

ABSTRACT LADIS

There are over two and a half million people of Islamic religion in our country, a little less than 5% of the entire population: about 30% are migrants, but both the number of second generations and that of Italian converts is increasing. Recent estimates indicate that Italian citizens of Islamic religion are now over one million, of which at least half are already born Italian citizens. These data allow us to state that it is now anachronistic, even from a sociological point of view, to think or refer to Islam as a "foreign" and "foreign religion" in Italy. Despite this, Muslim people (or people perceived as such because of their nationality) continue to suffer numerous discrimination, in particular - but not limited to - in accessing services and the labour market. On average, the second generations feel more discriminated against than the first. Discrimination is also greater for those who wear traditional clothes or religious symbols, such as the veil: women are in fact the majority among the victims of Islamophobia, subjected to double discrimination (as women and as Muslims).

This research, carried out as part of the LADIS project, tells us about a social and cultural context, both at European and national level, not only yet unable to enhance religious and cultural differences, but also still struggling to recognize rights of citizens who bear these differences. From the research carried out it emerges that the practices of collaboration between local administrations and Islamic communities and Muslim women's associations are not yet widespread both at European and national level. Nevertheless, the mapped practices allow to have a fairly defined picture of the different types of interaction between Local Authorities and Islamic communities, women's and youth associations that take place on the territory both in Italy and in some European countries. The aim of the research is to reconstruct the "state of the art" of requests, proposals, general or particular needs at a territorial level. These become good administrative practices aimed at the full recognition of representative bodies, places of worship and community representatives (men and women) present in the area, of specific needs and proposals linked to the dignity of women, the new generations, education or the inclusion of Muslim women in particular and of Islamic communities more generally. A rigid interpretation of secularism often leads to the idea that the different religions should be accepted as long as they renounce some of their "distinctive" traits, linked to cultural or ritual aspects or other. The research aimed to enhance a variety of initiatives, arising from public institutions or Islamic associations (mosques, women's or youth associations, or even religious bodies of other confessions). Most of them, starting from the requests and needs of Islamic communities, contribute to increasing the well-being of the entire territory enhancing religious diversity and identifying new resources for the entire population. The experiences collected concern both policies or practices actively promoted by local authorities (in some cases by regional or national authorities), and experiences in which associations and communities take on a leading role. This second type includes both experiences supported, including financially, by public entities, as well as initiatives self-financed by associations/communities. Among the issues to be addressed, particular attention was given to the needs related to Islamic ritual burial, a relevant topic for decades due to the presence of an indigenous Muslim population and therefore unable to request a burial in other foreign countries and has become an urgent need due to of the Covid-19 emergency. The Covid-19 emergency also highlighted the importance of guaranteeing a widespread territorial distribution of places of worship, in order to favour adequate spaces and places of prayer. Another area of interest that has involved Islamic communities for years, with a strong impact on the quality of life of women, concerns care and healthcare. The request for attention to female modesty, which has emerged in particular from Islamic communities, has over the years also proved to be of interest to other groups of the immigrant population and even to the sensitivity of many Italian women, not of Islamic religion. The research also included initiatives taken at a national level to promote and maintain dialogue between Islamic communities and institutions also at a national level (for example with the Pact for Italian Islam). Indeed, it is these signs of political openness at the national level that have allowed local authorities to autonomously implement good practices in a context of "normality" rather than in exceptional situations, as it must be for everything concerning the recognition of different religions and the right to practice. The research was carried out also directly involving local authorities in ALI, by sending a short questionnaire to local administrators. From the survey it emerged that often the administrators have little knowledge of ISLAM and little awareness of Islamophobia: few local authorities have initiated welcoming policies and recognition of citizens and communities of Muslim faith; few are the administrative realities that have promoted a stable comparison,

forms of collaboration aimed at increasing active citizenship and the participation of citizens, including those of Muslim faith, involving them in the management of common goods, in the development of the well-being of the territory. Even at a European and national level, there are not many cities and territories that have adopted integrated plans of actions to combat discrimination on an ethnic/religious basis at the local level. Even rarer are the cases in which the integrated plan has adopted a gender perspective. In Europe, the most accomplished example is the Barcelona City Action Plan against Islamophobia. In our country, some examples are those of the municipalities of Bergamo, Bologna and Turin. But very positive signals come from these Municipalities that have initiated dialogue and confrontation with Islamic communities and associations, collaborating with their representatives, recognizing their effective citizenship rights and trying to overcome the boundaries of public order and security: in many cases these paths have been successful, they have highlighted the contribution and value that Islamic associations and communities can have in the cultural and social development of the city and the territory. Turin, Milan and Bologna are examples of cities where, in collaboration with the municipal administration, Islamic communities have opened mosques to citizenship, allowing all citizens to deepen their knowledge of the Islamic religion by overcoming cultural prejudices and stereotypes. As far as practices are concerned, this first analysis shows the strong commitment made by the associations that work in the territories not only to be "recognized" but to contribute to local development from an interreligious perspective, proving to be a precious resource not only for the population of faith Islamic but for the whole community.