



Actors Interviewed:

- Civil society: NGOs, trade unions, migrants' organizations: 7
- Media: 8
- Governmental representatives: 3

1. DESCRIPTION OF WORK AND TARGET GROUP

Policy Brief:

"As far as demographics are concerned, male migrants account for slightly more than half of the undocumented population, and they are generally young (and also significantly younger than their documented counterpart). According to the ISMU estimates, the majority of the unauthorized population is composed by Eastern European citizens, followed by North Africans, and immigrants from Asia and Oceania, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America". (p.2)

"Italy needs to recognize the demand for unskilled foreign workers as a structural and permanent feature of its labour market and to develop a policy framework which allows a fully legal matching between employers and immigrant employees". (p.4)

The majority of the interviewees felt that visa overstay and irregular entry are the most common pathways into irregularity although a number amongst them perceived irregular entry as the main important pathway. According to the interviews with two NGOs and a trade union, undocumented migrants entering the country are both men and women (50% and 50%). An NGO representative noted that the gender of irregular migrants varies depending on the country of origin: for example, there are more women from Ukraine and the Philippines, and men from Bangladesh whereas it was said that there is an equal share of men and women from Africa. Another respondent indicated that several women come from Somalia while men arrive mainly irregularly at the Italian island of Lampedusa. One interviewee remarked that the majority (70%) of the undocumented migrants his team works with are men.

An NGO, a trade union, a doctor, all of the journalists interviewed and a former MEP highlighted that the current immigration system leads undocumented migrants to work in the informal economy. The trade union representative estimated that the informal economy counts for 40% of the national economy. One

journalist pointed out that irregular migrants in Italy are a major source of labour, as low-skilled workers for jobs that Italian citizens refuse; namely, seasonal work, low-paid jobs in agriculture, manufacturing, construction and the service sector. Another one stated that 95% of foreign workers do not have an employment contract; 80% of them are undocumented and employers increase the 'black' economy by refusing to regularize their workers.

***Terminology** (CLANDESTINO). Majority used "irregular" or "undocumented" (senza documenti o irregolari). Two interviewees stated that the use of the term "clandestine" was negative and incorrect. Majority used "black economy" and not "informal" or "shadow" economy.

2. ESTIMATES, DATA, ASSESSMENT OF SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF THE IRREGULAR MIGRANTS' POPULATION

Policy Brief:

"After almost a century of emigration history, Italy has relatively recently become an immigration country. The institutional framework has been inadequate to manage the increasing flows of immigrants". (p.2)

"Different sources of information can be combined and compared to obtain a sufficiently clear and updated picture of the stock of unauthorized immigrants which is currently residing in Italy. According to estimates from survey data collected by the Fondazione ISMU, the stock of undocumented immigrants was approximately 541,000 in 2005, 650,000 in 2006 and 349,000 in 2007". (p.2)

"Although Italy is sadly famous for the images of clandestine immigrants shore landing along its Southern coasts, official records show that migrants arrived in that way represent only a small fraction (4-16% in the period 2000-2006) of the existing stock of undocumented residents. Indeed, between 2000 and 2006 the Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs estimated that around 65-70% of the undocumented migrants currently residing in Italy are overstayers. The remaining 15-34%, instead, managed to avoid controls at the Northern borders and at international ports and airports". (p.2)

Pathways into Irregularity

The interviewees noted several pathways into irregularity; the three main pathways pointed out were overstaying a visa, irregular entry and refusal of refugee status. From the viewpoint of one NGO, migrants most commonly become undocumented because they enter the country irregularly. The same NGO argued that another pathway into irregularity concerns refusal of refugee status. In the experience of one respondent, irregular entry is the first pathway into irregularity while visa overstay is perceived as a second pathway. According to a member of an association, irregular entry is the main pathway into irregularity whereas to an NGO, a trade union as well as a governmental authority representative, the majority of migrants become undocumented because their visa expires.



Flows of Undocumented Migrants Coming to Italy

The majority of the interviewees, except three, felt that the total yearly number of irregular migrants is increasing. The number of irregular migrants receiving services from three NGOs interviewed and a trade union is increasing. Five of the seven journalists interviewed and the three governmental representatives stated that the number of undocumented

migrants is increasing. On the other side, there are those who believed that there is a steady flow of undocumented migration. One NGO stated that the number of undocumented migrants receiving services is steady. Two journalists came up with the same conclusions; two others believed that the number of irregular migrants is steady. None of the respondents noticed a decrease in migration flows.

