

Immigration in Italy: Recent Findings

Dossier Statistico Immigrazione Caritas/Migrantes 2007

Migration flows and the European context

Europe, composed of states with millennial traditions, is now inhabited by citizens from many other countries. In the EU-27, an area with around a half a million people, immigrants with foreign citizenship account for approximately 28 million (at the beginning of 2006), but this number grows to approximately 50 million if those who have acquired citizenship in the meantime are included. This presence is set to grow, according to forecasts on demographic and labor needs.

Free movement of workers is one of the key elements of European unification, therefore migration has marked Europe throughout its history.

According to data from the 2007 Eurobarometro, if 48% of European citizens believe that an immigrant presence is necessary in certain economic sectors, almost as many express uncertainty about the presence of foreigners, in particular regarding the unemployment rate.

Immigrants account for 5.6% of total population with important variations: 0.5% in new member countries (Romania and Bulgaria) and between 4% and 8% in the states of the EU-15. There are also important concentrations in certain regions: in France 40% of foreigners live in the Paris region where one resident out of eight is a foreign citizen; in the United Kingdom over one third of the foreign population lives in London's metropolitan area; in Spain approximately half of all immigrants are based in Madrid or in Catalonia. In Italy, however there is a more territorial dispersion and only one fifth of immigrants reside in the provinces of Milan and Rome.

In the countries of old immigration, the immigrant presence has remained stable or has slightly decreased as is the case in Germany, while it is increasing in countries with new immigration (those in the Mediterranean).

Two thirds of the immigrant population is composed of non-communitarians: 32% from non-EU Europe (in large part from Russia, Turkey and the Balkans), 22% from Africa (of which two thirds come from North Africa), 16% from Asia (with equal numbers of immigrants from the Far East, topped by China, and those from the Indian subcontinent) and 15% from the Americas (mainly from Latin America).

The hundreds of thousands of foreigners who gain citizenship in their country of residence are no longer counted as immigrants (in 2005, 162,000 in the United Kingdom, 150,000 in France, 117,000 in Germany and 29,000 in Italy) and account for different percentages of the respective resident foreign populations (5.7% in the United Kingdom, 1.6% in Germany and less than 1% in Italy). When discussing the immigrant presence, those people who were born abroad and who have become citizens must also be taken into account (in Great Britain this number is double that of the 3 million foreign citizens), as must the second and third generations born in-country.

The flows of foreign workers in Italy in 2006

In 2006, an effort to double the annual quota of workers coming from abroad (increased to 170,000) was met by a demand three times that number, demonstrating the deficiencies of the mechanisms of encounter between supply and demand. For years it was assumed that foreign workers would wait for the call from abroad, while in fact they had already started to work in Italy, awaiting legal recognition.

The 540,000 requests for legal status made a second decree on worker flows necessary, allowing an additional 350,000 admissions. The following information emerges from an analysis of this data (relative to 9 questions out of 10):

- a low incidence of applications from highly qualified professionals (only 1,200 requests from managers and similar occupations)

- a high concentration of requests in certain provinces, namely in Rome (over 50,000), Milan (over 37,000), Turin and Brescia (around 20,000), Bologna (almost 15,000) and Verona, Padova, Venice and Naples and Treviso (a little over 10,000 respectively), which confirms a certain territorial polarization of flows towards Lombardia, the Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Lazio, Campania, and in the South.

Regarding the country of origin of these workers, Romania is the largest group (over 130,000 requests), followed by Morocco (50,000 requests), Ukraine and Moldova (35,000 requests respectively), Albania (30,000), China (27,000), Bangladesh (20,000 requests). India comes in at the end of the top ten countries of origin and, at the same numeric level, Sri Lanka and Tunisia, accounting for 13,000 while the other two countries account for 10,000 requests.

Jointly examining the flows of 2006 and those of 2005 the following trends emerge:

- the areas with the highest levels of employment (North West, North East and Center) confirm, with high numbers of employed workers, their role as leaders and register an increase compared to the local population.

- the South has entry flows that correspond to 12-14% of total registered entrances over the last two years and that, if confirmed, are destined to increase the importance of the presence of the foreign population

- the Islands, accounting for only 1 out of every 25 workers that have entered Italy, are characterized by a stable but contained increase in numbers

Illegal Flows: a Challenge at the European level

The intensity of illegal flows in Europe is favored by its geographic position, but also due to other causes: inadequate entrance quotas, insufficient practical methods for establishing legal insertion and methods of meeting between workers and employers, expansion of the black market and the precarious status of legal workers. The need to regulate flows should not lead to restrictions of migration policy that are based on adequate admission procedures and an attention to integration: therefore “La Commissione De Mistura” has proposed several conceptions for the functioning of the “Centri di permanenza temporanea”. When the illegal population is too large it makes society less ready to accept foreigners therefore it is essential to create an analysis without prejudices that succeeds in finding practical solutions for its reorganization.

Italy is a country that is very exposed to migratory flows due to its geographic location. While in 2007 the new French government confirmed in its objective of expelling 25,000 illegal foreigners, the number of people in this same situation is over 100,000 per year in Italy.

