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Migration trends in Italy

In few decades Italy has turned from an emigration country into an immigration country. Italy is a country which has **60 million** people of Italian origins, the children and grandchildren of Italian spread all over the world - and still today the number of Italian living abroad (**3,000,000**, according to the Aire data) is slightly lower than the number of immigrants living legally in Italy. In general terms, however, the scenario is changing due to the high mobility of people from the South to the North. In today's world about **200 million** people live in a country other than the country where they were born. This figure is expected to double by 2020.

Over the last three decades, Italy has witnessed a real inter-ethnic revolution due to the arrival of migrants from more than **200** different nations. According to the Population Reference Bureau, Italy ranks second in the world among the countries which attract the greatest number of immigrants: after the United States (with a million of new immigrants per year), Italy has an average slightly lower than **300,000**.

Since the 1970s the migration issue has started to gain relevance in Italy. In **1970** total migrants to Italy amounted to **146,989**, equal to 0.3% of the Italian population. Since then, a gradual – though relentless - increase of immigration flows has been recorded:

in **1995** foreigners living in Italy were **677,791** (equal to **1.2 %** of the Italian population);
in **2000** they already were **1,340,000 (2.4%)**;

This growth continued until **2003** reaching **1,503,000 (2.7%** of the total population).

Since then, however, the increase has been remarkable also due to the **2003** regularization and the yearly decrees for authorization to entry. You can find hereafter some summary data :

- ◇ **2004: citizens with stay permits: 2,786,000, equal to 4.9% of the population**
- ◇ **2005: citizens with stay permits: 3,035,000, equal to 5.3% of the population;**
- ◇ **2006: citizens with stay permits: 3,700,000, equal to 6.4% of the population.**
- ◇ The estimates made on the presence of illegal migrants in Italy (namely more than **800,000** people) must be added to this last figure. Therefore the final figure points to **4.5** million foreigners who work and live in Italy, equal to **7.8%** of the total population.

Current and future population trends

In Italy immigration will be ever more the only population growth factor, capable of tackling the problem of deaths outnumbering births.

If the current trends remain unchanged, in 2050 the people **over 65** will exceed one third and will account for **66%** (as against the current **28.9%**) of the total working population, that will decrease substantially (merely 1 out of 2 people will be working as against the current ratio of 2 out of 3).

Furthermore, the forecasts made by the recent “State of World Population 2007” of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) are far from being reassuring. In fact, according to the UNFPA, in 2050 the African continent population will rise from the current **945.3** million people (more than 50% of whom is already living below the poverty line) to **1,937** million people. Conversely, in 2050 the 27-E.U. – with its current population amounting to 707.7 million people - will decrease to **634.7** million people (with a sharp fall by **73** million inhabitants). In Italy this fall is estimated at **7.3** million, from the current **58.2** million people down to **50.9** million inhabitants.

Therefore forecasts point to a remarkable increase of the migration flows towards Europe (and Italy, which is located on the Northern shore of the Mediterranean), thus rendering more difficult to master the already precarious management and control of the migration flows, with possible social disruptions - especially if appropriate measures are not taken to regulate these flows, to fight against illegal immigration and promote integration at local level, in particular.

The reasons underlying migration to Italy

90% of immigrants come to Italy with the intention of remaining there on a stable basis: 62% of them have a permit for working reasons (7% of whom are self-employed); 29,3% arrive for family reunion purposes; 2.1% for study reasons; 1.7% to settle down in a country of their choice; 1.6% for religious reasons and the rest (2,9%) for other reasons.

Foreigners belong to more than 200 different ethnic groups and this renders integration pathways more difficult since they have to reconcile different cultures, habits and religions. At the end of 2005, **49%** of people came from **Europe** as a whole (both E.U. and non-E.U. countries); **23.1%** from **Africa**; **17.4%** from **Asia**, whereas people coming from the **American continent** levelled off at **10.6%**. A breaking down of these figures by nationality shows that **Rumania** ranks first (**11.9%**), followed by **Albania (11.3%)**, **Morocco (10.3%)**, **Ukraine (5.2%)**, **People's Republic of China (4.9%)**, **Philippines (3.4%)**, **Poland (3.2%)**, **Tunisia (2.7%)**, **India (2.3%)**, **Serbia and Montenegro (2.2%)**.

