAN MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION IN ITALY

Abstract:	*The mass emigration of 1991, the mass migration following the 1997 financial crisis, and the migrant surge during the Kosovo conflict in 1999 were the three main waves of Albanian migration to Italy. In addition to the initial surprise and lack of preparation on the side of the Italian people and governmental bodies, each of these waves was marked by incredibly challenging initial conditions. The Albanian immigrants' integration process is today viewed as a largely successful narrative. What were the primary causes of the comparatively quick integration following such a dramatic beginning? Young age, medium educational attainment, big family size, lack of religious affiliation, and comparatively high level of familiarity with Italian language and popular culture are characteristics that identify Albanian immigrants. Also, the Italian government has taken significant steps towards integration, including legalizing undocumented immigrants and reaching agreements with their Albanian counterparts on the repatriation of Albanian individuals convicted of crimes.*
	The primary issues and patterns that have surfaced during three decades of migrant flows are examined in this article. Particularly, it emphasizes integration into the workforce and culture, and how the media depicts and influences the relationship between migrants and the host country. Integration data have been examined in the context of Italian political and social dynamics. A few integration factors have also been studied, with a focus on the demographics of migrants and refugees during the main migratory waves. It may be possible to determine the least stressful and most successful cohabitation techniques throughout Europe's difficult and ongoing migrant waves by looking at these integrating components.
Keywords:	**Migratory flows; challenges; integration; workforce; education**
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Introduction

Migration has had a long and complex relationship with Albania and its people. For centuries, Albanians have moved throughout the world, looking for better economic opportunities. In certain periods, such as the mass emigration from the late 19th century through the end of the Second World War, the number of Albanian migrants constituted a sizeable portion of the population. Between 1990 and 2020, migration has been used by a significant number of Albanians to escape economic hardship and lack of opportunity created by the breakdown of centralized state planning. These economic and social conditions resulted in widespread poverty and unemployment, social tension and upheaval, resulting in political turmoil and ethnic violence. Despite a period of high economic growth from 2000 to 2008, the disparity with Western Europe starkly demonstrates the unfinished transition to a stable, high-income, modern, and equitable society.

The striking fact is that Albanian migration to Italy presents three main waves clearly denoted by the changing legal and economic aspects at play. The first wave in the early 1990ᵋ, composed mostly of economic

migrants, was of the clandestine type, framed by the collapse of a centralized economic model and a migration regime characterized by the absence of a treaty, permissive national policy, and only informal presence of the state in the migration system. The shift towards an orchestrated system of migration recognized by migration regime legalities started three years later in 1993. Indeed, the second wave began in 1994 when a treaty aiming for the legalization of irregular migrants from Eastern Europe, such as ethnic Albanians who fled since August 1991, constantly meeting this requirement and having used the spring mass migration route towards Italy, came into force[1]. This marked a turning point in the Albanian migration to Italy, as it allowed for a more regulated and structured approach. The effects of this treaty were further solidified by a series of regularization ordinances in 1995 and 1998 that legalized immigrants who had worked with a regular residence permit for at least three years, providing them with a sense of stability. Finally, in response to the increasing number of migrants and the need for better management, a law aimed at regulating labor forms and migration quotas was introduced, establishing guidelines and limitations for the labor force and immigration flow. This comprehensive approach aimed to address the economic and social impacts of migration while ensuring a more controlled and structured system[2].

A sought-after, more desirable and highly coveted feature of residence permits, combined with the process of legalized migration, has significantly diminished the geographical distances between countries as air travel became more accessible. This development has remarkably facilitated family reunification, especially for vulnerable groups such as women and minors who were left behind in their countries of origin. These individuals, now armed with affordable and rapid means of transportation, were able to embark on the journey to their host countries. This profound shift in migration patterns may potentially account for the increasing number of individuals returning to their country of origin as well as the parallel decrease in circulation among Albanian migrants and returnees from 1995 until the eve of the second Albanian crisis, which was officially declared in 1997. During this period, approximately 150,000 asylum seekers took a courageous stance and migrated in search of what they perceived to be a beacon of democracy and shared development standards.