The people interviewed attributed the increases to several reasons. One respondent from an NGO argued that there are no legal paths of entry provided by the current legislation implemented; “the more we implement restrictive policies, the more the number of irregular migrants increases”, she was quoted. A member of a trade union also believed that the increase of irregular migration is due to an increase in restrictive immigration policies. A refugee stressed the lack of effective policies in the country while one journalist remarked that the number of irregular migrants is increasing mainly because their labour force fuels and is fuelled by the ‘black economy’. Another media representative said that the undocumented migrant inflows remain steady due to the latest political developments in Italy.

Numbers of Undocumented Migrants Receiving Assistance from Organizations

Undocumented migrants seek from NGOs direct assistance, legal or social advice. Many NGOs also provide language classes and training. The majority of NGOs keep a record of how many undocumented migrants they assist, and if not, they have an approximate estimate of how many undocumented migrants access their services. Only one association and another NGO do neither. However, the two entities’ services aim to help undocumented migrants.

The number of undocumented migrants to which one NGO provides assistance to was reported to be of 50% to 60%. Amid 1,000 people asking for assistance from an additional NGO interviewed, 40% are irregular migrants. 25% to 30% is the percentage of irregular migrants receiving services from a trade union. Dealing with migrants who go ashore, an NGO argued that it is confronted to several situations of emergency: 95% to 100% of people receiving assistance by this organization are undocumented.

Many immigrants applied for work visas under the “Flow Decree”¹ and still entries exceed 100,000 people per year. Another NGO assists every year 10% of these undocumented migrants of whom 50% are asylum seekers. It is important to mention that holding a card released by this NGO has been considered a prerequisite for the residence permit for years; its own cards are in fact aimed at opening a dossier which approximately reaches out 5,000 immigrants every year.

Figures and Percentages of Undocumented Migrants Living in a Given Geographical Area (Rome, Castel Volturno, and Lazio)

- According to a member of an association, estimates indicate that there are 80,000 undocumented workers in Rome of which 10,000/12,000 are from Bangladesh. (Source not specified).
- One journalist stated that the population of undocumented migrants in the Lazio region is quoted between 70,000 and 80,000 people. (Source not specified).
- According to a regional authority, data collected in Castel Volturno have counted 15,000 irregular migrants.

Policy Brief:

“Different sources of information can be combined and compared to obtain a sufficiently clear and updated

¹ Throughout the '90s, Italy gradually attempted to set up a quota system to manage the regular inflows of migrant workers. According to the design of the system, the government establishes every year – through the so called “Flow decree” – the number of immigrants which will be allowed to enter the country for working reasons. Francesco Fasani, “A country report on undocumented migration in Italy”, 2008, p. 36.

picture of the stock of unauthorized immigrants which is currently residing in Italy. According to estimates from survey data collected by the Fondazione ISMU, the stock of undocumented immigrants was approximately 541,000 in 2005, 650,000 in 2006 and 349,000 in 2007". (p. 2)

Estimates of Undocumented Migrants in Italy

According to several NGOs, journalists and authorities, estimating the total population of undocumented migrants in the working region of the interviewees is quite difficult. However, some guesstimates were attempted by the respondents. Many interviewees quoted the number given by the annual CARITAS report, whereas others referred to varying numbers from the "Flow Decree."

- An NGO representative quoted the annual CARITAS report according to which 1,000,000 is the number of irregular migrants living in Italy. He also cited a number of 800,000 people that have applied for the "Flow Decree"; the majority of these remained irregular, since only 130,000 work permits were provided to irregular migrants.
- A member of a trade union cited the Italian "Flow Decree" number of 740,000 irregular migrant applicants; although the range admitted was 170,000 only. He said that 1,000,000 irregular migrants could be counted in the country.
- Another respondent also referred to the Italian Flow Decree having received 740,000 applications although the range admitted was down to 170,000.
- One journalist estimated that 600,000 to 700,000 irregular migrants live in Italy and contribute to strengthening the 'black' economy. They in fact allegedly represent 30% of it whereas regular migrants are estimated to be 4,000,000. He also added that the number of regular migrants alone represents the same size as the population of one of Italy's regions.
- One interviewee from an association said that on the national level, 800,000 irregular migrants should be counted whereas undocumented workers in Rome are estimated to be 80,000 of which 10,000/12,000 from Bangladesh.
- A journalist stated that the population of undocumented migrants in the Lazio region is between 70,000 and 80,000 people.
- According to a regional authority, data collected in Castel Volturno and based on the amount of waste production, the main indicator used to identify this target group in the city, have counted 15,000 irregular migrants.

