
Reasons for taking in migrants: a global emergency?

Data released by international institutions active in the area of human mobility - especially dealing with situations of emergency linked to this phenomenon - show that migrant reception is a challenge confronted by necessities, circumstances and realities that constitute the main cause of population displacement, whether voluntary or involuntary.

While estimated voluntary reasons for migration include insufficient means of subsistence, precarious living conditions, reunification with migrated family members and the quest for better educational and training opportunities, prominent causes that force people to leave their homeland involuntarily most certainly include armed conflicts, political instability, violence and persecution, along with natural disasters caused by environmental and ecological factors. Moreover, there are also situations of violence connected with phenomena of exploitation, illegal trafficking or trafficking in human beings that go so far as creating organised forms of forced labour.

The dynamics of world population growth, including fertility rates and life expectancy, are additional factors of concern and surely must be taken into account when proposing an organic and structured, but above all renewed, understanding of migrant reception processes.

The question is whether barriers can still be erected or whether the countless regulations put in place to manage migrant inflows are enough to actualise consistent reception. In fact, it would seem that despite ongoing efforts, the idea of including elements that could allow for unforeseen situations, subsequently enshrined in migrant reception policies and activities, is still far from becoming a reality. Suffice it to mention the various definitions given to persons arriving or knocking at the doors of other countries, such as immigrant, exiled, asylum seeker, refugee, migrant, tourist, student... which necessarily require a different approach on the part of institutions, both for lawful purposes and for aspects pertaining to social inclusion, since each of these terms has a different meaning and corresponding treatment.

Public order, cultural diversity, religious diversity must not pose an obstacle, nor can reception be subjected to a loss of humanitarian credibility, established under international norms as an essential factor to guarantee protection of the human person in all situations. Likewise, the criterion of vulnerability- which entails identifying specific reception requirements representing an underlying criterion of human rights - is equally valid. This raises several challenges not only in terms of security or resources, but also in terms of a broader political approach, as evidenced in the evolving right to asylum and the attention accorded to it - acknowledged for the first time today at European level by the recent EU Citizens' Initiative aimed at collecting one million signatures to demand new policy measures from the EU.

All forms of bias, be it selective forms of reception or policies' dual treatment of persons fleeing their countries and arriving in other States, must be removed from the reception process, or at least mitigated.

Successful reception thus becomes the way to foster the resilience of people on the move, and to ensure that their specific needs are met. At practical level this means monitoring mobility patterns, resilience, the kind of support given while avoiding inflexible practices and, above all, lack of governance (which is ultimately the core issue).

In fact, human mobility is a phenomenon that must be managed with an approach based on continuity, organisation and ordinary activities rather than being viewed as an emergency to be dealt

with by means of emergency measures.

From this perspective, reception becomes the passage from compassion to care.

Vincenzo Buonomo