

## Italy

### Introduction

The transformation of the role of Italy from a country of emigration par excellence to a country of immigration took place somewhat suddenly from the late 1970s onwards. Especially in the last twenty years, Italy has experienced stronger immigration than many other European countries and currently the annual growth rate of the immigrant population is one of the highest in the European Union.

Despite its young history of immigration, the country has significant experience regarding migration movements: apart from being one of the world's largest exporters of manpower in the past, Italy, from the end of the 19th century onwards, also experienced sizable movements of internal migration from the agricultural South to the more industrialized North.

In 1973, Italy, for the first time in its history, had a positive net migration rate: immigrants slightly outnumbered emigrants. From that year on immigration steadily increased. This trend has become particularly noticeable since the 1980s: the 1981 population census already counted nearly

### Background Information

**Capital:** Rome

**Official language:** Italian

**Area:** 301,340 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population (at 1 Jan. 2011):** 60,742,397

**Population density:** 201.57 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>

**Population growth:** 0.42% [2011], -0.08% [2010], -0.05% [2009]

**Foreign population as a percentage of total (at 1 Jan.):** 7.5% [2011], 7.0% [2010], 6.5% [2009]

**Labor force participation rate:** 62% [2011], 62.2% [2010], 62.4% [2009]

**Unemployment rate:** 8.0% [2011], 8.4% [2010], 7.8% [2009]

**Religions (2011):** Roman Catholics (87.8%), Protestants (1.3%), Other Christians (3.8%), Muslims (1.9%) [2007], No religion (5.8%)



211,000 immigrants. In 1991 Italy faced the first wave of "mass immigration": on only two days, around 50,000 Albanians arrived in Italy as a result of the collapse of the Albanian communist regime. The 1990s were marked by an acceleration of immigration flows. While there were 356,159 foreign residents in Italy in 1991, their number reached 1,300,000 in 2001 and increased even further to 4,500,000 in 2011. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2012 4,859,000 foreigners resided on Italian soil, representing about 8% of the country's total resident population. Since the progressive EU enlargements, immigrants especially come from Eastern European countries. Since 2004 Romanians have constituted the largest immigrant community in Italy, followed by Albanians and Moroccans.

### Historical Development of Immigration

#### Overseas emigration

In the second half of the 19th century and in the early 20th century, Italy contributed greatly to intra-European migration flows and registered sizable emigration to North and South America and Australia. Mass overseas migration started in the 1870s. From 1876 until the outbreak of World War I, almost 14 million Italians left the country. The USA turned into the principal destination for Italian emigrants. In fact, between 1901 and 1914, 40% of all Italians leaving the country

went there. Migration to the USA significantly decreased between 1917 and 1924 with the introduction of immigration quotas that limited the number of Italians permitted to enter the country to 5,000 per year. Also, the rise of the fascist regime in Italy led to increasing restrictions on emigration. Apart from the USA, other important migration destinations were Argentina and Brazil as well as France and Austria-Hungary, at the beginning of the 20th century also to an increasing extent Germany and Switzerland. For most Italians, migration was only temporary: 50% of all Italians settling in North and South America between 1905 and 1915 later returned to their home country. Italian migrants were also known as seasonal workers, thus they were nicknamed “birds of passage” in the USA and “golondrinas” (swallows) in Argentina.

migration regimes. Italy signed several such agreements: 1946 with Belgium and France; 1947 and 1948 with Argentina; 1947 with Czechoslovakia, 1951 with Canada and Australia, and 1955 with Germany. Sending Italians abroad was, at that time, considered a strategy to counteract high unemployment rates attended by rising social pressure. Between 1946 and the mid-1970s more than seven million Italians left their country, half of them eventually returned home. Labor migration flows from Italy that were driven by the demand of the importing countries, did, however, not reach the magnitude of emigration that Italy had recorded before the Second World War. Despite of these emigration movements in the post World War II period, Italy was slowly undergoing a transition, turning from a migrant sending into an immigrant receiving country. This development was accompanied by an

**Table 1 – Number of Italian emigrants by country of destination, 1861-1985**

Years	France	Germany	Switzerland	USA/ Canada	Argentina	Brazil	Australia	Other countries	Total
1861-1900	1,268,000	465,000	430,000	797,000	844,000	832,000	5,490	1,048,000	5,689,490
1901-1940	2,987,000	895,390	1,503,000	4,664,000	1,774,000	519,000	54,970	1,477,000	13,874,360
1946-1985	2,076,000	2,098,155	2,671,000	740,500	324,910	82,265	336,525	1,157,000	9,486,355
Total emigrants (1861-1985)	6,331,000	3,458,545	4,604,000	6,201,500	2,942,910	1,433,265	396,985	3,682,000	29,050,205
Returned to Italy	47%	30%	45%	12%	25%	11%	23%	67%	35%
Permanently established	53%	70%	55%	88%	74%	89%	77%	33%	65%

Source: Elaboration by the author based on Caritas-Migrantes, 2010

### Migration in the interwar period and after the Second World War

Emigration from Italy continued in the interwar period when more than 4 million people left the country. Several thousand opponents of the fascist regime fled Italy while at the same time migration towards Italy's colonies in eastern Africa increased. In 1938, Italy and Germany signed a migration agreement on the basis of which about 500,000 Italians arrived in Germany to work in factories and, to a lesser extent, in agriculture.

After the Second World War transcontinental emigration declined, while Italy was increasingly exporting manpower to those north-western European countries undergoing vigorous economic growth. Contrary to the situation before World War I, migration flows were now restricted and regulated, bilateral agreements becoming an important characteristic of labor

economic boom in the 1950s and 1960s which triggered large internal migration movements from the agricultural South to the industrialized North of the country.

