

Mitterhofer Johanna

Institute for Minority Rights, European Academy of Bozen/Bolzano (EURAC), Bolzano, Italy

Migration policy aims to manage migration flows while guaranteeing the fundamental human rights of migrants and facilitating their inclusion in local society. In order to achieve this, migration policy needs to consider not only global or national developments, but also the socio-political, economic and cultural contexts at the regional and local level.

This presentation explores the relationship between migration policy and minority policy, and the opportunities and challenges that arise when migrants move to areas inhabited by minorities. It focuses on the Italian autonomous province of South Tyrol, characterized by the presence of two “historical” minorities (the German-speakers and the Ladins), the Italian-speaking population, and an increasing number of people with migration background – the so-called “new” minorities.

Within this pluriethnic context in which public resources and offices are divided neatly according to ethno-linguistic criteria, debates on migrant inclusion are closely tied to debates on its effects on the German-speaking and Ladin minorities. What are the effects of migration on the “traditional” ethno-linguistic composition of South Tyrol? Can, or should, minority rights be extended to “new” minorities?

Parallel to this concern on migration’s impact on the status quo, there are calls to overcome the established ethno-linguistic divide. Instead of focusing on identity built on language and ethnicity, they promote a common “territorial identity”, that is, an identity based on a sense of belonging to the same territory shared by all inhabitants of the region.

By exploring the various perspectives on the South Tyrolean migration policy debate and drawing on concrete case studies of initiatives promoting “territorial identity”, this presentation provides insights into the complexity of migration debates applicable not just to South Tyrol, but to all contexts where multiple, and diverse, groups with “minority status” live side by side.