Among these, there are 22,016 who arrived by seas (13% of the total, almost 1,000 less than in 2005): not surprisingly, labor traffickers included Sardegna in their circuits. In this way the sea, fundamental to exchange, continues to be a death trap. But tragedies were not fewer on land: migrants travel, and often die, hidden in trucks (with the risk of asphyxiation due to lack of air or being crushed by merchandise), under trains or in the holds of airplanes, or crossing mountains, rivers or areas with mines if they do not end electrocuted, frozen or victims of other incidents. In all cases it is the hope of a better life that motivates people to face these types of dangers.

In 2006, of the 124,383 illegal residents designated by the police, only 36.5% (45,449) were effectively repatriated (64.1% in 1999). However, taking into account the latest enlargement of the EU and by removing Bulgarians and especially Romanians from this total, the number of people in an illegal situation decreases to under 100,000 (84,245). In the EU, it is Italy that has led the way in an organic pilot experience for the recovery of victims of trafficking. Since 2000, over 45,331 people, the majority of whom are women victims of sexual abuse, have received some form of assistance: approximately one third (13,854) have received work stipends.

In contrast to trafficking, that is strengthening at a national and international level, the number of categories benefiting from assisted repatriation (over 7,000 from 1991 to the present with the help of the OIM) is growing and a certain level of economic support is provided to those who cooperate in their identification, either those who present themselves of their own accord or those who collaborate once they have been detained. The aforementioned can also benefit from a reduction of the limitation on re-entry (from 10 to 2 years), except for those who continue to be repeat offenders.

This agreement would also serve to reduce the involvement of illegal immigrants in penal cases. Foreign citizens account for almost one fourth of penal cases and for almost one fourth of all imprisonments. The biggest group is comprised of illegal immigrants who in certain networks account for 4 out of 5 cases (issues of prostitution, extortion, contraband export and import). Solving these problems requires the same effort for illegal foreigners as Italians as the aforementioned account for approximately 6% of the resident population and the same percentage in court cases.

Legal foreigners in Italy at the end of 2006

The number of legal immigrants would seem to be an easy number to calculate, however to obtain it one must make complicated estimations based on statistical sources that are often incomplete. One must also keep in mind that legal presence includes two categories, those that are residents i.e. registered with “comuni” (calculated annually by Istat and presented in a chapter of the Dossier) and those that are short-term residents that are authorized to remain in Italy or are not interested in registering because they have come for short periods, or because they have a precarious living situation. The Dossier Caritas/Migrantes concentrates on these short-stay cases.

From the base of the 3,035,000 regularized presences estimated at the end of 2005 (an estimation that is close to that of Istat) the newborns of 2006 were added to this number (approximately 60,000) as were the requests presented for work that were fixed in 2006 (540,000 but the total of 486,000 was used to take into account those that were not accepted).

Then the following categories were added (excluding the 5% those who left Italy or did not have a visa to enter):

-visas released for family reunification (82,330);

-visas released for university study or other forms or accredited study in Italy (19,604);

-visas released for religious motives (3,191);

-visas released for residence (928).

The result of this estimation is a presence of 3,690,000 foreign citizens (communitarian and non-communitarian) as a maximum estimation; one can subtract approximately 100,000 units as a minimal hypothesis, because a larger number of requests were rejected and that those that left the country and were no longer registered was over 15,000. Foreign citizens account for 6.2% of total population.

Italy, along with Spain, follow Germany as the countries with the largest immigrant population in the EU and regarding annual increase, these two Mediterranean countries do not have equals in Europe and even exceed proportions in the United States (with a population five times that of Italy, the U.S. registers over one million new immigrant entries per year).

The individuals included in annual quotas (over double in comparison with the 250,000 of the preceding year), added to others that arrived in Italy, especially for reasons of family reunification, have increased the immigrant population by one sixth (more than half a million units) at the end of 2006. In the past, increases of immigrant population were due to regularizations, but in the last two years this increase has occurred without such provisions.

The structural nature of the foreign presence

Italy has the highest negative population growth rate and has the lowest birthrate in the world along with Japan. Births by immigrant mothers accounted for approximately half of all births registered between 1995 and 2005: these women had on average 2.45 children in comparison with 1.24 by Italian women, who have their first child on average at 31.3 years of age compared with 27.3 for immigrant women.

The occupational requirements are, in turn, the consequence of these demographics and immigrants can respond to the work demand, having a notably high employment rate and accounting for 6.1% of Italian GDP. They pay almost 1.87 million euros in taxes through 2,300,000 declaration of revenue as demonstrated by the Ministry for Social Solidarity in "Viaggio nell'Italia dell'immigrazione" published in 2007.

For structural purposes Dossier Caritas/Migrantes has included as a whole all factors that made increase immigration so as to correctly debate the migratory phenomenon: number of immigrants, regular increase in numbers, origin from multiple countries (polycentrism), unequal but diffused distribution throughout the national territory, balanced demographics (equal numbers among the sexes, presence of married, unmarried and engaged couples as well as a high number of minors), persistent requirements of

additional workforce increase a tendency towards stability and a growing need for public participation.