### Becoming a country of immigration

In 1973 Italy, for the first time, recorded a positive migration balance, thus becoming a country of immigration which it has remained ever since. The migration surplus was mostly due to large numbers of Italians returning from abroad, inward mobility was soon exceeding outward flows. At the same time, foreign immigration increased. The first waves were composed of women from the Philippines and Central America, Eritrea and Cape Verde coming to Italy as domestic workers, and Tunisian, Senegalese and Moroccan men who were engaged mostly as fishermen in the South, as seasonal peddlers along the Italian coasts or as tomato pickers in the

plains. At the end of the 1980s, Moroccans and Senegalese represented the largest immigrant groups on Italian soil. But flows further diversified. The collapse of Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe triggered especially Albanian immigration. Thousands of refugees landed on Italian shores, most of whom entered the country illegally, pushing the Italian government to adopt measures to regulate and manage immigration flows (cf. "Migration Policies").<sup>1</sup>

## Recent Developments

In 1991, Italy was, for the first time, confronted with "mass immigration". On only two days, that is March 7th and August 8th, around 50,000 Albanian refugees landed on the coasts of Apulia after the collapse of the Albanian communist regime. The images spread by the media of this massive influx or, as it was perceived by the Italian public "invasion" of migrants, fostered feelings of concern with regard to immigration. 25,000 Albanians were sent back to their country of origin.

Yet, immigration from Albania did not come to a halt. Since 1997 Albanians have been represented among the two largest immigrant groups. Between 2003 and 2004 alone their number grew by 40%. All in all, immigration from East-

citizens from Eastern European countries in Italy the Chinese population has also experienced significant growth in recent years (cf. Table 2).

Within the last thirty years Italy has turned from a migrant sending into an immigrant receiving country. The speed of this development which is somewhat typical of other Mediterranean countries<sup>2</sup> such as Greece, Portugal and Spain as well has had a significant impact on the evolution of Italy's migration policies.

## Migration Policies

### 1980s and early 1990s

Until the late 1980s, Italy - still lacking the experience of having to deal with large numbers of immigrants – did not limit immigration. Yet, the transformation from being a country of emigration to becoming a receiving country led to the need to adopt specific and targeted political measures. In 1986, Act 943, Italy's first law on immigration, was passed which, in addition to introducing regularization for irregular immigrants, declared total parity of treatment between Italian and foreign workers, though this was principally a declaration of intent since the law itself did not foresee the adoption of concrete

**Table 2 – Number of foreign visa owners, 1992-2007. Top five countries of origin**

1992		1993		1994		1995		1996		1997		1998		1999	
Morocco	83,292	Morocco	66,526	Morocco	72,464	Morocco	73,076	Morocco	81,247	Morocco	115,026	Morocco	122,230	Morocco	128,297
Tunisia	41,547	USA	40,960	USA	42,005	USA	43,449	USA	44,830	Albania	66,608	Albania	72,551	Albania	87,595
USA	41,523	Philippines	30,220	Yugoslavia	36,782	Yugoslavia	36,855	Philippines	36,007	Philippines	56,209	Philippines	57,312	Philippines	59,074
Philippines	36,316	Tunisia	27,356	Philippines	30,992	Philippines	32,625	Yugoslavia	33,905	USA	44,873	USA	44,652	USA	45,944
Germany	26,377	Germany	26,767	Tunisia	28,856	Germany	29,028	Tunisia	30,666	Tunisia	40,002	Tunisia	41,439	China	41,237
2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005		2006		2007	
Morocco	155,864	Morocco	162,254	Morocco	167,334	Albania	171,567	Romania	244,377	Romania	249,369	Romania	271,491	Albania	282,650
Albania	133,018	Albania	146,321	Albania	157,646	Morocco	170,746	Albania	240,421	Albania	251,240	Albania	256,916	Romania	278,582
Philippines	67,386	Romania	69,999	Romania	82,555	Romania	94,818	Morocco	231,044	Morocco	235,012	Morocco	239,728	Morocco	258,571
Romania	61,212	Philippines	65,073	Philippines	67,258	Philippines	65,575	Ukraine	117,161	Ukraine	111,570	Ukraine	115,087	China	122,364
China	56,660	China	60,143	China	61,452	China	64,010	China	104,952	China	106,750	China	114,165	Ukraine	118,524

Source: Elaboration by the author based on Geo-Demo Istat data

ern European countries has significantly increased in recent years thus majorly changing the composition of the immigrant population. Most striking is the increase in the number of Romanian and Ukrainian citizens on Italian territory (cf. Table 2). Between 2003 and 2004, in only one year, the Romanian community grew by 140%, becoming the largest immigrant group in Italy in three consecutive years. Likewise, the Ukrainian population rose from 15,000 people in 2003 to more than 117,000 people in 2004, an increase of 700% in just one year. This was also an effect of the large regularization of irregular immigrants which took place in 2002/2003 (cf. "Irregular Migration"). Apart from the growing presence of

integration policies.<sup>3</sup> In 1990, partly due to external pressure imposed on Italy by other European countries engaged in the *Schengen* process and worried by the excessive permeability of the Italian border, the government passed Law 39, the so-called "Martelli law" (Legge Martelli). As a result, border controls increased, citizens of the principal sending countries were required to apply for a visa, and the expulsion of illegal immigrants was enforced. Furthermore, the law provided for setting up a yearly quota for legal entries. Thus, for the first time, Italy adopted measures to discipline immigration flows. Yet, these regulations did not result in effective border control or hindering illegal migrants from entering the country. On the

contrary, illegal immigration even increased. As a result of the sudden and unexpected influx of about 50,000 Albanian refugees on March 7 and August 8, 1991 (cf. "Recent Developments"), the issue of migration entered political center stage. In 1992, Law 91 modified criteria for naturalization and citizenship, making these easier accessible for descendants of Italian emigrants abroad and more difficult to obtain for non-EU immigrants (cf. "Citizenship").

### Late 1990s

In 1998, the center-left coalition led by Prime Minister Romano Prodi passed the "Turco-Napolitano" law (Act 40), Italy's first systematic migration law. Again, irregular migration was at the center of attention. The law aimed at reducing the number of clandestine entries and adopting more effective repatriation measures. Also, Centers for Temporary Detention ("Centri di permanenza temporanea" - CPT) for migrants soon to be deported were established. At the same time, the law granted access to education and the national health system for all immigrants regardless of their legal status (including irregular migrants). It placed legal migrants on an equal footing with Italians regarding social rights, allowed for family reunification, and introduced permanent residence permits ("Carta di soggiorno") that foreigners can apply for after legally residing in Italy for a period of at least five years. A Fund for Migration Policies was introduced in order to finance initiatives supporting the integration of immigrants into Italian majority society.

