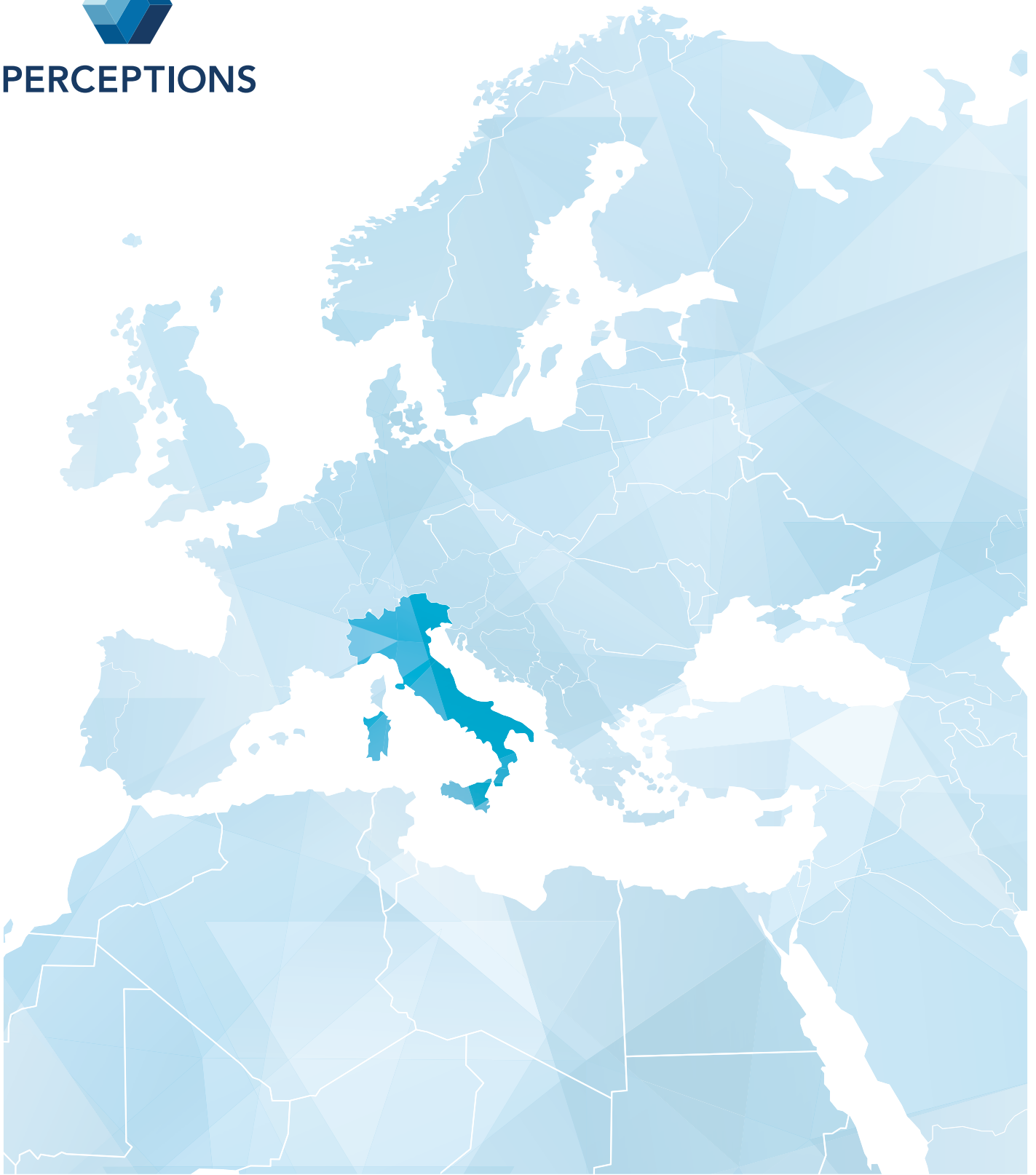# PERCEPTIONS

Italy

PERCEPTIONS
Country Report

PERCEPTIONS RESEARCH:
Literature, studies, projects, stakeholders, solutions, tools and practices

DISCLAIMER:

Disclaimer: This report is based on desk-research conducted between 2019 and 2022 and covers major development between the period of 2015-2019. For more updated information on the country profile, please check the additional institutional links at the end of the document.