As a result, there was a noticeable surge in their population within the host country. Alongside this influx, Italy experienced a significant increase in the construction labor market. The number of working hours rose by an estimated 200,000,000, which translates to roughly 124,000 additional employees between 1998 and 2004. This wave of migration was predominantly driven by the desire for family reunification, with numerous first-generation linkages occurring through marriages between Italian citizens and immigrants[3]. Subsequently, marriages between immigrants themselves became increasingly common. Additionally, the frequent occurrence of clause laws for reunification with ascendants or dependents further contributed to this family-oriented wave of migration. It is worth noting that although the percentage of female resident workers is stabilizing at around 33%, it remains lower than that of foreign resident workers. In fact, foreign resident workers make up approximately 50.6% of the population[4].

The dynamics of migration shifted once again in 2000-2001 when the United Nations administration, supported by the Italian government and endorsed by the Security Council, successfully restored administrative and public institutions in Kosovo[5]. This led to a voluntary return of immigrants with Serbian and Albanian Kosovar origins due to both economic and political reasons. Consequently, the number of immigrants from this region decreased significantly. The third wave of migration, which can be characterized by both semi-clandestine and legally formalized migration, introduced new dimensions to the phenomenon. This wave utilized the concept of international protection as a pretext for reception. Many individuals sought political asylum, which often resulted in pending requests. The porous nature of borders and territories, compounded with the prevalence of illegal identifications, facilitated the continuous flow of immigrants while evading strict controls. This phenomenon enabled anonymity and allowed individuals to escape detection

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[1] King Vullnetari, *Migration and Development in Albania*, Sussex Centre for Migration Research, Sussex December 2003, p. 25, https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/377327/1/WP-C5.pdf (12.11.2024)

[2] Eda Gemi, Anna Triandafyllidou, *Rethinking migration and return in Southeastern Europe: Albanian mobilities to and from Italy and Greece*, Routledge, London, 2021, p. 6

[3] Barjaba King, *Introducing and Theorising Albanian Migration*, "The New Albanian Migration", edited by Russell King, Nicola Mai & Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, Sussex Academic Press, Brighton, 2005, p.15

[4] Pittau Ricci Urso, *Gli Albanesi in Italia: un caso di best practice di integrazione e sviluppo*, "REMHU: migracoes e desenvolvimento", Vol. 17, No. 33, 2009, p.77

[5] *Ibidem*, p.155

while perpetuating smuggling activities. The absence of comprehensive policies on legal family formation and regularization, like those implemented in other European countries, further exacerbates this issue. Under the prevailing search privileges regime, emergency hospitality takes the form of temporary accommodation as a response to asylum applications made within the country.

This approach is directly proportional to the volume of asylum requests. Furthermore, taking a customizable route from the neighboring Balkan countries towards the shores of Italy has introduced new challenges. This route often involves the reception of forced mothers who are trafficked with minors, both of whom are subjected to affirmative or penal instances against their accomplices. Over the course of 30 years, this migration route has witnessed the arrival of over 600,000 individuals, solidifying their position as the second largest foreign community in Italy—a testament to the enduring allure of this European heartland[1].
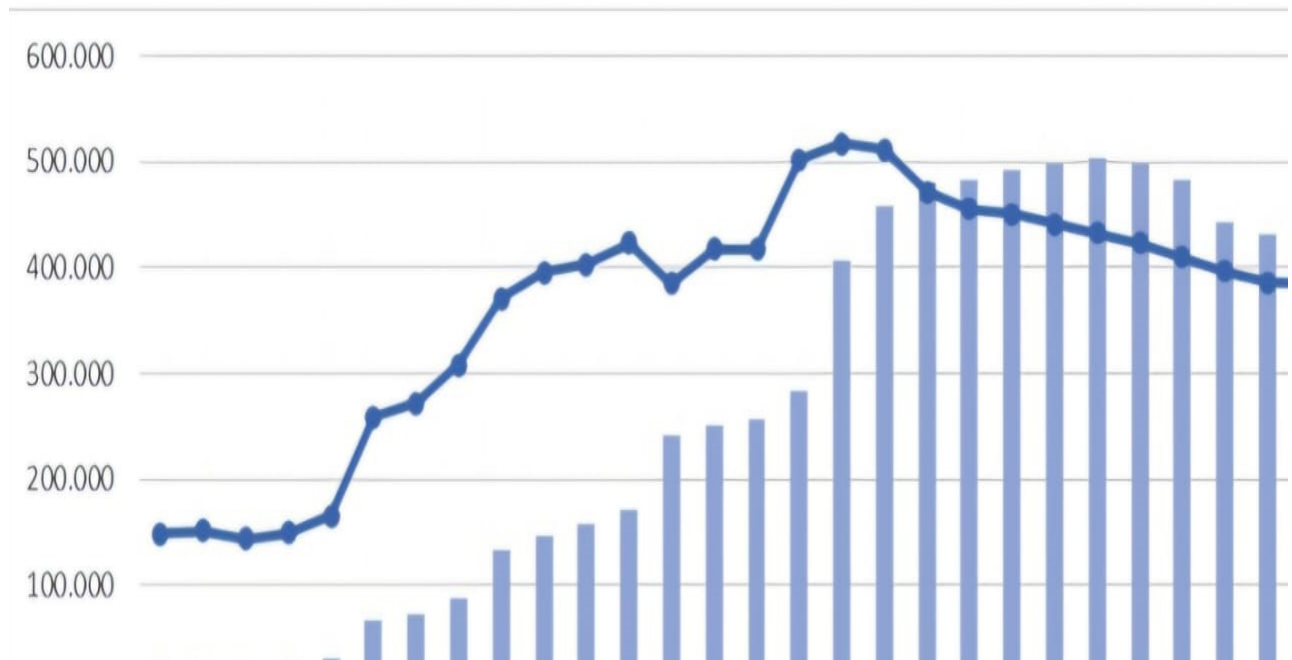