### After the turn of the millennium: the "Bossi-Fini" law and its repercussions

In 2002 the Italian government – a center-right coalition under Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi that took office after elections in 2001 – approved the "Bossi-Fini" law (Act 189) which (re)established restrictive positions on immigration by limiting legal entries and by focusing on the introduction of more effective tools to fight irregular migration.

As a consequence, third-country nationals must now have a job contract prior to immigration. Temporary visas to search for work are no longer available. Also, temporary immigration is privileged over permanent settlement: the maximum dura-

tion of a residence permit issued to immigrants who hold a fixed-term work contract has been reduced to one year while immigrants with unlimited employment contracts are issued a two-year residence permit. In case of dismissal, the time allowed to search for a new job has been reduced from 12 to six months.

In terms of fighting illegal migration, the law provides for the immediate expulsion of clandestine immigrants who are accompanied to the country's borders by the police. Furthermore, suspected illegal immigrants are taken to Temporary Detention Centers, in order to be identified. If the police fail to discover the identity, the immigrant will be detained for between six months and up to a year, or deported.

The law also provides for the engagement of neighboring countries into the prevention of illegal immigration to Italy. Ships of illegal immigrants can be stopped at sea where the identification of those entitled to political asylum takes place. This clause has provoked concerns in the international community about the right to asylum. Especially human rights organizations suspect that some immigrants who meet the requirements to be granted asylum status are sent back to their countries of origin where their lives are at risk.

Yet, despite this restrictive stance on immigration, between 2002 and 2003 the center-right coalition also granted regularization to about 634,700 people and thus ran Europe's largest amnesty program.

To date, the "Bossi-Fini" law is still the main legislation concerning migration in Italy, although, over the years, there have been many proposals for reform. These proposals especially target the provision of the law that third-country immigrants in order to enter the country legally must already have a job contract. Paradoxically, this rule leads people to enter the country illegally in order to search for a job, then to return to their home country where they apply for legal admission. In summary, the law is highly controversial because it considers migration a social danger that needs to be contained, even at the cost of severely cutting down on immigrants' rights.<sup>4</sup>

### "Pacchetto Sicurezza"

In 2007, Giuliano Amato and Paolo Ferrero, ministers of the center-left coalition - back in office since 2006 and led once again by Romano Prodi - pushed for a legislative reform with regard to immigration. They introduced a bill which aimed to change the most controversial clauses of the "Bossi-Fini" law. Due to a change in government in 2008, their attempt was, however, not successful.

In 2008 a center-right coalition under prime minister Silvio Berlusconi took office. Interior Minister Maroni introduced the so-

**Table 3 – Number of foreign residents and annual increase, 2006-2011. Data as of 1<sup>st</sup> January**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 <sup>a</sup>
Total foreign residents	2,670,514	2,938,922	3,432,651	3,891,295	4,235,059	4,570,317	4,859,000
Increase over previous year (%)	-	10.1%	16.8%	13.4%	8.8%	7.9%	6.3%

<sup>a</sup>: estimate by Istat, 2012

Source: Elaboration by the author based on Geo-Demo Istat data

called “Pacchetto Sicurezza” (“Security Package”, law 125/2008, amended the following year by the same government with the law 94/2009). These laws present migration as a threat because they draw a connection between illegal immigration, security and organized crime. The main provisions of the laws constituting the “Security Package” are the following:

- Illegal entry and stay are declared a crime and are punished with a fine reaching from 5,000 to 10,000 euros [law 94/2009];
- Imprisonment from six months to three years and confiscation of the apartment of those who rent to clandestine immigrants [law 125/2008].
- The consequences for employers who employ irregular foreigners are aggravated [law 125/2008].
- It is now possible to keep illegal immigrants up to 180 days in so-called Identification and Expulsion Centres (“Centri di identificazione ed espulsione” - CIE<sup>5</sup>) in order to discover their identity and prepare subsequent repatriation [law 94/2009].

As can be seen from the development of Italian immigration policies, the “fight” against illegal immigration has, from the beginning, been at the heart of the political debate on immigration and respective legislation (cf. “Irregular Migration”).

## The Immigrant Population

### Development

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2012 more than 4,850,000 foreigners were estimated to live in Italy, that is 8% of the total population. Compared to the previous years, Italy’s foreign population has significantly increased not only in total numbers but also with regard to their proportional share in the total population: in 2011, 4,570,317 foreigners were registered as residents in Italy, equal to 7.5% of the total population, while in 2010, 4,235,059 lived on Italian soil, constituting 7% of the total population. However, as can be seen from Table 3, the growth of the foreign population has slowed down in the last few years.

The reasons for this slowdown are to be found in the recent economic recession that has hit Italy, like all of Europe. The economic crisis has caused a worsening of conditions for stay and employment, resulting in increasing numbers of foreign residents returning to their home country or moving to other countries.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the decrease in Italy’s foreign population is also due to naturalization. In 2010, for example, 65,938 people obtained Italian citizenship (+11.1% over 2009) (cf. “Citizenship”).

### Countries of origin

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, Romanians were the largest immigrant group, representing 21% of Italy’s foreign population, followed by the Albanian community (10.6%), Moroccans (9.9%), Chinese (4.6%) and Ukrainians (4.4%) (cf. Table 4).

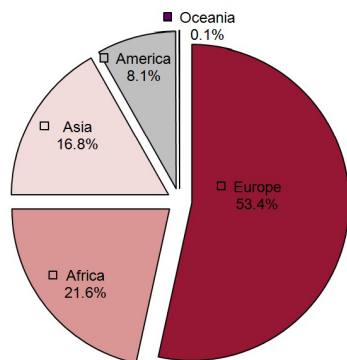
**Table 4 – Number of foreign residents and percentage of total foreign residents, by gender. Top twenty countries of origin. Data at 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011**