These characteristics obviously influence the territorial configuration and while bringing benefits, they also create new challenges and questions surrounding integration policies made by politicians and administrators to deal with national challenges while guaranteeing the security and welfare for Italians as well as immigrants.

A widespread but unequal territorial diffusion

Territorial distribution of foreign inhabitants at the end of 2006 saw 6 out of 10 immigrants settled in the Settentrione (33.7% in the North West and 25.9% in the North East; in absolute numbers almost 1.25 million in the first area and almost 1 million in the second); there are approximately 1 million foreign inhabitants present in the regions of the Centro (26.6% and more than half a million in the regions of the Sud (13.8%).

The median growth rate of legal residents (+16.1%) varied greatly by region: at the bottom, the North West and the Centro and at the top the North East and the Islands while the regions of the Sud increased to 21.0%.

During the 2007-2008 period, flows continued to grow at the same rate, but certain changes are of note: presences in Lombardia increased from 850,000 to more than one million; the Veneto, Emilia Romagna and the province of Roma increased to more than half a million units; the Piemonte increase to almost 400,000, Tuscany to 350,000 Campania to 200,000 and the Marche to 150,000 units while the Trentino Alto Adige and the Abruzzo had under 100,000 units (but both were close to that number) along with Sardegna, Basilicata, Molise and Valle d'Aosta. Currently Lombardia receives one fourth of all foreign residents and, along with other regions of the North and Centro, it has the highest number both regarding the percent of the immigrant population and that of minors within the foreign population.

The different weights of continents and countries of origin

According to the estimate of the Dossier the foreign presence is composed by one half of Europeans: in particular from 2000 to 2006, those from Eastern Europe increased by 14 percentage points, while those from Africa increased by 5 points and from Asia and America by 2 points, respectively: all areas therefore grew numerically. In conclusion, today for every 10 immigrants, 5 are European, 4 divided between Africa and Asia and 1 from the Americas. The 880,000 immigrants from the EU-27 (25.9%) are almost equal to the other immigrants coming from the Balkans and the other countries of Eastern Europe (25.3%) denoting a strong European presence.

Romania (556,000 presences, according to the estimates of the Dossier) is close to one sixth of the total (15.1%), ahead of Morocco by almost five points (387,000) and Albania (381,000). Ukraine accounts for a little less than 200,000 units (195,000) and China (186,000) follows with 5%. The Philippines account for 113,000, a number that is close to that of Moldova, Tunisia, India and Poland. There are several groups between 80,000 and 50,000 units: Serbia, Bangladesh, Peru, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Ecuador, Macedonia, Senegal, Pakistan, and the United States. The number of permanent residents is different, however and Albania precedes Morocco and Romania in this category.

These national groups have specific territorial concentrations. For example, citizens of Ex-Yugoslavia account for one fourth of all immigrants in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region (due to geographic proximity); Ecuadorians account for one fifth of all foreigners in Liguria (due to the link of that region to Latin America); Filipinos and Poles are well represented in Lazio, especially in Rome, working for families and drawn to the center of Catholicism.

The different motives for long-term stays

To offer a global vision of the regularized foreign presence, the Dossier also included minors under 14 years of age who do not have their own “titolo di soggiorno”, and included them in the category of “motive familiari” which, in comparison with last year, registered an increase of 6 percentage points (even after this new calculation), recalibrating in consequence the percentages of other stay purposes.

Stays for work and for family reunification (92.1% of the total) both played an important role. The importance of these motives demonstrates how different migratory trends are in the long term – probably of a permanent nature – among the immigrant population. Only once an acceptable level of socio-economic stability has been reached is it possible to examine, for example, the acquisition of a house, the formation and re-composition of the family unit, and educational goals for offspring.

The North of Italy continues to be the main pole of attraction for workers (59% of the national total), the Centro is further behind (26.4%) as is the Meridione (14.7%). A reverse triangle effect is thus produced: a large base in the North that shortens down the peninsula. Also, as underlined by the Rapporto CNEL sugli Indici di integrazione, a strong working presence, if not balanced by an adequate family presence, is a sign of a deficit of integration. Therefore productivity, even at high levels does not necessarily create a high level of stability due to the separation of nuclear families. The result is that for immigrants, life in small urban or suburban areas is often more agreeable, even if it is at a lower socio-economic level: for example life in small companies in the provinces often creates a more stable job market compared to that of a large city in regards to the instability of work and the ease of finding adequate housing.

TYPOLGY OF IMMIGRANTS

The impact of new EU country immigrants

After the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU, Italy is no longer the last in regards to the presence of communitarian immigrants that now account for one fourth of total presences. Their number increased markedly following the second to last enlargement of the Union (1 May 2004) and the latest enlargement (1 January 2007): among the top ten immigrant groups are Romania (more than one half million of presences) and Poland (a little less than 100,000).

Italy is in the process of implementing the total free movement of the communitarian workforce, but has already liberalized access to several sectors: managerial and highly qualified workers, agricultural and tourism industries, domestic and personal assistance work, building and mechanical work, as well as other branches of work that are seasonal

or autonomous; the remaining sectors are subject to certain authorizations, that while bureaucratically functional, have the sole purpose of regulating the job market.