In Italy the number of immigrants is very different according to the various regions and their percentage out of the total Italian population ranges from about 10% in the Northern and central regions to a mere 2-2.5% in the Southern regions. Obviously the richer the regions the larger the number of immigrants living there.

The way in which our society is changing

In Italy immigrants are a young population: **70%** of them is in the **15-44** age bracket (as against a mere **47.5%** of Italians in the same age bracket). Most immigrants are married (**52.7%**), even though their spouse and children have remained in the country of origin, as evidenced by the remarkable flow of family reunions (100,000 per year).

A basic parity is recorded between men (**50.1%**) and women (**49.9%**), who in some regions, such as Latium and Campania, are a majority due to the growing needs in terms of domestic work and care services to children and elderly people.

The fertility rate is higher among foreign women with 2.4 children on average (4 in the case of Moroccan women and 1.7 in the case of Polish and Rumanian women as against a mere 1.25 for Italian women). Foreign citizens, who in **2005** gave birth to **52,000** children, account for 9.4% of new births. A larger number of divorces is recorded among immigrant women than among Italian ones (2.5% as against 1.7%) and this is another sign of the fact that – together with the most frequent conditions of social uneasiness – marriage, motherhood and family can be experiences they live in a more problematic way.

At the end of 2005 **minors** were **586,000**, equal to roughly **25%** of the foreign population, with a larger incidence than among the Italian population. Their number has almost doubled over the last five years (in 2001 they were 326,101 and 56% of them were born in Italy).

Foreign **students** amount to **424,683** (according to the 2005-2006 data) and in two years' time they will far exceed 500,000: on average they account for **4.8%** of total students, with peaks of 6% in primary schools (4 out of 10 as against a mere ratio of 2 out of 10 in secondary and high schools). We can say that there exist regions and provinces which "anticipate" the future with a far larger incidence of foreign students: 8-9% in Umbria, Lombardy, Veneto and Marches and 12% in Mantova, Piacenza and Reggio Emilia, whereas in some villages of the Northern and central Italy their number even exceeds **50%**. Immigrants' children have found a favourable environment in schools, but the obstacles which cause delays in their school career must still be faced more adequately.

The scourge of illegal migration

It is hard to estimate the number of illegal migrants living in Italy. This scourge, however, results from an interplay of reasons:

- a) the external migration pressures which sometimes turn into international people trafficking, but more often in Italy give rise to the phenomenon of the overstayers (namely people who entered the country with a tourist visa, who then became illegal migrants when their permit expired);
- b) people who got a legal stay permit, but – due to the constraints of the current immigration law, the bureaucratic delays or the loss of their jobs – have turned into illegal migrants. A case in point is the total number of applications submitted in 2006 - in the framework of the two yearly decrees which allow entry for working reasons – which exceeded **600.000**;
- c) the existence of a wide underground economy (worth 20-25 % of the GDP) which acts as a catalyst for illegal migrants, who swell the ranks of moonlighting and are often subjected to working conditions similar to slavery.
- d) According to many sources, the number of illegal migrants can be currently estimated at **800.000 – 1.000.000** people. This is a very high amount which cannot be tolerated for a long period of time without causing disruptions in the social fabric and a new upsurge of intolerance.

Social and industrial relations

In Italy no difference is envisaged at wage, regulatory and contractual levels between Italian and non-Italian workers. This is a fundamental principle for us that we do not want to be called into question. The same treatment must be ensured to all workers when they operate in the same sector, with the same tasks and the same working time. Hence there exists no industrial relations system, which defines differentiated models. However, the large number of immigrants working in many companies and sectors, such as building, manufacturing, tourism, as well as domestic work and care to people (where mainly women are employed), must lead us to consider that the current migration law entails – though indirectly – the risk of potential discrimination towards these people. In fact, at least for the first years, the possibility of remaining in Italy legally is closely linked to the status of regular worker: hence, in many cases, these people are forced to suffer from overriding attitudes and harassment since they are *de facto* liable to be blackmailed.