	Males	Females	F/M*100	Total number	In %
Romania	439,311	529,265	120	968,576	21.2%
Albania	259,352	223,275	86	482,627	10.6%
Morocco	254,906	197,518	77	452,424	9.9%
China	108,418	101,516	94	209,934	4.6%
Ukraine	40,617	160,113	394	200,730	4.4%
Philippines	56,559	77,595	137	134,154	2.9%
Republic of Moldova	42,997	87,951	205	130,948	2.9%
India	73,446	47,590	65	121,036	2.6%
Poland	31,415	77,603	247	109,018	2.4%
Tunisia	67,435	38,856	58	106,291	2.3%
Peru	39,310	59,293	151	98,603	2.2%
Ecuador	37,985	53,640	141	91,625	2.0%
Egypt	62,840	27,525	44	90,365	2.0%
Macedonia	50,330	39,570	79	89,900	2.0%
Bangladesh	55,642	26,809	48	82,451	1.8%
Sri Lanka	45,007	36,087	80	81,094	1.8%
Senegal	61,242	19,747	32	80,989	1.8%
Pakistan	49,584	26,136	53	75,720	1.7%
Nigeria	24,549	29,064	118	53,613	1.2%
Serbia	28,537	24,417	86	52,954	1.2%
Other countries	371,729	485,536	131	857,265	18.8%
Total first twenty nationalities	1,829,482	1,883,570	103	3,713,052	81.2%
Total foreign residents	2,201,211	2,369,106	108	4,570,317	100%

Source: Elaboration by the author based on Geo-Demo Istat data

A look not at countries but regions of origin shows that immigration to Italy is predominantly European (53.4%). More than half of the foreigners from European countries residing in Italy are citizens of an EU-member-state, most of them originate from countries that have only recently joined the Union (Romania, Poland, Bulgaria); the remainder originate principally from Central and Eastern Europe (especially Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova and Macedonia). The strong presence of immigrants from Central and Eastern European countries (citizens of EU and non-EU countries from this region combined represent 49.4% of all foreigners in Italy) is mainly due to the private sector’s need for domestic helpers and care workers. This sector employs large numbers of foreigners from these countries.

**Figure 1 - Foreign residents in Italy, by geopolitical macro-area of origin.**  
Data at 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011



Source: Elaboration by the author based on Geo-Demo Istat Data

As far as non-European countries are concerned, there is a prevalence of African citizens, mainly coming from North Africa (Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt in particular). This group represents 21.6% of Italy's foreign population. Immigrants from Asia are mostly citizens of China, the Philippines and India, representing 16.8% of the country's foreign population. 8.1% of all foreign citizens residing in Italy come from the Americas, mainly from Peru and Ecuador.

### Gender distribution

The overall distribution by gender is balanced, with a slight prevalence of women, but it is strongly imbalanced within the various communities. Women dominate notably among the Polish, Ukrainians, Moldavians, Romanians, Peruvians, Ecuadorians and Filipinos, while men are in the majority among citizens of Senegal, Egypt, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Tunisia, India, Ghana, Morocco, Sri Lanka, Albania and China (cf. Table 4).

These differences are due to deeply rooted forms of segmentation by gender on the job market, as well as to different settlement patterns by nationality. The sector of personal and family services (help with children, the elderly and the sick, housework and other services, etc.) is emblematic for this phenomenon. Workers are almost exclusively female and the majority originates from countries such as the Ukraine, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Peru, Ecuador and the Philippines. Immigrants from these countries of origin have established forms of chain migration that lead to the placement of further immigrants from the same region in the service and care sector.

### Territorial distribution

Concerning the territorial distribution of immigrants in Italy, the majority of foreigners are concentrated in the northern (61.3%) and central (25.2%) regions of the country, while only 13.5% of all immigrants reside in Southern Italy. The regions accumulating the greatest number of foreigners are Lombardy and Lazio because their metropolitan capitals Mi-

lan and Rome alone attract large numbers of immigrants. Considering not absolute numbers but the percentage of immigrants over the total population, the highest concentration of immigrants is to be found in Emilia-Romagna, where the foreign population represents 11.3% of all residents, followed by Lombardy (10.7%) and Veneto (10.2%), whereas the national average of the foreign population was 7.5% of the total population in 2011.

While large cities and municipalities are generally the most important recipients of immigrants, there are also some small Italian towns, almost all in the North of the country, where the percentage of foreigners is particularly high, in some cases reaching 33% of the city's total population. This, for instance, is the case in the Ligurian municipality of Airole (Imperia) which has about 500 inhabitants and almost one in every three residents is a foreigner.<sup>7</sup>

This distribution pattern reflects the economic and productive structure of the country that is based on the diffusion of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs).

Territorial distribution differs among immigrant groups. Albanian citizens are prevalent in Apulia, the region facing the Albanian coast. The largest foreign community in Emilia-Romagna are Moroccans. Tunisians are mostly concentrated in Sicily, where they have carved out a leading part in the fishing sector. Liguria and Campania show a high density of Ecuadorians and Ukrainians while the Chinese are concentrated in cities in northern and central regions of Italy that represent industrial and manufacturing zones like, for example, Prato, near Florence, where the Chinese community constitutes about 40% of all foreign residents.

Territorial distribution mirrors the map of the foreign labour market, which is fairly segmented according to gender and ethnic origin and is maintained and supplied through migration chains.<sup>8</sup>

## Citizenship

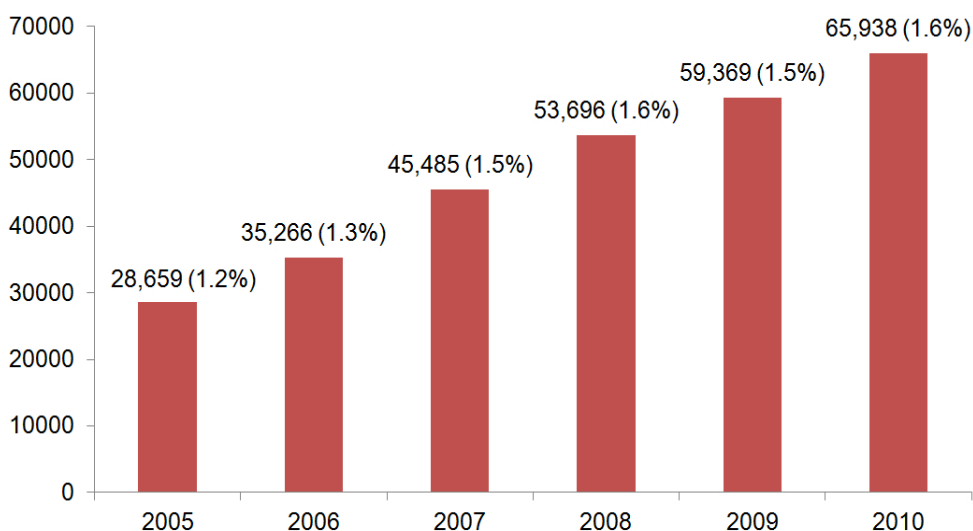
The first law on citizenship was passed in 1912 (Act 555). It established the *jus sanguinis* principle whereby only descendants of Italians had the right to obtain Italian citizenship, and predominantly the male line of descent. Thus, Children automatically acquired their father's citizenship. Foreign women married to an Italian man were granted Italian citizenship whereas Italian women lost Italian citizenship in case of marriage with a foreign national if they acquired the citizenship of their husband.