Assessment Regarding Estimates and Views on their Reliability

Policy Brief:

"Different sources of information can be combined and compared to obtain a sufficiently clear and updated picture of the stock of unauthorized immigrants in Italy". (p. 2)

" Italian policy makers should start:

- *promoting and funding research on irregular migration: the fact that the Italian Government produced only one official estimate of the undocumented population (in 1998) demonstrates the need for a much more careful (and continuous) monitoring of the phenomenon;*
- *making policy decision based on existing research findings". (p. 4)*

Most of the interviewees believed that reliable data about irregular immigration in Italy already exist. Some of the respondents did not think reliable data will constitute a useful base upon which policies could be drafted, and that research could be invested in other areas. Other interviewees believed that data could be a useful tool for policy makers, and are very important. Some underlined that it is necessary to go beyond numbers focusing instead on social inclusion and humanitarian aspects. Another

journalist pointed out that reliable data could be exploited by politicians, considering the lack of policies on irregular migration.

To an NGO, having clear estimates and data sources will not be a useful tool for their work. According to its representative, Italy already has a yearly estimate, which is published in the annual report edited by CARITAS. In the organisation's opinion, the number of irregular migrants is irrelevant because Italy schedules regularisations every year. One additional interviewee stated that in Italy there are already reliable and clear-cut data, gathered and published in the CARITAS report, which is a reliable source from his point of view. A trade union representative added that the Flow Decree is considered the only reliable tool to set the number of irregular migrants. One journalist argued that reliable estimates already exist provided both by the annual CARITAS dossier and ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics) which establishes the number of residents in the country.

An additional respondent thought that reliable data are a crucial tool to lower the social strain, and could contribute to implementing policies and making the public aware of the current situation in Italy. Another one agreed that these estimates could improve policies in the field, but warned figures would help to solve problems only if they were used in a proper way. One NGO representative said that trustworthy numbers are important; one journalist believed figures are necessary to draft laws and legislation. A refugee living in Rome said that reliable statistics could enhance the chance of implementing policies on the ground only if supported by a personal commitment to each individual case.

A former MEP said that since the number of undocumented migrants is increasing, clear and reliable data sources would be beneficial to the Italian politics. "Politicians have to be fully aware of what goes on in their country if they want to be able to give a real effective answer to immigration", she said. A local authority believed that trustworthy estimates could allow states to conceive effective strategies and implement policies aimed at improving the current situation. However, it is often difficult to obtain clear figures because, according to him, this phenomenon varies quickly and depends on several different factors. In Castel Volturno, for example, the amount of waste production is used as an indicator of the number of irregular migrants. Without any demographic increase attested by the local registry office, since each person produces a certain amount of rubbish, the rise in waste is to be attributed to the irregular migrants living in the village.

One journalist emphasized the difficulty of providing clear figures to be used as a tool for designing policies. The Flow Decree counts how many irregular migrants live in Italy but this decree does not consider the situation on the whole. According to another journalist, the "Flow Decree" does establish the number of undocumented migrants. However, not all the irregular migrants are able to apply for regularisation. He proposed to count this group by using parameters coming from the economic productivity where data are available (e.g. the agriculture and construction sector). The respondent stated that through statistic calculations, implying the Italian Gross Domestic Product as well as through checks on the labour force, the actual number of irregular migrants working in Italy may be correctly estimated.

According to one interviewee, estimates on undocumented migrants are already available; "the real problem is that nobody wants to guarantee and give rights to the migrants", he was quoted. A doctor believed that since reliable data exist, the health care system, social services and education could consequently be improved. A journalist said that reliable estimates would not add any extra value in conceiving and implementing new policies in the field. He pointed out that the Italian government is not able to face neither manage such a challenge. His conclusion was that there is lack of strategies and understanding from the Italian authorities.