Table 1. Albanian citizens regularly residing and incidence on the total number of regularly residing, 1992-2023[2]

The socio-economic impact of the mass migration of the last two decades has become an interesting and highly debated issue in academic circles and research. Numerous works have extensively examined the diverse and intricate structural effects of Albanian immigration. However, only a few have delved into the direct microeconomic equilibrium effects on the communities from which the migrants originate. The decades-long wave of mass emigration has given rise to a notable phenomenon known as the 'dual economy' in Albania[3]. Throughout this period, it is worth noting that the participation of the diaspora in the social and economic development of the country has been severely limited, resulting in relatively minimal fundamental changes to the existing socio-economic landscape. When reflecting on the destination country, Italy, one can observe that various significant diachronic moments have shaped the trajectory of the Albanian community's interaction within it. Initially, the community predominantly engaged in housework, forming an essential backbone of domestic labor. Subsequently, their roles shifted towards unqualified work or involvement in off-

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[1]Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, *Rapporto Comunità albanese in Italia. Rapporto Annuale dulla Presenza dei Migranti*, Roma, 2023, p. 2

[2] Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, *Rapporto Comunità albanese in Italia. Rapporto Annuale dulla Presenza dei Migranti,* Roma, 2023, p. 8 https://www.lavoro.gov.it/sites/default/files/temi-e-priorita%2C%20immigrazione/studi-e-statistiche/RC_Albania_2023_def.pdf (03.05.2024)

[3] Sabatino Bonifazzi, *Albanian migration to Italy: what official data and survey results can reveal,* "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", Vol. 29, No. 6, p. 970, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369183032000171320 (22.09.2024)

ethnic businesses. Despite these adaptations, the Albanian community has consistently remained on the margins of the collective life of the host society, without fully integrating or benefiting from their contributions.

The situation of unpreparedness regarding migratory flows has been addressed in three phases, through three important laws: in 1990, urgent provisions on political asylum, entry and residence of non-EU citizens and regularization of non-EU citizens and stateless persons present in the territory of the State (Legge Martelli)[1]; in 1998, a consolidated law on immigration and the condition of foreigners (Legge Turco-Napolitano)[2], and in 2002 numerous amendments modified thee 1990 Law adding regulatory provisions (Legge Bossi-Fini)[3]. This consolidated body of laws intervened in the main areas of immigraio: immigration law in the strict sense, concerning the management of the migratory phenomenon as a whole: the definition of rules for entry, residence, control, stabilization of migrants and also the repression of violations of these rules; and integration law, which concerns the extension, to a greater or lesser extent, of the rights of citizens (civil, social, political rights) to migrants. The fundamental underlying principles were essentially three: the planning of migratory flows and the fight against illegal immigration (regarding immigration law); the granting of a wide range of rights aimed at the integration of regular foreigners (integration law).

The many socio-economic advantages for traditional community functions recognized in various states, especially in Germany, where, for example, Albanians benefit from facilitated taxable capital repatriation and many other significant benefits, also stimulate new investments and the deployment of pressure on the management and enhancement of uncontrolled remittances sent by migrants from Germany to Albania[4]. In Italy, we note the fair number of remittances sent, particularly in family integration plans, which are much lower compared to Germany. This is partly due to the constant political management of the immigrant phenomenon, which has practically transformed these flows into a consistent protection of national funds by Albania, which continues today, even if competition has gradually reduced the monetary demand made by Italians of Albanian origin for products made in Italy.