Since 1992 citizenship and naturalisation have been regulated by law 91 which abolished the gender differences of the previous law with regard to acquiring Italian citizenship. It is, however, still based on the concept of *jus sanguinis*: the law eased access to citizenship for descendants of Italian emigrants but did not grant the same right to Italy's immigrant population.

Acquisition of citizenship according to the *jus soli* principle is limited to children whose parents are either unknown or stateless or if children are not automatically granted citizenship by their parents' country of origin. The law further admits requests for naturalisation from non-EU citizens legally resident in Italy for at least ten years (four years for EU citizens).

Furthermore, citizenship can be obtained through marriage to an Italian citizen after the foreign spouse has been legally resident on Italian territory for two years following the marriage (for three years if he/she is resident abroad). Second generation immigrants, born in Italy of parents with foreign citizenship may apply for Italian citizenship during a period of twelve months following their 18th birthday if they have lived continuously in Italy until adulthood. This law also allows for dual citizenship.

**Figure 2 - Acquisitions of Italian citizenship and percentage of total foreign population, 2005-2010**



Source: Elaboration by the author based on Geo-Demo Istat data

Against the background of a growing immigrant population, the number of foreign citizens acquiring Italian citizenship continuously increased in the past years. Between 2005 and 2010 more than 288,000 people were naturalized. In 2010, 1.6% of the immigrant population became Italian citizens (cf. Figure 2).

## Immigrant Integration and Integration Policies

### Integration into the education system

The inclusion of non-Italian students into the education system is at the centre of social policy debate in recent years, mainly due to the fact that the number of foreign students in compulsory education is steadily increasing. Data on education shows that in the School Year (S.Y.) 2010/2011 in the Italian School System there were 711,064 students without Italian citizenship (7.9% of the total student population in Italy). The number of non-Italian students increased by 5.4% over the previous S.Y. In comparison to the years before, this increase was lower than that which occurred in the school years 2009/2010 (+7% over previous S.Y. 2008/2009) and

2008/2009 (+9.6% over S.Y. 2007/2008). This increase is mainly due to a growing number of second-generation immigrants - non-nationals born and raised in Italy - entering the Italian school system.<sup>9</sup>

Currently, primary schools hold the biggest share of non-Italian students with 254,644 admissions (9% of all children enrolled in Primary School are non-nationals). However, the most significant increase in non-Italian students the last decade was registered by Upper Secondary Schools, although at this school level the incidence of non-Italians on the total of students is still quite low (5.8%).

Italians and foreign students show differences in the type of Upper Secondary Schools they chose to go to: while non-Italian students are concentrated in "Istituti Professionali" (Vocational Institutes) (40.4%) and in "Istituti Tecnici" (Technical Institutes) (38%), and only to a lower extent in "Licei" (High Schools/Grammar Schools) (18.7%), Italian students most commonly prefer "Licei" (43.9%) and "Istituti Tecnici" (33.2%) and, to a lesser extent, "Istituti Professionali" (19.2%). There is also a significant difference in school performance between Italian and foreign students, especially at the Upper Secondary School level: in the S.Y. 2009/2010, about 30% of non-Italian students were not promoted to the next S.Y. (about twice the rate recorded among Italian students) and thus had to repeat one year in order to improve their grades.<sup>10</sup>

### Labor market integration

Another key indicator of integration into society is job placement: the employment rate of foreigners in Italy is, in fact, higher than that of Italians (in 2010 it was 67.0% compared to 60.6% among Italians). However, the unemployment rate among foreign residents is higher than that of Italians (11.6% and 8.1%, respectively). This is partly due to the fact that foreigners are concentrated in low-skilled job positions, the ones most affected by the current economic crisis.<sup>11</sup>

### Social rights and political participation

Italy lacks a systematic and coherent integration policy, though there are numerous laws regulating the various areas of social integration of migrants. Insufficient long-term political planning has resulted, up to now, in "emergency" reactions to the needs associated with the phenomenon of migra-

tion, mostly limited to the sphere of social policies. Immigrants have been granted social rights (especially regarding employment, health and education) while recognition of political rights lags behind.<sup>12</sup> Despite numerous reform attempts over the last years, political representation, undoubtedly a fundamental element of inclusion into society and participation in public life, is limited. The right to vote is reserved for EU members who request it, limited to local elections and elections to the European parliament. On the local level, some cities such as Modena, Padua, and Turin, but also some provinces and regions have established so-called "Consulte degli Stranieri", political consultative bodies composed of locally elected migrants, which are supposed to politically represent non-EU citizens. These consultative bodies do, however, only have advisory and not decisional power, therefore political influence of non-EU citizens is very limited.

### Weaknesses of Italy's integration policy and current developments

Weaknesses of Italy's integration policy are especially due to the ineffective and inhomogeneous implementation of actual policy. Decentralization and different socio-economic conditions in the various regions of Italy lead to an unequal treatment of the immigrant population, some regions providing more opportunities and rights to immigrants than others. In general, the implementation of immigrant integration policies is more effective in the North of the country, where social, welfare and health services are more efficient, than in the South, where there is more competition with the local population for access to resources and services, and it is more difficult to find work.

Also, the recent economic recession has an impact on immigrant integration policies because it erodes the social sector and therefore the backbone of such policies. Policy gaps and lacking implementation is oftentimes substituted by religious institutions, trade unions and non-profit organizations which provide support for immigrants in situations such as their initial reception or job placement. Integration thus takes place on an informal level, through mediation from voluntary associations, the actions of ethnic networks and through the workplace. Good practices, especially at the local level, play a much more important role in integrating immigrants than official policies do.

