

Reunification of Filipino Families in Italy: What the Youth Have to Say

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Abstract

Filipinos are among the first migrant groups that came to work in Italy, starting from the late 70s. The first wave of migrant workers, majority of them women, did not bring their families with them. But the family reunification program of the government has recently encouraged more Filipinos to bring their children to Italy, especially before they reach 18 years of age. Children who are brought to Italy, the so-called 1.25 and 1.5 generations, i.e., from about 10-18 years old, seem to experience more difficulties adjusting and integrating into Italian schools, even in re-connecting to their parents in Italy.

This study undertook a literature review of the situation of migrant children and youth in the United States (US) and in Europe, particularly Italy, in terms of their integration and performance in school and in their families, and their identity formation. Two focus group discussions were also conducted with eleven (11) Filipino youths aged 14-20 who were petitioned by their parents to join them in Italy.

Findings from the FGDs support previous studies that show the emotional difficulties faced by migrant children as indicated by communication problems and lack of closeness with their absentee parents. Further, the lack of adequate grounding in speaking and understanding the Italian language as well as socio-psychological preparation greatly impede the migrant youth's capacity to cope with school and to socialize with the Italian natives. They experience difficulties in schools and recognize the advantages of the Philippine educational system. Nevertheless, they firmly intend to remain in Italy so they could be with their parents. They have definite ambitions to finish their studies in order to find good employment and take over the income-earning responsibility from their parents.