Additionally, it is important to highlight that the integration policies implemented by Germany have been instrumental in attracting many Albanian immigrants, who have found numerous opportunities for social and economic advancement in the country[5]. These policies have not only facilitated the entry and stay of Albanians in Germany but have also provided them with access to various social welfare programs, educational opportunities, and employment prospects. As a result, many Albanians in Germany have been able to establish stable lives, contribute to the local economy, and maintain strong ties with their home country. Moreover, the favorable taxation system in Germany has further incentivized Albanian entrepreneurs and investors to seize business opportunities, leading to an increase in trade and economic cooperation between the two nations. Overall, the integration of Italians of Albanian origin has varied across different countries, with Germany emerging as a particularly attractive destination for migrants due to its comprehensive support structures and economic incentives.

During the past years of exceptional Albanian emigration, the reports and studies concerning them and their future were incredibly dismal, to say the least. As of today, Italy possesses not only 30 years of experience with this migrating population, but also a notable number of second-generation descendants who

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[1] *Gazzetta Ufficiale n.49 del 28 Febbraio 1990*, https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/gazzetta/serie_generale/caricaDettaglio?dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1990-02-28&numeroGazzetta=49 (21.04.2024)

[2] *Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 59, Supplemento Ordinario n. 40 del 12 marzo 1998*, https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/atto/serie_generale/caricaDettaglioAtto/originario?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1998-03-12&atto.codiceRedazionale=098G0066&elenco30giorni=false (22.04.2024)

[3] *Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 199 del 26 Agosto 2002*, https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/gu/2002/08/26/199/sg/pdf (21.04.2024)

[4] Mai Russell, *Out of Albania. From Crisis Migration to Social Inclusion in Italy*, Bergahn Books, Brooklyn NY 2008, p.121

[5] Begotaraj Ngjela, *Population movements and migration as a trend: the case of Albania,* "Journal of Balkan Studies", Vol. 2, No. 1, 2022, pp. 65-81

appear to have firmly established themselves in the local society[1]. The implementation of various regularization and supportive laws has significantly contributed to shedding a less tragic light on this situation.

Reason of the permit	V %	Variation % 2021/2020	Incidence on total non EU citizens (%)
Work	20,3%	559,3%	11,8%
Family	59,0%	106,5%	14,2%
Study	1,5%	132,8%	2,5%
Asylum and other forms of protection	1,1%	98,2%	98,2%
Elective residence, religion, health	18.0%	52.8%	27.7%
TOTAL – 29.520	100%	124.0%	12.2%

Table 2. - New residence permits issued to Albanian citizens in 2021 by reason and citizenship. V.% and variation 2021/2020[2]

The most significant indication of progress regarding the standing of these immigrants is the fact that now, in the second decade of the 2000s, migrants are frequently opting to return to Albania voluntarily. These returns are motivated either by the desire to fulfill personal and professional projects that have further developed in their new country of residence, or because of professional downsizing and unemployment resulting from recent crises, such as the economic downturn in Italy and Europe[3]. These returnees have vastly contributed to establishing flourishing businesses in their homeland. They achieve this by not only transferring the technologies and production methodologies they acquired in Italy, but more importantly, by importing goods and supplies from Italy, which are produced in large volumes at competitive costs. The heightened integration of recent and future generations of migrants, combined with the experience and financial capabilities of their predecessors, renders these migration processes genuinely virtuous and beneficial not only for the economic advancement of the migrants themselves, but also for the overall societal structure of Albania.

In the Italian context, the media tends to extensively showcase news that primarily focuses on portraying Albanians in a negative light. This is done by placing strong emphasis on criminal activities or highlighting their challenging living conditions within the host country. It is crucial to acknowledge that the media holds great influence as a catalyst in society, as it has the power to polarize communities and position them in relation to one another. Furthermore, it possesses the ability to bring about transformative effects by not only providing information but also by constructing reality through various representations. When it comes to the formation of national identity, the media plays a highly influential role by determining what is deemed newsworthy. This is particularly significant, as it involves the media's decision-making process on which topics to cover, how to cover them, and ultimately impacting the way in which the national "other" is portrayed with the intention of either worsening or improving such representations[4].

