



Charter on the values and significance of citizenship and integration

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INTRODUCTION

The Charter on the Values and Significance of Citizenship and Integration is one of a number of initiatives undertaken by Giuliano Amato, Minister of the Interior, towards the end of 2006 to tackle the question of social unity and integration.

The objective is to set out the values and principles for all those wishing to have permanent residence in Italy irrespective of whatever religious, ethnic and/or cultural group or community to which they may belong.

The Scientific Committee whose task was to formulate the Charter on the Values and Significance of Citizenship and Integration was appointed by a decree issued by the Minister of the Interior on 13 October 2006. This Committee was made up of the following members: Professor Roberta Aluffi Beck Peccoz (University of Turin), Professor Carlo Cardia, with the role of coordinator, (Roma Tre University), The Hon. Prof. Khaled Fouad Allam (University of Trieste), Professor Adnane Mokrani (Gregorian University, Rome), and Professor Francesco Zannini (Pontifical Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Rome). Prefect Franco Testa and Vice Prefect Maria Patrizia Paba also took part in the work of the Scientific Committee.

The Scientific Committee carried out extensive consultations meeting a wide range of associations and organizations in the field of immigration including those representing and involved in religious, social, trade union and voluntary work activities, members of the “Consulta per l’Islam Italiano” and the “Consulta giovanile” for questions concerning cultural and religious pluralism, as well as experts and leading exponents of Institutions.

The Charter on the Values and Significance of Citizenship and Integration is closely linked to the Italian Constitution and to the European and International Charters on human rights. The Charter is essentially of a programmatic nature setting out guidelines for the Ministry of the Interior and is also intended as a useful instrument for immigrants, religious communities, and Italian citizens, especially the young, in order to spread a better knowledge of the problems concerning immigration and religious freedom.

The Charter on the Values and Significance of Citizenship and Integration was officially presented by the Minister of the Interior on 23 April 2007.

ITALY, A COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE AND VALUES

Italy is one of the oldest countries in Europe with its roots firmly sunk in the cultures of Ancient Greece and Rome. Italy grew and developed within a Christian framework which dominated its history and together with Judaism prepared the way for its opening towards modernity and the principles of freedom and justice.

The values on which Italian society is based is the result of the commitment of generations of men and women of different standpoints, both lay and religious, that were written into the Democratic Constitution of 1947. The Constitution marks the great divide from the totalitarianism and anti-semitism trend which poisoned twentieth century Europe with the persecution of the Jews and their culture.

The Constitution is founded on the respect for human dignity and is inspired by the principles of freedom and equality for all those living in Italy. Starting with its Constitution, Italy has taken an active role in the creation of a united Europe and of its institutions. The European Treaties and Conventions have paved the way towards the realization of an international order based on human rights, equality and solidarity among peoples.

The geographical position of Italy, the Hebrew-Christian tradition, and the liberate and democratic institutions that govern it, form the basis of its readiness to receive and welcome other populations. Set in the midst of the Mediterranean, Italy has always been a crossroads of people and different cultures; even today its population still provides evidence of this diversity.

All that which makes up the patrimony of Italy, its artistic and natural beauty, its economic and cultural resources, and its democratic institutions are there to serve the men, women and the young not only of this but also of future generations. Our Constitution safeguards and promotes inalienable human rights so as to sustain the weak, and to guarantee the development of every individual not only with regard to work possibilities and aptitude but also with regard to the moral and spiritual disposition of each one.

DIGNITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL, RIGHTS AND DUTIES

1. Italy has committed itself to ensuring that from the very moment an individual enters Italian territory he/she may enjoy basic human rights with no discrimination as to gender, race, religion and/or social standing. At the same time, every individual living in Italy is under a duty to respect the values on which society is based, the rights of others, and the duties of solidarity as required by law. In accordance with that provided by law, Italy offers political asylum and protection to those who are persecuted or prevented from exercising basic human rights in their countries of origin.
2. In providing equal rights and duties for all, the law offers its support to those, particularly women and minors, who suffer from discrimination or live in a state of need by removing the obstacles which prevent full personal development.
3. The rights to freedom and social rights that have been developed over time by our legal and political system must be extended to all immigrants. The right to life is guaranteed from its inception until its natural completion as too is the right to medical care with free treatment if necessary; special assistance is provided during maternity and infancy. The right to education is recognized as an indispensable tool for personal growth and integration in society.
4. Men and women have equal rights and enjoy the same rights both within and outside the family. Italy offers women, men and young immigrants a path towards achieving their full integration in society while fully respecting the identity of each individual. In this way, those who decide to settle in Italy are enabled to take an active part in social life.
5. In accordance with that provided by law, an immigrant can become an Italian citizen. In order to obtain Italian citizenship within the period provided for by law it is necessary to know the Italian language and the essentials of Italian history and culture as well as subscribing to the principles that govern our society. Living in the same territory means being complete citizens on a collective basis, loyally adhering to common values and responsibilities.

SOCIAL RIGHTS. EMPLOYMENT AND HEALTH

6. Italy protects and promotes all forms of employment while at the same time it condemns and fights any form of human exploitation; particularly that of women and children. Work is an aid to personal development and the fulfilment of the individual's natural abilities and skills.

7. Like any Italian citizen, an immigrant is entitled to receiving a just remuneration for the work carried out, health and welfare contributions, and the necessary support in old age as well as in the event of illness or accident as provided for by law.

Every job must be carried out in appropriate conditions for the safety and health of the person involved.

8. Whoever is a victim of harassment, discrimination, and/or exploitation at his/her place of work can appeal to public authorities, trade unions, and/or social and assistance organizations to have his/her rights respected and to be able to perform his/her duties with human dignity.

9. Citizens and immigrants are entitled to receive medical treatment in public hospitals. Medical treatments are carried out with full respect for the patient's wishes and human dignity; the sensitivity of each individual is also taken into account. Any body mutilation that is not medically necessary will be punished irrespective of whoever is responsible.

10. Italy has committed itself to ensuring that everyone has adequate housing to meet the needs of his/her family at a reasonable cost. Whoever is in a state of need, or is forced to bear excessive charges for his/her accommodation can appeal for help to public authorities and trade unions in order to have his/her rights respected.

SOCIAL RIGHTS. SCHOOL, EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

11. Children and young people have both the right and obligation to attend compulsory schooling so as to be introduced into society on an equal basis and play an active role in it. All parents, whether Italian or not, must support their children in their studies, in the first place by enrolling them in compulsory schooling which begins with primary school and continues until the child is 16 years old.

12. Education is focused on the formation of the person, to promote the knowledge of basic human and legal rights and duties, the friendly relationship among people, and the respect for and goodwill towards all forms of existing life. Furthermore, in order to promote the sharing of the said values, the school provides programmes to inform students about history, culture, and principles of the Italian and European tradition. To provide an adequate education in line with the pluralism of society and given the intercultural framework it is also essential to promote a knowledge of the cultures and religions to which the children and their families belong.

13. The school encourages acquaintance and integration among all young people, the overcoming of prejudices, and the avoidance of division and discrimination through their common upbringing. Teaching is given with full respect for the religious views and/or ideals of the young people and their families. Also, in certain situations, the school provides religious education courses voluntarily chosen by the pupils or their parents.

14. On the basis of the same values, it is also up to the means of information to further knowledge on immigration, its cultural and religious components, to fight prejudice and xenophobia. Its role is essential to spread a cultural pluralism that respects the traditions and basic values of Italian society.

15. The right of public and private bodies to establish schools and educational courses is guaranteed provided that pupils are not discriminated against for ethnic or denominational reasons and that such bodies guarantee an education in line with general teaching principles and human rights. All forms of teaching, whether given in the public or private education system, must be conducted with respect for the beliefs of every individual and aim to unite people and not divide them.

FAMILY, NEW GENERATIONS

16. Italy recognizes the rights of the family as that of a natural society based on marriage. It considers family education a necessary tool for the upbringing of new generations.