The Security Act 94 of 2009 has brought about conditions that are slightly less favorable to integration since they declare illegal migration a crime and clamp down on conditions for family reunifica-

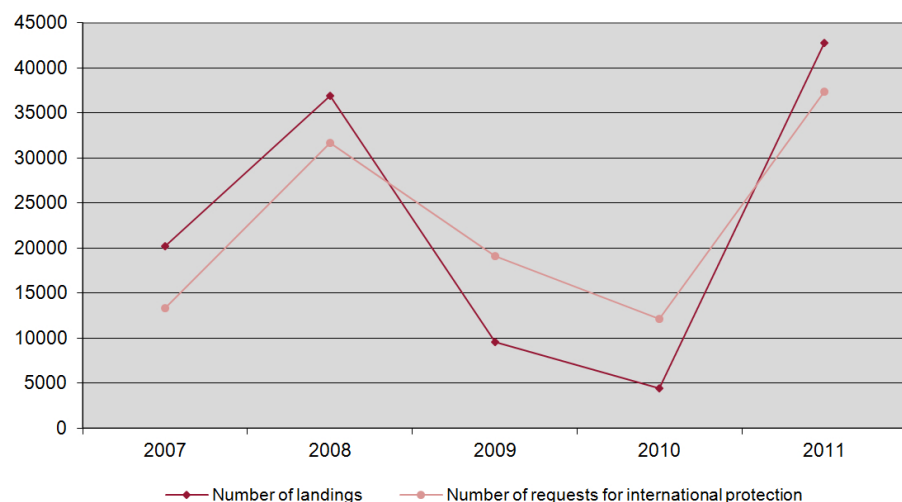
tion which is currently only possible if the immigrant who wants to bring his family to Italy can ensure their subsistence and if Italian authorities have verified that housing conditions meet sanitary requirements. EU citizens are exempt from these rules. By dpR<sup>13</sup> 179/2011, passed by Italy's president Giorgio Napolitano on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012, non-EU foreigners who intend to request permission to stay longer than one year must sign an Integration Agreement with the Italian State. This involves an evaluation of the applicant's capacity for integration, based on several socio-economic indicators such as knowledge of the Italian language and culture, the educational level reached, professional qualifications and employment. Within two years of stay, immigrants must reach a minimum point score in order to be able to renew their residence permit.

## Irregular Migration

### "Clandestine" immigrants and "irregular" immigrants

Irregular Migration has always been a crucial problem in the debate on immigration in Italy, because the issue of and thus the discourse on immigration is strongly influenced by a strong presence of irregular migrants on Italian territory. The Italian law distinguishes between *irregular* immigration and *clandestine* immigration, a distinction which is based on the status of the immigrant at the time of entry into the country. "Clandestine" immigrants entered Italy without a required entry visa while "irregular" immigrants are individuals who entered the country with a valid visa which they then overstayed, whereby their stay becomes illegal. Most illegal immigrants in Italy fall under the category of "irregular" immigration. This phenomenon seems to be so widespread that some researchers believe that almost all migrants from non-EU member states residing in Italy have lived illegally in the country for at least a certain period of time.<sup>14</sup>

Figure 3 – Number of landings on Italian shores compared with number of requests for international protection, 2007-2011



Source: Elaboration by the author based on data provided by the Ministry of the Interior



### Landings on Italian coasts

Special attention has been dedicated to the landing of immigrants - in many cases refugees - on Italy's coast since they are considered clandestine at the moment of their arrival given that they do not possess of the necessary legal entry documents.

The first decade of this century saw landings of African and Asian clandestine immigrants on the coasts of Sicily (especially from Iraq, Liberia, Sudan, Morocco, Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia) - between 2007 and 2008 Italy recorded more than 57,000 arrivals by sea. These numbers decreased in the following years. New waves of arrivals were then recorded with the outbreak of the so-called "Arab Spring" in 2011. Immigrants arriving by boat on the coast of Sicily and the Island of Lampedusa mostly originated from Tunisia and Libya. In 2011 alone, more than 50,000 refugees came to Italy via these routes (cf. "Refuge and Asylum"). Yet, many immigrants did not even reach the Italian coast but lost their lives at sea.<sup>15</sup>

### Size of the irregular immigrant population

Evaluating the true dimension of irregularity is not easy. Estimations rely on the number of cases discovered in the context of regularization procedures, and on other kinds of indirect sources such as research on illegal work carried out by the Ministry of Labour. Recent research done by ISMU (Initiatives and Studies on Multiethnicity) comes to the conclusion that on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011 about 443,000 irregular migrants were living in Italy, a slight decrease as compared to the previous year (454,000) and a strong decrease as compared to 2008, when they were estimated to be 651,000.<sup>16</sup> The number of illegal immigrants, in fact, varies enormously from year to year. This fluctuation does not only stem from the actual influx of new irregular immigrants but also depends on regularization programs, changes in the legal status of those who legally stayed in Italy for a certain period of time but then overstayed their visa and thus became irregular migrants, and consequences of EU-enlargement. The drop in the number of persons being illegally present on Italian territory registered after 2008, for example, might be interpreted in the light of the entry of Romania and Bulgaria into the European Union the previous year.

### Amnesties

Regularization of illegal immigrants is a structural part of Italy's migration policy. From the Eighties up to the present day, Italian governments have undertaken five big regularization programs, so-called *sanatorie* (1986, 1990, 1995, 1998 and 2002), granting legal status to over 1,400,000 foreign citizens.<sup>17</sup> The *sanatoria* of 2002, under the "Bossi-Fini" Law, alone allowed more than 630,000 migrant workers to emerge from illegality. In terms of numbers it might be considered the most important regularization program ever carried out in Italy.<sup>18</sup>

Amnesties as a means of retrospective immigration management are typical for Mediterranean countries and are sub-