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[1] Zana Vathi, *The children of Albanian migrants in Europe: ethnic identity, transnational ties and pathways of integration,* University of Sussex, 2011, p. 35, https://sussex.figshare.com/articles/thesis/The_children_of_Albanian_migrants_in_Europe_ethnic_identity_transnational_ ties_and_pathways_of_integration/23316749?file=41104385 (21.09.2024)

[2] Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, *Rapporto Comunità albanese in Italia. Rapporto Annuale dulla Presenza dei Migranti,* 2022, p.10, https://www.lavoro.gov.it/sites/default/files/documenti-e-norme/studi-e-statistiche/RC-Albania-2022.pdf (23.05.2024)

[3] Cristiana Paladini, *Circular migration and new forms of citizenship. The Albanian community's redefinition of social inclusion patterns* in "European Journal of Research on Education," 2014, Vol. 2, No. 6, pp.109-115; Paladini Cristiana, *Circular migration and new forms of citizenship. The Albanian community's redefinition of social inclusion patterns*, "European Journal of Research on Education", 2014, Vol. 2, No. 6, https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Circular-migration-and-new-forms-of-citizenship.-of-Paladini/7d1db717a5ef331c85e97408dda57e7623fcd68b (10.09.2024)

[4] Alessandro Silj, *Albanese uguale criminale. Analisi critica di uno stereotipo*, in Limes 20 giugno 2001, https://www.limesonline.com/rivista/albanese--criminale--analisi-critica-di-uno-stereotipo-14578404/ (22.08.2024)

Argument	Clandesti-nes	Work	Criminal-ity	In-tollerance	Bossi-Fini Law	Prostitu-tion	Religion	Other arguments	TOTAL
No. articles	280	127	61	95	342	44	53	203	1.205
%	23.2	10.5	5.1	7.9	28.4	3.7	4.4	16.8	100,0

Table 3. Italy, Newspapers and Immigration: Articles by Subject (2002)[1]

Several studies contrasting media with actual crime rates and other problems have concluded that no link exists between media coverage and reality. However, it has been widely pointed out that media effects are very complex; it is not just that often they are different from the wishes of critics and researchers[2]. It is that they are different even from the portrayal of their enthusiasts. These findings have led to a growing interest in understanding how the media influences public perception and shapes societal norms. In response to the request for more specific information on how other issues were treated, particularly local events related to Albanians, it is crucial to delve deeper into the relationship between sensationalist coverage and the ignorance of the workings of bad reporting. This combination can often result in the exaggeration and distortion of the real circumstances of Albanians functioning in Italy. The consequences of such misrepresentation can be far-reaching, perpetuating stereotypes and hindering the integration process of Albanian communities.

To truly comprehend the impact of media coverage on public opinion, it is necessary to consider the underlying mechanisms that contribute to the formation of biased narratives. The sensationalism employed by certain media outlets not only captures attention but also distorts the realities faced by Albanians in Italy. By overemphasizing isolated incidents and amplifying negative experiences, media outlets inadvertently create a skewed perception of the Albanian community, leading to societal stigmatization and discrimination[3]. Furthermore, the lack of understanding and knowledge regarding the workings of bad reporting exacerbates the issue. Journalists who lack the necessary expertise or fail to conduct thorough research may unintentionally perpetuate false narratives about Albanians in Italy. This ignorance of the complexities and nuances of their experiences further fuels the misrepresentation and hinders accurate public understanding.

Addressing the misconceptions and misrepresentations surrounding the circumstances of Albanians in Italy necessitates a multifaceted approach. Firstly, media organizations must prioritize responsible reporting, ensuring that accurate information is conveyed to the public. Fact-checking and engaging with the Albanian community directly can help to avoid the dissemination of falsehoods and biases. Secondly, fostering dialogue and understanding between different communities can facilitate more accurate portrayals in the media. By promoting diversity and inclusivity, media coverage can become a tool for unity rather than division. In conclusion, while studies have shown no direct link between media coverage and reality, the complexity of media effects cannot be ignored. The combination of sensationalist coverage and ignorance of bad reporting practices can lead to the distortion and exaggeration of the circumstances faced by Albanians in Italy. To combat this issue, responsible reporting and fostering dialogue are vital steps towards promoting accurate narratives and facilitating the integration process of Albanian communities.