For new communitarians, becoming employed is relatively easy and one only needs an identity card and the “codice fiscale”, easily procured from the “Agenzia delle Entrate” without need for any work host (one is necessary, however for sectors with restrictions). A very strong political sign of the active presence of the “non italiani non del tutto stranieri” was the participation of 6,313 communitarian immigrants (of which 5,122 Romanians and 750 Poles) at the administrative vote of May 2007 for the renewal of 861 “Amministrazioni comunali”.

Romania, that has its strongest European presence in Italy and in Spain, considers Italy an acceptable destination for reasons of cultural affinity. In turn, Italy is interested in this Eastern country where more than 20,000 Italian companies are based.

Until now “quasi” free movement has not resolved all problems related to worker integration, coexistence, legality (a problem that is at the forefront of public opinion) and public assistance: in addition to recent current events, one must consider the presence of these workers in the black market, and the approximately 2,000 unaccompanied minors as well as the phenomenon of begging that concerns people who have come without a precise plan or who are under the direction of illegal networks.

The enlargement of the Union also provokes reflection of the policies of integration of the Roma (more than 10 million in the EU-27). In Italy there are 140,000 of which 60% are permanent inhabitants: of the others, one half is semi-nomadic, and the made up of “sinti”, artists that travel permanently taking their shows with them.

Minors

Following the stabilization that occurred after the regularization of 2002, many adults were joined by their families, thus increasing the number of minors (665,626 at the end of 2006, 80,000 more in comparison with the preceding year) and their weight in the total foreign population (22.6%, approximately 6 percentage point more than the data concerning Italians).

Their presence is particularly high in the regions of the North and also in the Centro, with the highest levels at 25% in the Veneto, 24% in Lombardia and in the Marche, 17-18% in some regions (Molise, Basilicata and Sicily), and 16% in Campania. Sicily and Puglia account for 22% respectively.

In different provinces minors account for more than one fourth of the entire foreign population: Ascoli Piceno, Belluno, Bergamo, Brescia, Cremona, Cuneo, Lecco, Livorno, Lodi, Modena, Palermo, Reggio Emilia, Rovigo, Trapani, Treviso and Vercelli. In Rovigo, in particular the percentage is 28.2%.

For the first time in 2006, Istat studied second generation immigrants, that is to say foreigners born in Italy and those that have acquired Italian citizenship: 398,295 people, over half of all minors and 13.5% of the foreign resident population. The regions most concerned are those of “old” immigration such as Lazio, Lombardia, the Veneto and Emilia Romagna. This category is of social relevance because this population is subject to contradictions of “bi” culture and can be, thanks to a reform of law on citizenship, the “bridge” generation between immigrant parents and their future citizen offspring. The growing number of births from foreign parents (56,765 in 2006) and the high birth rates

(around 21 per thousand) indicate the importance of families and their contribution to counteracting an aging population.

Births by foreigners account for 10.3% of all new births and this number is at 17% in Lombardia, Veneto and Emilia Romagna and decreases to 1-2% in all regions of the South with the exception of the Abruzzo. Children of immigrants account for 1 out of 5 births in Prato and Brescia and 1 out of 4 in Reggio Emilia, Treviso, Vicenza and Modena.

Women

Over the last few years, the female presence has grown more markedly than that of the male presence in most regions, due to work linked to family services and other types of work: as such there is now parity among sexes.

The estimate of the number of foreign women at the end of 2006, calculated by the Dossier Caritas/Migrantes is 1,842,000 units present in Italy, equal to 49.9% of the total immigrant population (7 percentage points more than in 1991) (thus confirming the role of women in the current migratory process). There are certain focal points of "feminization" in some regions of the South, as in the case of Campania (61.7%) and of Calabria (56.8%). On the other hand percentages are lower in the North (48.4% spread as follows: North West 48.6% and North East 48.3%), while the presence is over 50% in the Centro (54.2%) and at 56.8% in the South and near 49.7% in the Islands.

There are many European nationalities as well as Latin American with a strong female component and among these there are two large groups like those of Ukraine (83.6%) and Dominican (73.1%); for Asia the Filipina population is important and for Africa the female population of Cape Verde (76.9%) which is higher than the percentage of Nigerian women (59.2%).

The employment rate of women born abroad is high: 58.4% compared with a little more than 51% of total female population. This tendency is common to all European states. The employed born abroad account for 42%: more than half is employed in domestic work and care (700,000 according to official statistics, but many work on the black market) or are directed into a single sector (a situation that is often obligatory). Another important sector (1 out of 10 employed) is that of hotels and restaurants. According to data of Inps of 2004 the annual salary of an immigrant woman is on average 7,136.00 euros equal to 58.6% of what men earn, which is in turn lower than the average Italian salary.

Immigrant women are also less prone to the risk of unemployment (on average 8.6%). In fact, while the unemployment rate for men is 3.6 percentage points higher than total unemployment, for women this number increases to 4.6 percentage points.