**Table 5 – Requests for protection and main countries of origin of asylum seekers, 1990-2011**

	Requests for protection	Top three countries of origin of requests
1990	4,573	1) Albania, 2) Romania, 3) Ethiopia
1991	28,400	1) Albania, 2) Romania, 3) Somalia
1992	2,970	1) Romania, 2) Somalia, 3) Eritrea
1993	1,736	1) Romania, 2) Ethiopia, 3) former Yugoslavia
1994	2,259	1) Romania, 2) Ethiopia, 3) Sudan
1995	2,039	1) Romania, 2) Iraq, 3) Sudan
1996	844	1) Iraq, 2) Ethiopia, 3) Zaire
1997	2,595	1) Albania, 2) Iraq, 3) Turkey
1998	18,496	1) former Yugoslavia, 2) Iraq, 3) Turkey
1999	37,318	1) former Yugoslavia, 2) Iraq, 3) Turkey
2000	24,296	1) Iraq, 2) Turkey, 3) former Yugoslavia
2001	21,575	1) Iraq, 2) Turkey, 3) former Yugoslavia
2002	18,754	1) Iraq, 2) former Yugoslavia, 3) Liberia
2003	15,274	1) Somalia, 2) Liberia, 3) Eritrea
2004	10,869	1) former Yugoslavia, 2) Romania, 3) Nigeria
2005	10,704	1) former Yugoslavia, 2) Eritrea, 3) Romania
2006	10,026	1) Eritrea, 2) former Yugoslavia, 3) Nigeria
2007	13,310	1) Eritrea, 2) Ivory Coast, 3) Nigeria
2008	31,723	1) Nigeria, 2) Somalia, 3) Eritrea
2009	19,090	1) Nigeria, 2) Somalia, 3) Pakistan
2010	12,121	1) former Yugoslavia, 2) Nigeria, 3) Pakistan
2011	37,350	1) Nigeria, 2) Tunisia, 3) Ghana

Source: Elaboration by the author based on data provided by the Italian Ministry of the Interior

ject to controversial political debates. It is important to point out that regularization cannot be deemed to substitute coherent migration policies for various reasons. First, it only grants a temporary legal status or document (residence permit) to migrants. This status or document is subject to annual renewal that is reapproved on the basis of specific requirements, such as employment and accommodation. It is possible that a migrant who was able to regularize his status falls back into irregularity if he cannot meet these prerequisites necessary to renew his residence permit. Second, equal access to regularization programs is not guaranteed. In fact, only those migrants can take advantage of a regularization program who have an employment contract and thus a regular job. Last, regularization programs seem to induce a chain

reaction, encouraging more illegal immigration by instilling into the collective migrant imagination the idea that – once on Italian soil - it will be possible to sooner or later regularize one's status.<sup>19</sup>

In a nutshell, those programs undertaken by Italian governments, have, on the one hand, brought many immigrants out of illegality, but are, on the other hand, simply an acknowledgement of the ineffectiveness of existing migration policies and the failure to design foresightful strategies to regulate entries and reception of immigrants. Regularization can thus be regarded as a kind of "emergency" management. As long as the Italian economy calls for cheap and flexible labor the phenomenon of irregular migration, comprising illegal entries, the absence of a valid visa or residence permit and illicit employment, will keep on playing a central role with regard to immigration in Italy.<sup>20</sup>

## Refuge and Asylum

The "Bossi-Fini" law (Law 189/2002) considerably modified previous legislation on refugees and asylum. As a result, the "Commissione centrale per il riconoscimento dello status di rifugiato" (Central Commission for the Recognition of Refugee Status) was replaced by the "Commissione nazionale per il diritto di asilo" (National Commission for the Right of Asylum) which has a decentralized structure made up of local commissions all over Italy (located in Gorizia, Milan, Rome, Foggia, Siracusa, Crotone, Trapani, Bari, Caserta, Turin, Bologna) which handle the requests of refugees residing within the boundaries of their territories. These local commissions are obliged by law to hear the applicant within 30 days from submission of the request and to come to a decision within the following three days.

### Controlling the inflow of asylum seekers

Over the last 10 years, there has been a discontinuous trend concerning asylum applications. This development has to be regarded against the background of arrivals by sea on Italian shores, because the majority of the immigrants coming to Italy this way are in fact refugees and asylum seekers (cf. Figure 3).

In 2008, for example, 13% of all immigrants coming to Italy arrived by sea. Of these 75% applied for asylum; 50% of them were finally granted some form of protection.<sup>21</sup> The fall in numbers of asylum applications in 2009 and 2010 was due to the ratification of the "Trattato di amicizia, partenariato e cooperazione" (Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation) with Libya, approved by Parliament in February 2009, whereby Libya agreed to fight illegal migration by preventing immigrants to depart from its shores. The treaty has, in short, resulted in increasing border controls.<sup>22</sup> The ratification of this treaty has raised much concern among human rights associations, especially at the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The controversies mainly concern the fact that the management and control of the flows of asylum seekers fleeing war-torn countries, primarily in sub-Saharan Africa, was assigned to Libya, a country that has not signed the Geneva Refugee Convention.<sup>23</sup>

### Current developments

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the number of European asylum seekers is shrinking whereas the number of people who originate from African countries and apply for asylum is increasing (cf. Table 5).

In 2011, Italian authorities received 37,350 applications for asylum, three out of four asylum seekers came from an African country, especially Nigeria (7,030 requests), Tunisia (4,805), Ghana (3,402) and Mali (2,607). The same year, the National Commission for the Right of Asylum gave a positive answer to 40% of the requests examined, while protection was denied in 44% of all examined cases (of the remaining 16% of asylum applications 9% could not be traced and 7% had another outcome<sup>24</sup>).

### Future Challenges

The future scenario of migration in Italy depends on how three main issues will be addressed in the near future. At the level of policies the question how the management of immigration flows as well as the inclusion of the immigrant population into the Italian (mainstream) society can be improved is at the centre of attention. A second issue is the perception of immigration by the Italian public. Will immigration and immigrants continue to be viewed in a rather negative light or will both be regarded as a chance rather than a threat? Finally, recent international developments such as the economic crisis and recent political changes in many North African countries had and will continue to have an impact on immigration patterns in Italy. How to deal with the repercussions of these events will be a political and economic challenge Italy needs to find answers to.

With regard to immigration policies, there is no doubt that one of Italy's biggest challenges is that connected to irregular migration. It is necessary to develop appropriate measures to reduce the number of migrants living in irregularity on Italian soil because their irregular status is closely linked to social marginalization especially due to an irregular migrant's lack in e.g. social and political rights. Also, coherent integration policies have to be designed, including the rethinking of the concept of citizenship and naturalization against the background of Italy's current character as a country of immigration.