The institutional and policy framework of both sending and host countries is instrumental in shaping the nature, pace, and scale of migration. In fact, throughout history, states have played an immensely significant role in organizing and facilitating movement across borders, whilst also regulating labor rights. However, the willingness of these states to negotiate and accommodate largely determines whether migration occurs in an orderly or disorderly manner. Consequently, in the case of Albanian migration, the dichotomy

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[1]Data processed on Caritas - *Migrantes XIII Rapporto sull'immigrazione*, Caritas di Roma, Rome 2003 https://www.simmweb.it/archivio-sito/fileadmin/documenti/Rapporti_immigrazione/caritas_dossier_statistico_immigrazione_03.pdf (11.09.2024)
[2]Phantom Cava Antonia, *Without a History: Immigrants and Media in Italy*, "Journalism and Mass Communication", Vol. 6, No. 10, 2016 https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4ce5/62efd19bebf979db6f20be60977a7e0694fa.pdf (11.09.2024)
[3]Mai Russell, *Italophilia meets Albanophobia: paradoxes of asymmetric assimilation and identity processes among Albanian immigrants in Italy*, "Ethnic and Racial Studies", 32(1), 2009, pp. 117-138 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01419870802245034 (11.09.2023)

between orderly and disorderly pertains to the various models that have shaped the movement patterns. Initially, the "roots-migration-enclave" model prevailed, wherein labor was quasi-imported to facilitate the subsequent social and spatial integration of migrants through family reunion. However, with time, alternative and more competitive models gained popularity, such as the "circular" or the "stepwise" migration model, which brought about distinct changes in the migration landscape[1]. These shifts resulted from the evolving attitudes of both sending and host countries, as well as the changing socioeconomic dynamics within Albania and its diaspora communities abroad. The exploration of these different models and their impact on Albanian migration provides valuable insights into the role of institutional frameworks, policy evolution, and sociopolitical factors in shaping migration patterns.

It was essentially these two models that EU member states applied when dealing with migration from former socialist countries. Beyond migration management, especially for the more recent "migration in turbulent times," institution-bilateral agreements are expected to promote social and economic rights to a more transitional kind of rights and responsibilities. Additionally, it is expected that the scope and scale of negotiations with countries of origin of temporary relocation with Albania will probably decrease considering the "sociodemographic decline of the EU"[2]. These changes warrant a comprehensive review and reevaluation of existing frameworks and mechanisms to ensure the successful management, integration, and coordination of migration policies and practices at both the regional and national levels. Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of migration dynamics in the context of European Union member states.

As these dynamics continue to evolve, it becomes crucial to recognize the significance of socio-economic determinants that shape migration patterns and trends. By acknowledging these determinants, EU member states can better comprehend the complexities associated with migration and ensure that the appropriate policies and frameworks are in place to effectively manage and address them. Moreover, within the framework of migration management, it is crucial to consider the various factors that influence the social and economic rights of migrants. By promoting transitional rights and responsibilities, institution-bilateral agreements can contribute to the holistic integration of migrants into the host societies. This integration necessitates not only the provision of basic services but also opportunities for education, employment, and social participation, ensuring the long-term well-being and resilience of both migrants and host communities. Additionally, as the European Union experiences significant shifts in its geographical area of application, there is a pressing need to reevaluate the scope and scale of negotiations with countries of origin for temporary relocation[3].

The changing dynamics call for a comprehensive review of existing frameworks and mechanisms to ensure their relevance and effectiveness in the current socio-political landscape. This review should encompass a thorough examination of the legal and policy frameworks in place, as well as a critical analysis of national laws, regulations, and practices to ensure harmonization and coherence in migration management. Furthermore, the successful management, integration, and coordination of migration policies and practices necessitate a collaborative approach at both the regional and national levels. It requires close cooperation among EU member states, international organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders involved in migration governance. Through enhanced coordination mechanisms, knowledge-sharing, and capacity-building initiatives, the European Union can strengthen its collective response to the complex challenges posed by migration, ensuring a more equitable and inclusive society. In conclusion, the evolving nature of migration dynamics calls for a comprehensive and forward-looking approach to migration management within the European Union. By promoting transitional rights and responsibilities, reevaluating existing frameworks, and fostering collaboration among relevant stakeholders, the EU can effectively address the socio-economic complexities associated with migration and ensure the successful integration and well-being of both migrants

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[1] Mai Russell, *Of myths and mirrors: Interpretations of Albanian migration to Italy*, "Studi Emigrazione", No. 39, 2002, p. 175, https://sussex.figshare.com/articles/journal_contribution/Of_myths_and_mirrors_interpretations_of_Albanian_migration/23321195 (01.08.2019)

[2] Niemann Zaun Natascha, *Introduction: EU external migration policy and EU migration governance*, "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", Routledge 2023, pp.1-21 https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/119270/ (11.09.2024)

[3] Kahanec Ritzen, *A Sustainable Immigration Policy for the EU*, Springer, New York, 2017, p.157

and host communities. Only through such collective efforts can the European Union navigate the intricacies of migration in the present and lay the foundation for a more inclusive and prosperous future.