According to another journalist, trustworthy numbers could be dangerous, even exploited, because the country lacks of policies on irregular migration; "there is no adequate strategy in place; border controls and restrictive measures are set to be the priorities", he said.

3. DISCUSSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Policy Brief:

“Addressing the main contradiction in Italian immigration policy: namely, the sharp contrast between a formally restrictive migration policy, on the one side, and a strong demand for foreign workers and a widespread tendency to indulge in irregular employment in the Italian economy, on the other”. (p. 4)

State Policy Responses and their Implementation on the Ground.

Most interviewees stated that there are no state policies implemented on the ground which could turn out beneficial for undocumented migrants. Border control, detention, expulsion and regularizations are the principal policy responses of the Italian government to undocumented migration. Regularizations' schemes were then considered by the interviewees the only way for an undocumented migrant to change his status and be regularized.

The majority of the respondents were concerned about the current Italian policies which lead to an increase of economic exploitation of undocumented migrants.

A governmental representative from the Ministry of Interior was in favor of assisting member states in making returns as well as their own systems of immigration management more effective. He argued that regularization and rigor are the key priorities undertaken by the Ministry. Better cooperation with member states was also perceived as another important measure on the European level in order to improve policies. He also highlighted that the Flow Decree could be an effective tool if applied properly.

A former MEP would support a policy that promotes integration, which would also improve the wider social landscape in Italy. According to her, the lack of social inclusion policies increases the number of irregular people and of social pressure against them. She said current policies are worsening the conditions of irregular migrants; “Italy only acts by means of amnesties which are not an appropriate tool to meet all migrants' needs”, she was quoted. Moreover, she stressed that there is a serious lack of political will to find a solution.

A regional authority stated that politicians should increase and deepen bilateral agreements with the countries of origin by means of humanitarian actions, assistance and social inclusion. From his point of view, integration of migrants is crucial. He argued that in his village, the effects of irregular migration are amplified because all the commercial activities are exploited by the Camorra (mafia in Naples).

One NGO representative would expect the government to implement appropriate policies instead of encouraging the exploitation of migrants and the expansion of shadow economy. “The stricter the system, the more irregular migration gets worse”, she stated.

Another respondent said that the current policies implemented on the ground facilitate irregular entries and irregular migration. Politicians respond by tightening up laws and legislation, investing 90% of the resources in contrasting irregular entry and only 5% in integrating migrants. The only available tool, the Flow Decree, was not considered as adequate since only 130,000 irregular migrants were regularized out of the 800,000 who applied.

One more interviewee stated that in Italy, there are no beneficial policies provided. The current implemented policy increases the number of irregular migrants. On the other hand, she maintains that Italy holds the most beneficial state policy in term of health care and education provided to children of irregular migrants. A trade union representative noted that the current Italian law (Legge Bossi-Fini) contributes to increasing irregularity: in fact it reduces the labour costs through exploiting migrants, and

therefore reinforces the shadow economy. While the current policies implemented on the ground are based on reducing labour costs, the 'black' economy represents 40% of the national economy. Additionally, irregular migrants are exploited, and are denied rights. "They might be entitled to some rights but they do not fully enjoy them", he said.

One NGO not only criticized the so called "Security Package", which includes the criminalization of assistance but also the border agency "Frontex." A doctor firmly believed that improving health care assistance along with welcoming migrants and reducing the 'black' economy are the only solutions to this current urgent issue.

A journalist underlined the fact that irregular migrants in Italy are a major source of labour; they contribute to the Italian economy as low-skilled workers for jobs which Italian citizens refuse. Another one pointed out that 95% of foreign workers are lacking an employment contract and that 80% amongst them become irregular.

Yet, another journalist emphasized the lack of strategies and the need to cooperate with the countries of origin migrants come from. "Italian politics tend to exploit migrants as a tool for consensus", he was quoted. A refugee living in Rome underlined that in Italy he feels like being an object exploited by politicians; he said that the rise in conservative leaders and the centre right government are in fact affecting the policies currently implemented on the ground. He highlighted the paradox of Italy (also Europe) which needs immigrants because of their labor force although at the same time it exploits, criminalizes and makes them more vulnerable.