How immigration is perceived by the Italian public also depends on the question how it is dealt with at the political level. Especially right-wing parties, like the *Northern League* (Lega Nord), tend to exploit the topic for electoral purposes by drawing a close connection between immigration and public security and by focusing exclusively on the criminalization of irregular migration. In order to win votes they present immigrants as competitors for jobs, thereby blaming immigrants to be one reason for unemployment among Italian nationals. This is especially dangerous against the background of the current economic crisis that has predominantly affected vulnerable groups, including immigrants. The worsening of the job market for both immigrants and Italians may lead to increasing competition for work and may provoke social conflicts as well as changes in immigration patterns in the com-

ing years. Despite this discourse, there is also a tendency towards a growing awareness among the Italian public of the complementary role of immigrant labor especially with regard to specific economic sectors, such as care work and construction, where Italians do not want to work.

Finally, international developments have an impact on immigration patterns in Italy such as the “Arab Spring” in 2011 that has caused new migration movements from North Africa to Italy and Europe. Against this background, weaknesses of the Italian refugee reception and asylum system came to light that have to be addressed in the near future.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Bertagna/Maccari-Clayton (2011).
- <sup>2</sup> For more information on the so-called “Mediterranean Model of immigration” see Pugliese (2002).
- <sup>3</sup> Pastore (2009).
- <sup>4</sup> Rusconi (2010).
- <sup>5</sup> With the law 125/2008, the “Temporary Detention Centers” (CPT), established in 1998, adopt the name “Identification and Expulsion Centres” (CIE).
- <sup>6</sup> Ismu (2011a), Istat (2011).
- <sup>7</sup> Istat (2011).
- <sup>8</sup> Istat (2011).
- <sup>9</sup> Levels 0 (Early Childhood Education), 1 (Primary) and 3 (Lower Secondary) of ISCED classification 2011 (International Standard Classification of Education) (Cf. [http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/UNESCO\\_GC\\_36C-19\\_ISCED\\_EN.pdf](http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/UNESCO_GC_36C-19_ISCED_EN.pdf)). The education system in Italy is divided into five levels. The first three levels are the same for everyone: “scuola dell’infanzia” (Kindergarten, for children aged between 3 and 6 years), “scuola primaria” (Primary School, for children aged between 6 and 11), “scuola secondaria di primo grado” (Lower Secondary School, for students aged between 11 and 14 years). Having passed these three stages, students make a choice between several types of Upper Secondary Schools (5 years) differentiated by subjects and activities or between Regional Professional Schools (2 or 3 years). Concerning Upper Secondary Schools, the main division is between the “Liceo” (High School/Grammar School), the “Istituto Tecnico” (Technical Institute) and the “Istituto Professionale” (Vocational Institute). The fifth educational level is University which is accessible after having completed 5 years of any type of Upper Secondary School.
- <sup>10</sup> Miur (2011), Ismu (2011b).
- <sup>11</sup> Istat (2012).
- <sup>12</sup> Ambrosini (2005).
- <sup>13</sup> DPR (“Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica”) is an Act passed by the President of the Republic.
- <sup>14</sup> Arango/Finotelli (2009), Caponio/Colombo (2005).
- <sup>15</sup> According to estimations of “Fortress Europe” since 1994 6,226 people died or were missing in the Strait of Sicily along the routes that go from Libya (from Zuwarah, Tripoli and Misratah), Tunisia (Sousse, Mahdia and Chebba) and Egypt (in particular the area of Alexandria) to the islands of Lampedusa, Pantelleria, Malta and the southeastern coast of Sicily. 1,822 of them only in 2011.
- <sup>16</sup> Ismu (2011a).
- <sup>17</sup> Arango/Finotelli (2009). To these must be added that of 2009, exclusively for domestic workers and care workers, which resulted in about 295,000 applications (see British Council, Migration Policy Group 2011).
- <sup>18</sup> Caponio/Colombo (2005).
- <sup>19</sup> Jahn/Straubhaar (1999).
- <sup>20</sup> Arango/Finotelli (2009), Cnel (2008), Sciortino (2006).
- <sup>21</sup> Types of protection: international protection (temporary visa renewable during the procedure), refugee status (5-year visa, renewable), subsidiary protection (3-year visa, renewable), humanitarian protection (1-year visa, renewable). For further information, see SPRAR (2011).
- <sup>22</sup> SPRAR (2011). Because of the Libyan revolution the treaty is currently temporarily suspended, although Libya has repeatedly affirmed its intention to reactivate it.

<sup>23</sup> "World Report 2012: European Union", online at <http://www.hrw.org/>.

<sup>24</sup> Withdrawals and transfers due to Dublin requests.

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### Online resources

Cestim - Documentation on Migration Web Site:  
<http://www.cestim.it/>

Cnel – National Council on Economy and Labor:  
<http://www.portalecnel.it/>

Fieri – European and International Forum on Migration Research:  
<http://www.fieri.it/>

Fortress Europe:  
<http://fortresseurope.blogspot.it/>

Inps – National Institute for Social Insurance:  
<http://www.inps.it/newportal/default.aspx>

IOM – International Organization for Migration:  
<http://www.iom.int>

Ismu - Initiatives and Studies on Multiethnicity:  
<http://www.ismu.org/>

Istat – National Institute of Statistics:  
<http://www.istat.it/>

Ministry of the Interior:  
[www.interno.it](http://www.interno.it)

Miur - Ministry of Education, University and Research:  
[www.istruzione.it](http://www.istruzione.it)

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Publishers: Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS) of the University of Osnabrück, Neuer Graben 19/21, 49069 Osnabrück, Germany  
Tel.: +49 (0)541 969 4384, Fax: +49 (0)541 969 4380, E-Mail: [imis@uni-osnabrueck.de](mailto:imis@uni-osnabrueck.de)

German Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpj), 53113 Bonn; office in Berlin, Friedrichstraße 50, 10117 Berlin, Germany; with the collaboration of Network Migration in Europe e.V.

Editorial staff: Vera Hanewinkel, Apl. Prof. Dr. Jochen Oltmer (head)

Focus Migration country profiles (ISSN 1864-6220) and policy briefs (ISSN 1864-5704) are produced by the above-named cooperation partners.

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