The national contracts, however, include specific provisions which regulate aspects of specific interest to foreign workers. In particular, the criterion for enjoying holidays is redefined to enable many of them to go back to their countries of origin for a number of weeks (even though the total number of holidays remain the same for all workers). The national contracts also include arrangements to regulate the right to training in a different way, by laying emphasis on some issues such as the learning of languages with specific attention paid to the terminology related to prevention and safety at the workplace. Arrangements are also reached – especially at company level - with a view to redefining the working time on the occasion of religious celebrations (such as the ramadam).

Yet the relations with counterparts are also pursued “outside” the workplace. In particular, trade unions negotiate and bargain important matters related to social integration, especially in cities. Exchange of views are promoted with the local authorities so as to develop and implement effective social policies designed to mitigate the difficulties of those who come from other countries, starting from the issues of housing, health care and the schooling of immigrants’ children.

The exchange of views with the central government is heavily influenced by the counterparts’ sensitivity and the Italian trade unions, however, keep on urging the Ministries concerned to try and solve the real problems posed by integration and concurrently formulate proposals in order to reform legislation which, in our opinion, caused serious damage both to immigrants and the country as a whole.

Special attention is paid to the workers who provide domestic services and care services to children and elderly people. In Italy about 1,000,000 are estimated to work in this important sector, which often replaces “state” interventions and is a fundamental part of the Welfare system.

90% of these workers are foreigners and mainly women. The protection of these workers is hard due to the obvious difficulties for trade unions to operate in the context of their workplace (namely families). These workers are often underpaid and underprotected at insurance and social security levels. This is the reason why trade unions operate especially by means of two tools: the contractual rules and their enforcement *ex post* by legal support, as well as more social activities such as guidance and information on rights, cultural and vocational training also by means of initiatives in the countries of origin. In particular, pilot projects for assistance have been started in many cities, thanks to which female workers can exchange their views on the main problems they experience and the way in which they can solve them with the aid of local authorities.

A specific activity is carried out by trade unions on the issue of safety at the workplace: the accident rate among immigrants is twice as much as the rate among Italian workers - hence targeted measures must be taken, starting from the dissemination of data and information on the main legislative and contractual regulations. This aim is reached thanks to specific training and the spreading of guidebooks and publications in many different languages.

Immigration, labour and trade unions

According to the Eurostat/Istat forecasts, Italian young workers (15-44 years old) will decrease by **1,350,000** in 2010 and by **3,209,000** in 2020, whereas the older ones (45-64 years old) will increase by 910,000 in 2010 and by 1,573,000 in 2020. This trend explains why migrant workers are playing an ever more relevant role on the labour market: according to INAIL (the Italian Institute against industrial accidents), in 2006 foreign workers accounted for **20%**. In 2007 this figure is expected to rise to about **24%**. This also bears witness to the extreme mobility of these workers, 50% of whom must renew their labour contract every year (“only” 1 out of 4 in the case of Italian workers).

More than **140,000** foreigners who owned a company in 2006 must be added to them .

The average per capita wages, however, are still far lower than the wages of their Italian colleagues: this wage differential is a clear sign of a disadvantaged situation, which is often linked to the precariousness of stay permits, the non-recognition of their diplomas and qualifications, their irregular status, as well as some preconceived ideas still prevailing in Italian companies. In 2005 INPS (the Italian social security Institute) reported average gross wages still lower than 800 euros.

This is also the reason why immigrants are ever more resorting to trade union protection. In **2005** the foreign workers affiliated to the three Italian trade union confederations CGIL, CISL and UIL amounted to **526,320** with a percentage exceeding 9% which, on average, is higher than the percentage of the total number of foreigners out of the Italian population (which in 2005 was equal to 5.3%). This is a sign of the foreign workers’ awareness of the role that trade unions can play for them in terms of protection. But it is also a sign of the growing attention paid by CGIL, CISL and UIL to this important and valuable resource both within society and the labour world.

As to UIL, the immigrants affiliated to it rose from **92,366** in 2004 to **136,997** in 2006 (a **67.5%** increase over a period of two years). Breaking them down by sector of activity, in 2006 we had the following data: **58.5%** in the industrial sector; **20.1%** in the agri-food sector; **11.9%** in the service sector; **6.3%** in the transport sector and about **3%** in the other sectors.

Currently UIL has immigrant middle managers and executives operating at the workplace, as well as sectoral and local structures. In 2006 there were **446** foreign executives working for our organization.

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