New citizens

During the 1995-2005 period 213,047 requests for Italian citizenship were presented (of which 71.8% for marriage) and 135,496 were examined of which 125,335 had a favorable outcome (92.5%). Of the 59,923 requests for residency, more complex due to the requirement of 10-year residency and more documentation, 27,772 were examined and 20,731 granted (74.6%).

In 2005 the cases of citizenship were 19,266, a true boom compared with the 11,945 cases in 2004. The cases of citizenship due to marriage decreased from 83.7% to 61.5% and it will be interesting to see if this trend is confirmed. The breakup by country of origin is mainly from Europe, especially from the East (40% of all cases), followed by the Americas (prevalence of Central and South America) and Africa (prevalence of North Africa)

Citizenship through marriage is prevalent among immigrant from Eastern Europe (80%), from Latin America (90%) and minor for Africans (less than 30%) and Asians (40%).

In 2005 the granting of citizenship was at 51.5% for the North, 20.4% for the Centro, 10.7% for the Meridione and 13.7% for foreign residents (this naturally through marriage), with in the North an equal number of cases for naturalization (49%) and cases from marriage, with a high prevalence for this motive in the Centro (57%) and less so in the Meridione (74%).

Mixed couples are fundamental in the process of inter-ethnic and intercultural change in Italy even if certain marriages are of convenience (undertaken for the sole purpose of acquiring citizenship by bypassing the legal restrictions of the permesso di soggiorno) and for which exist a real market. This phenomena is visible due to the fact the levels of separation of mixed couples is twice the average.

There is a need to reform the law that exists at present according to which six months of marriage outweighs years and years of legal residence, in a country in which a constant presence is founded on stable work. The discussion surrounding a reform is a propitious opportunity to find new methods to facilitate the acquisition on citizenship especially for those born in Italy (almost 400,000 minors, as mentioned above), founded on constitutional values and to discourage marriages of convenience.

IMMIGRANTS AND SOCIETY

An asymmetrical relationship

Recent studies conducted demonstrate that Italians, while taking for granted that immigration will continue to increase, continue to be divided into two opposing blocks, with one favorable and the other against this phenomenon, even if it is not the first concern whereas employment and its precarious character is.

According to the study of "Makno & Consulting" conducted for the Ministero dell'Interno, interviewees had a perception of immigrants, in 85% of cases, based on news reports and believed that illegal immigrants are 50% more than legal immigrants (as if illegal immigrants were 4.5 million!), therefore there is a need for a less superficial knowledge of the current situation. There is also the fact that several television programs have contributed to an image of "normal" immigrants, portraying them not as part of small acts or shows, but also lauding them as actors, conductors, contestants, prima ballerinas, as if they were exceptional people who are not part of the immigrant collective. The same can be said of the image of foreign directors working in Italy (3,700, equal to 2.5% and destined to double in five years).

Italian universities, with 42,000 foreign students registered out of 1,824,000 (2.3%) are 4-5 times less attractive than those in Germany, Great Britain and France: the most frequented establishments are those of Rome "La Sapienza" and Bologna, each with

more than 4,000 registered students. Thus is posed the question of how to cultivate, within the education system, associations, managers, directors, leaders, opinion makers as union organizations have begun to do throughout the national territory.

The impression of immigrants regarding Italians is, on the other hand, more favorable in the study commissioned by the Ministero dell'Interno, with the majority declaring that they find themselves well in Italy because there is work, they like the lifestyle (including cuisine), architecture and climate, but state that their acceptance is lacking especially in the work place and in their search for housing made difficult by the resistance (in 75% of cases) of the owner to rent to a non-communitarian.

The Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni stated that in 2006, among the 10,000 cases brought to its attention, 218 cases of discrimination were linked to ethnic and racial issues especially in the workplace, housing, but also in relations with neighbors and in services from the public sector as well as banks.

Italians tend to treat differently those with different skin color (for this reason Africans are most affected) or of a different religion (in particular there are cases of Islamophobia). A hard life is characterized by numerous needs. The Centri d'ascolto della Caritas, frequented for two thirds by immigrants (of which 1 out of 3 do not have a permesso di soggiorno) demonstrate the consequences of not being able to count on a network of family of friends and the problems linked to unemployment and housing without mentioning other issues linked to poverty.

Forecast for the future

Italy's future situation can be predicted from the current train of events and statistics. The major and diffused presence of immigrants is increasing their property ownership: in 2006 immigrants accounted for one sixth of those who had acquired a house and they are becoming half of those who need a first home. Preferred property is restored, near public transportation and schools, in "provincial" (on average 4 houses out of 10, but 6 out of 10 in the Rome and Milan areas) rather than in a city center. Although this concerns the lower part of the housing market (117,000 euros for a 50mq house, which often creates crowding), the annual volume of commerce is over 15 million euros.

Despite many contradictions, Italian society is becoming more multicultural. 1 marriage out of 8 now involves a foreign citizen (but in only 20% of mixed marriages is an Italian woman part of the couple) and mixed couples are over 200,000 without taking into consideration cohabitation that is hard to quantify.

Even the acquisition of citizenship that is lower than most European levels, has doubled in the past several years and this is not only linked with marriage to Italians (almost 200,000 in 2005).