17. Marriage is founded on the equality of duties and obligations between husband and wife. This is the reason for its monogamous structure. Monogamy unites two lives and makes them jointly responsible for everything they accomplish together, starting with the upbringing of children. Italy prohibits polygamy as this is contrary to women's rights as confirmed by the principles established by European institutions.

18. The Italian system prohibits any form of coercion and violence both within and outside the family. It defends the dignity of women in any form and at any time during associative life. Freedom of marriage lies at the basis of conjugal union and implies the prohibition of coercion and forced marriages also between children. The basis of conjugal union is the freedom of marriage which is the right of young people, and also implies the prohibition of coercion and forced marriages between children.

19. Italy defends the freedom of minors in developing their own personality which is also brought about through meeting other young people and in taking part in social activities. The principle of equality is not compatible with demands for the separation of men and women, and boys and girls in public services and at work on account of denominational differences.

LAICITY AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

20. Italy is a lay country founded on the recognition of complete religious freedom whether it be that of the individual or the group. There is full religious freedom for every individual whether he/she be a citizen or a foreigner or a member of a religious community. Neither religion nor belief can be a reason for discrimination in social life.

21. All religious denominations are equally free before the law. The lay State recognizes the positive contribution that religions bring to the community and intends to emphasise the moral and spiritual patrimony of each one of them. Italy encourages inter-religious and intercultural dialogue to develop the respect for human dignity and to contribute towards the overcoming of prejudice and intolerance. The Constitution provides for agreements between the State and religious denominations with regard to the regulation of their specific legal status.

22. The principles of freedom and the rights of the individual cannot be violated in the name of any religion. Every form of violence or incitement to violence is prohibited even if motivated by religion. The law, both civil and criminal, is the same for all regardless of religion and there is only one court of jurisdiction for those who live in Italy.

23. Religious freedom and liberty of conscience include the right to have or not to have a religious faith, to practise or not to practise one's faith, to change religion, to spread it by convincing others, and to join denominational organizations. There is complete freedom of worship and everyone may fulfil religious precepts on condition they do not infringe criminal regulations or the rights of other individuals.

24. The legal and political system provides safeguards to protect freedom with regard to research, criticism and discussion even on religious matters, and prohibits any insult with regard to religion or religious sentiment. As regards State law, any difference in religion or belief is of no consequence with regard to the validity or not of any marriage.

25. Moving on from its own religious and cultural traditions, Italy respects the symbols and signs of all religions. No one may consider himself offended by the signs or symbols of any religion that is different from his/her own. As set down by International Charters, it is right that the young are educated to respect the religious beliefs of others without viewing them as reasons for division among man.

26. In Italy there are no restrictions on what people wear as long as they have been chosen in full liberty and are of no harm to the dignity of the person. Any form of clothing that covers the face is unacceptable because this prevents personal recognition and hinders the socialization of that person with others in the community.

ITALY'S INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT

27. In conformity with these principles, Italy carries out a policy of peace and respect towards all people in the world to promote the peaceful coexistence between nations and defeat war and terrorism. At an international level Italy is committed to safeguarding the environment and wealth of life on the planet.

28. Italy rejects war as a means for resolving international disputes, weapons of mass destruction, as well as any form of torture and punishment that degrades human dignity. It condemns anti-semitism which has already resulted in the genocide of the Jewish people, and any form of racism that divides man and humiliates the weak. Italy rejects any form of xenophobia which manifests itself in a phobia of Islam and discrimination against peoples from other parts of the world.

29. Along with other European countries, Italy has abolished the death penalty and is working at an international level to have it abrogated in the rest of the world. The abolition of the death penalty is a goal of civilization where respect for life prevails over the desire for revenge.

30. Italy is committed to seeing a peaceful resolution to the main international crises, in particular that of the Israel-Palestine conflict which has dragged on for such a long time. Italy's commitment has always been that of supporting a solution that permits peoples in the region to live together; firstly that of the Israelis and Palestinians in the context of two States and two democracies.

31. Italy works at an international level with other European countries to promote respect for human rights and the dignity of man throughout the world and to encourage the success of political democracy as the form of State government that allows citizens to take part in matters of public interest and the ever-increasing respect for the rights of the person.

Traduzione di Anne Monckton