Conclusive remarks

This study examines evidence-based academic research published in various forums. More questions were raised about the impact of migration and trust between migrants and host societies, but not much work has been done on the social attitudes of Albanian migrants in Italy towards the host community. A poll conducted in Italy to address these issues in 2019 showed that social, economic, and cultural relations are closely linked. Albanian immigrants in Italy state that they have a good and warm relationship with the Italian community, but research shows evidence of existing ethnic, racial, and religious biases. This is difficult to measure through surveys, and the interaction between the policy, social, and communication development groups is not yet structured. It is crucial to explore the specific factors that shape their social attitudes towards the host community, considering variables such as length of stay, level of education, and socioeconomic status. By conducting in-depth interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic studies, we can gain valuable insights into the dynamics of their interactions and identify potential areas of improvement.

Moreover, policy responses need to be more targeted and tailored to address the existing biases and challenges faced by Albanian migrants in Italy. Measures should be implemented to promote inclusivity, eradicate discrimination, and foster intercultural dialogue. This requires a comprehensive approach that involves not only policymakers but also social and communication development groups. It is imperative to establish effective channels of communication between these stakeholders to ensure that policies are informed by empirical research and reflect the needs and aspirations of both migrants and the host community. Furthermore, educational initiatives can play a crucial role in promoting understanding and empathy between Albanian migrants and the Italian community.

By incorporating multiculturalism and diversity into the curriculum, schools can cultivate a more inclusive environment that celebrates different cultures, values, and identities. This will help combat the existing ethnic, racial, and religious biases and pave the way for a more harmonious coexistence. As Italy grapples with the challenges posed by the third immigration wave, it is crucial to address not only the fears and negative sentiments of the population but also the underlying factors contributing to these sentiments. A prevalent claim suggests that the interpersonal dynamics between "old" immigrant groups and Italians are more amicable compared to those with "new" groups that have recently settled in the country. This claim can be attributed to the long-standing intercultural policy of the nation, which has fostered better understanding and integration among established immigrant communities. Consequently, the Italian migration policy has proven to be periodic in nature, adapting to effectively navigate through tumultuous waves of immigration. The stricter approach has aimed to maintain order and uphold the rule of law. It is crucial to emphasize that these measures were not a reflection of prejudice against specific immigrant groups. Instead, they signified the political recognition of the importance of all citizens, including those from Albania, in shaping and implementing Italian border policies.

The example of the silent integration of Albanians, however, even if not supported by active policies in their favor, and marked by the visual and media impact that the landings via the Adriatic in 1991 had and the alarmist vision of the years to follow, demonstrates the possibility that a presumed invasion of workers in search of dignity can be transformed into a fruitful settlement (as demonstrated by the growing vitality of a business community, significant presence of students and professionals) and constitutes a heritage of good practices to be extended. It would take courage to adopt legislation that accelerates the obtaining of a residence permit and the reunification of family members at least for non-EU foreigners who graduated from university in Italy. We must also insist, with common sense, on the reform of the citizenship law and ensure that it remains on the parliamentary agenda, until the absurd situation is resolved by law in which Italianized children of parents who arrived in Italy as foreigners lose precious years in the bureaucratic process of coming of age to obtain the passport of the country they deserve to represent, even legally. Of course – and the Albanian case is there to demonstrate it – it is possible to achieve the integration of a foreign and even stigmatized community despite security and bureaucracy.

It is not right, however, to shoot ourselves in the foot by giving up harmonizing and merging diversity in a national community that is as rich as possible and equal in shared rights and duties. We must not forget the fact that foreign workers in Italy, because they are willing to make sacrifices and on average younger than the

population of the country where they work, pay more contributions to the treasury than the monetary benefits they receive. Where integration is in fact a reality, often positive and dynamic, the law should conform accordingly.

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