Italian schools now receive more than half a million foreign students (2006/07 school year) that account for 5.6% of the school population, with numbers that are more than doubled (1 out of 8 students) in some cases. Milan and Rome are the areas in which the presence of foreign students is highest: respectively 48,000 and 40,000 students with foreign citizenship.

While there are very few of these students present in high school (only 9,000 candidates for final exams), many are concentrated in 4 out of 5 cases in technical or professional institutes which leads to an occupational integration that is less satisfactory, as happens

for example with children of Italians in Germany. It is estimated that problems of scholastic aptitude of various natures concern more than three fourths of foreign students and is particularly worrying in a country with a high level of dropouts (one fifth of all registered students) before obtaining a diploma.

But there is not a lack of examples of excellence. In this regard is important to make reference to immigrants who write in Italian. The database "Basili" identifies 279 (of which 119 are women, 43%) broken down as follows: 96 originating from Africa, 54 from the Americas, 47 from Asia, 82 from Europe, with a total of 80 nationalities.

It is also important to note the languages of immigrants. In the EU, the Day of European Languages is celebrated every 26 September. In Italy there are approximately 150 languages spoken by immigrants. There are 172 radio programs, 20 television programs and 29 newspapers in foreign languages (the radio-television programs can also be diffused in Italian) entirely dedicated to immigrants: 7 in Spanish, 3 in English, 3 in Portuguese, 2 in Chinese, Albanian, Ukrainian, Romanian and 1 in Punjabi, French, Polish, Bulgarian, Urdu, Russian, Tajik and Arab (census of 2005).

IMMIGRANTS AND THE WORKPLACE

The contribution and role of immigrants

According to a survey conducted by Istat, in 2006 the foreign workforce was 1,475,000 people (1,348,000 employed and 127,000 unemployed, with an unemployment rate of 8.6%) with two thirds concentrated in the North, one quarter in the Centro and approximately 10% in the Mezzogiorno. As far as sectors, 40% of foreigners work in industry and 55% in the service sector, while there are very few working in the agriculture. More than one fourth of employed foreigners works unconventional hours: 19% in the evening (from 8pm to 11pm), 12% during the night (after 11pm) and 15% on Sundays. 85% are employed as dependents. Their employment rate is 73.7% approximately 12 percentage points above that of the Italian population. The annual increase in employment (425,000 people) is attributable to two fifths of legal foreign residents. According to the Inail database, in 2006 there were 2,194,271 employed people, with 84.6% born in a non-communitarian country and 58% in the North of Italy. Their effect on total employment, that is 12.5% on average, reaches 16.2% in the North East and decrease to 6.9% in the South and 5.1% in the Islands. Lombardia, Emilia Romagna and the Veneto are the first three regions in regards to employment of foreign born workers, with 21.4%, 10.7% and 10.3% respectively in comparison with the national total.

The weight of this workforce reaches 66.2% in domestic work with families, 20.6% in agriculture, 20.4% in hotels and restaurants and 19.4% in construction. Women account for 40% of employed workers and 16.2% of corporation owners. Among foreigners there is a certain degree of job flexibility (1.7%): on average a foreign worker has two work contracts per year. Among foreign born workers, 1 in every 4 workers is a first-time employee on the job market (235,096). The building sector in which the percentage of immigrant workers is constantly increasing, demonstrates that rights do not progress at the same speed as shown by the number of workers on the black market (one fifth of the total) who are underpaid and have the lowest qualifications. While work conditions do

not reach a minimal level of regularity and stability, the number of union inscriptions (680,000 in 2006) also rose and account for one fifth of the legal resident foreign population and one third of the workforce. A sign of stability is also the makeup up foreign entrepreneurs (141,393 according to the Unioncamere archive and reviewed by Cna based on citizenship). These inscriptions have increased annually only by 8% compared with a growing trend in the last few years up to 70% for those who work in commerce and construction. Often this makes reference to dependents that are already present in Italy who have moved to freelance work to better utilize their own skills, while only 1 in 16 cases comes directly from abroad.

Although immigrants only earn on average 10,042 euros per year (data from Inps for 2004), foreign workers send important flows of money to their countries of origin and it is used infrequently for in situ investments due to family needs and instruction costs for their children at home. In 2006 remittances sent from Italy were above 4.3 million euros with an annual growth rate of 11.6% with an increase by almost a half of those sent to Asia (approximately 200 million euros, +14.6%). Romania, with 777 million euros, is the first destination for remittance flows.

Not only for work

The number of registered university students studying in another country in the world is 2,651,144 (source: OECD), with the highest concentration in the United States (21.6%), in Great Britain (11.3%), in Germany (9.8%), in France (9%) and in Australia (6%) and in Canada (5%). In Italy this percentage is at 1.5% with 45,000 presences. The low presence of foreign students in Italy (107,000 of which less than half are registered at universities) is an indicator of the low perception of the Italian university system abroad. Nevertheless, this presence is considered relevant in regards to productivity levels in the context of globalization. (statistics: Rapporto Italiani nel Mondo 2007, Idos, Roma 2007, pp.156-167). Studying this data by province, the top rank goes to Trieste where 16.1% of foreigners are students, followed by Florence (7%), Padova (6.9%), Siena (6.6%), Bari (5.8%): in absolute numbers however the provinces of Rome, Florence, Padova, Bologna and Milan are the leaders.

Considering the importance of Italy, the center of Catholicism, presences for religious motives (70,000) are of particular interest. Rome (where 12.3% of presences are for religious motives), Lazio and the Centro are the three areas that the most important in this category: in the case of the capital the importance is due to the presence of the papacy.

Foreign citizens (51,000) present for elective residence, are those that, taken into account their economic resources, have been authorized to live in Italy and to enter into the job market: this number is quite low compared to other countries. This category of foreigners lies outside the focus of the Dossier. The North is the area most affected by this phenomena (58.1% of the national total) followed by the Centro (30.6%), the Islands (6.4%) and the South (4.8%). The first three regions are Lombardia (26.6% of the national total), Tuscany (13.5%) and Lazio (11%). Milan (11.2% of the national total) and Rome (8.9%) are the first two provinces with the highest presence of elective residences.

LAW, POLICY AND INTEGRATION

An increase in presence, an unchanged bureaucratic burden

The release and renewal of the permesso di soggiorno creates an important bureaucratic burden for the Uffici di Polizia and make it stressful for foreigners to remain in Italy. At the end of 2006 the Government created a new procedure for the release and renewal of the permesso di soggiorno, aided by l'Anic, Poste Italiane and employers. Only for certain types do foreigners need to go directly to the Uffici Immigrazione of the Questura in their area.

On an operational level the new procedure through post offices has been chaotic due to the lack of availability of forms and has made the process more complicated for immigrants. This backup has become particularly acute in Rome and in Milan where there is a concentration of one fifth of the requests. The process is even more burdensome due to the need to return to the Questura twice to obtain the requested document, and due to fingerprinting. The need to go through the Centro per l'impiego has also been criticized as a waste of time which requires one to prove that there are no other workers for the job since the employer can confirm his choice for an extra-communitarian from abroad, making an alternate candidature superfluous. In a similar situation there is no longer a need to deal with the approximately 150,000 requests of Romanians and Bulgarians who had become communitarians in the meantime. For these reasons Minister Amato saw this as opportunity to issue a "circolare" that gave rights and obligations linked to the release of a renewed permesso di soggiorno, making it possible to hire those who have definitive documentation (Directive of the Ministero dell'Interno on 5 August 2006). Another advance was accomplished through legislative decree number 10 on 15 February 2007 that replaced all types of permesso di soggiorno of a stay inferior to three months with one declaration of presence that is presented to the Polizia di frontiera at the time of entry or within eight working days after arrival. It is important to note in these cases, though the bureaucratic burden is lightened for certain foreigners, there is also a loss of registration information in the archives concerning these immigrants while the possibility of continuing to monitor the movement of "short term residents" would help to understand better the migrant population in its entirety.

Living with different religious belief

From its start, the migratory phenomenon in Italy has been a multi-faith presence, but this dimension was marginal until the middle of the 1990s when the debate surrounding Islam and its supposed incompatibility with principles of Western society was raised.

There are more than 1 million Muslims living in Italy and they are the second largest religious group in the country, destined to increase with new arrivals and births. The presence is made visible by newspapers, but also by the 735 places of prayer or religious associations which were present in May 2007 a number that has more than doubled since 2000 (59th Siede al Parlamento, 1st semester 2006).

Religious pluralism, affirmed in Italy through immigration, is much larger and involves not only other non-Christian religions, such as Hinduism or Buddhism, but also different forms of Christianity through the Orthodox and Protestant religions. From the middle of

the 1990s the flows from Eastern Europe have increased the Christian, though not all Catholic, presence in Italy.

According to the methodology of estimation of the Dossier Caritas/Migrantes, among the legal foreign presence of 3,690,000 people, Christians remain almost half of this number, Muslims make up approximately one third while the other Oriental religions account for almost 5%. Other religious groups and agnostics account for one tenth of the total, but this number, is hard to distinguish and therefore difficult to study.

For Sikhs, for example, the difficulty in quantifying their number based on official archives has been supplemented to a certain degree by interviews conducted in situ. All groups are increasing quantitatively though not at the same speeds.

The stable percentage of Christians is due to those of Orthodox faith that increased by 259,000 units last year; due to this increase, while in 2005 their numbers were equal to those of Catholics, they now surpass them by 233,000 units, having reached 918,000 units (Catholics increased by 17,000 units and are now approximately 685,000). Muslims increased by 103,000 units due in large part to family reunification and new births. Their number, (1,202,396 people) could be equaled by those of Orthodox faith if the elevated flows from Romania continue and might also be surpassed if a large predominantly Orthodox country like Ukraine increases its part in in-flows.

The estimate of religious affiliation was extended this year to the 498,735 foreign students registered for the 2006-07 scholastic and are thus divided according to calculations of the Dossier. 236,000 are Christian (of which 117,000 Orthodox and 99,000 Catholic) and 185,000 are Muslim; Hindus and Buddhists are 16,000 (almost as many as Protestants estimated to be equal to 14,000); traditional Africa religions (6,000) and Jews (1,000) close the list while a certain number of students were not accounted for using this methodology. Examining these results in percentage form and comparing them with the foreign population as a whole, there was a decrease among students of 1.3 percentage points for Christians and an increase of 4.5 percentage points for Muslims, linked to the fact that some Islamic countries (ex: Morocco) insist on family reunification.

This estimate was conceived as an instrument to increase knowledge of religious plurality, stimulate a dialogue and place it within the respect of constitutional values of this society: for this reason the Dossier insists on the concept of integration, on the "Carta dei valori" proposed by the Ministero dell'Interno, on the development of laws regarding religious freedom and on the traditions that can be saved in the host country.

Immigration and legislative reform

The Italian population, minus the effects of the immigrant presence, has been declining for over ten years and according to Istat's demographic predictions, the country will continue to age. For this reason there is a need to have younger workers, to maintain levels of productivity and wellbeing. From the mid 1990s Italy is losing its position in international competitiveness and needs to increase its quantitative and qualitative productivity. There is no reason, therefore to view immigrants as a burden. On the contrary they demonstrate a strong will to succeed (the same as Italians that moved to the North of Italy and abroad), are more willing to moved and to take job openings, and by so

doing stimulate the job market despite the bureaucratic burden linked to their stay and the lack of hiring mechanisms as well as that of social security issues.

The future of Italy is also linked to immigration for demographic reasons and if all borders were close, in ten years there will be more than half a million children born by foreign parents that are already present in Italy. We know, however that borders will not be closed because there is still a need for labor and, following the current trend, in 20-30 years Italy will be one of the countries with the highest incidence of immigrants in the world (10 million units or more).

Last year's Dossier coined the slogan "beyond political division" to denounce the subordination of immigrant issues to political maneuvering. Certain issues should favor a coalition of different parties as has been the case in other European countries.

A series of measures can be considered by all those involved to better integrate immigrants: more stable duration of permesso di soggiorno, streamlining of the process, improvement of the meeting between supply and demand of work (with the reintroduction of sponsorship and a prevision of a permesso to look for work), improvement of legislation on citizenship, increase of necessary resources that are needed to increase integration, and a move towards debating the merits of giving the administrative vote to immigrants.

The year of European intercultural dialogue, even if it is not transformed into a formal event, can bring certain merits for the construction of Europe and Italy in the future. Diversity can become a stimulus to improve our growth, put us in contact with people from other countries, other languages, other cultures and other ways of life: while preserving our values and traditions, constitutional principles, we should appreciate the values of immigrants, with increased reciprocal exchange. A peaceful coexistence that regroups Italians and immigrants around common goals and progress is a necessity to prevent a society divided internally with negative sectarian leanings. It is necessary for all citizens to work to reconcile differences of new entrants with the fundamentals of Western tradition.

The work is not easy because we are confronted with people coming from five different continents; in addition, the past cannot provide pre-made solutions, because "classic" models of integration must be reexamined. In Europe, including in countries of important post-ware immigrant, there is an on-going learning process and one needs to find new innovative solutions, among others by maintaining a constant dialogue with the countries of origin. It is not enough to take decision on the mechanisms of entry, of stay and the job market, because it is also necessary to define valid objectives for a multicultural and interethnic society. The Christian roots of Europe, along with other factors have lead to the respect of the individual and his or her conscious, favoring tolerance and democracy, based on the concept of the separation between church and state and open to different religious and ethical choices while respecting certain fundamental principles. Underestimating this important factor would not help to create, as it is necessary, an adequate climate for inclusion and coexistence. For its part, the Italian church has never considered that just and open legislation on immigration would minimize Christian faith, whose roots, when they are solid, become stronger through debate.

Such coexistence could also be an example to countries of origin, creating a debate in loco about human rights and values. The political class, both European and national,

should be expected to address these questions, especially since a true coexistence is based not only market considerations, but also those regarding fundamental rights.

Italy has not just started out on this journey, but it must make progress on both the legislative and operational level. Regarding social policy, it must avoid having immigrants become a mass of poor following retirement as certain results from Dossier Caritas/Migrantes seem to suggest will occur. A report published in 2007 by the Centro Europeo per la politica e la ricerca sociale showed that non-EU immigrants are 2 to 3 times more prone to poverty than the “national” population.

On a religious level, Caritas and Migrantes believe that it is possible to create a dialogue that unites Catholics, Christians and other faiths to show to society, often shocked by certain “religious” acts, that believing in God is not only a personal value but can also have a positive effect on an entire society. This belief should help to address the lack of consideration or acknowledgement regarding the debate on religion.

The year of intercultural dialogue in Europe is a year to improve coexistence. This is the objective that, as an ecclesiastic community, Caritas and Migrantes feel called to collaborate on with all Italians and immigrants, with support from mass media.

*Traduzione di Claire Smolik, Master Immigrazione
Scalabrini International Migration Institute/Lumsa, Roma*