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Integration policy is based on a multilevel national working group in the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of the Interior. Regarding border control, police forces are involved under the coordination of the Ministry of the Interior. Expulsions of foreigners who represent a danger for public order and security or are illegally resident in the country can be issued by administrative authorities (Ministry of the Interior and Prefects) or by judicial authorities, as a consequence of a criminal proceeding. In recent decades, Italy has transformed from an emigration into an immigration country. The increase of immigration in Italy is strongly linked with the arrival of consistent inflows of labour migrants. The possibility to easily enter the labour market has constituted an important pull factor for migrants. The growth of immigrant stock in the last years is due also to migration networks and family reunification, caused by the stabilization process of some communities. In 2016, the Italian Government and IOM launched the campaign Aware Migrants to dissuade potential newcomers from attempting the journey across the Mediterranean Sea. In the 2018 report, CENSIS depicts a generalized and sorrowful sense of the loss of national sovereignty, accompanied by an upsurge of fear of 'the other'.

c) Facts & figures

Migration flow to Italy in 2015 and 2018

■ Total   ■ From non EU-countries
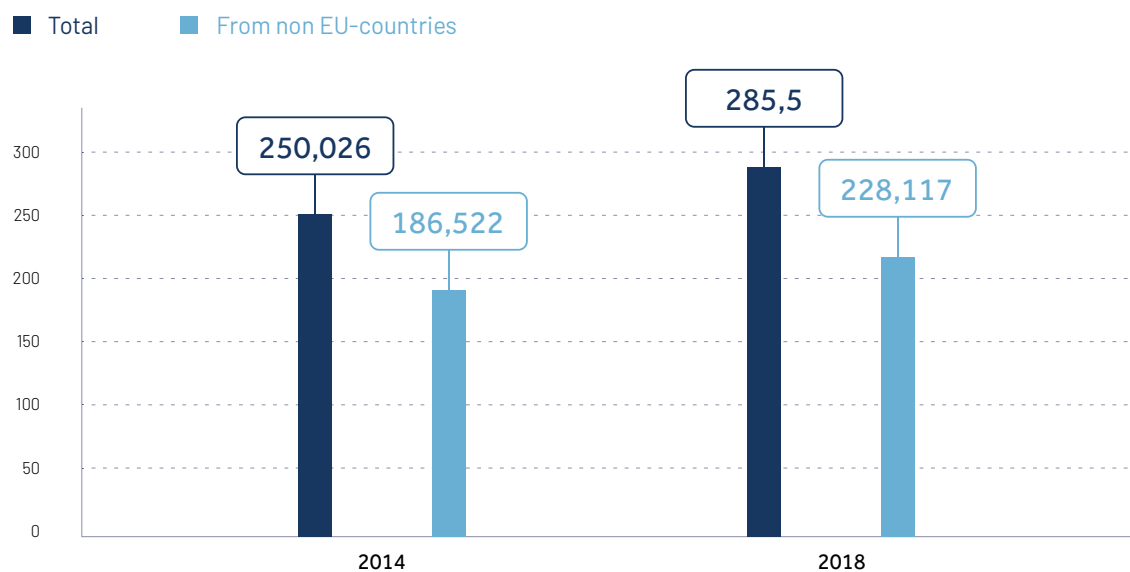
Foreign resident population in Italy over the years

2019

6,222,000

1996

737,793
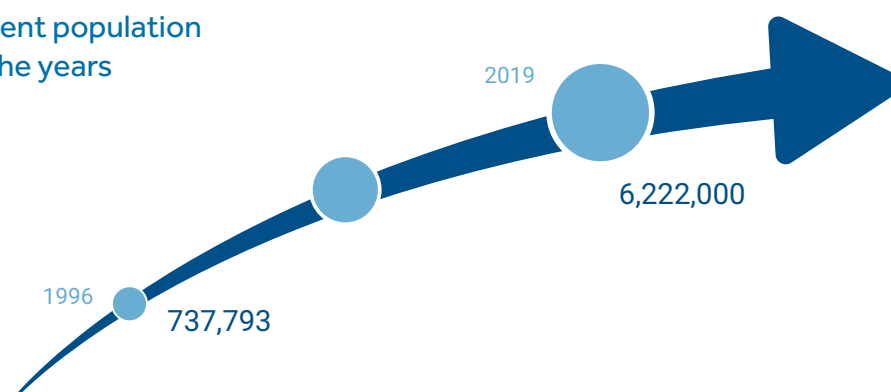
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Institutional setting

Italy is a democratic parliamentary Republic with a three-way division of power. Executive power is exercised by the Council of Ministers, legislative power is vested primarily by the Parliament, and the judiciary power is independent of the executive and legislative branches. The State has powers of control - subjected to constitutional limitations - over 15 ordinary regions and 5 regions with special autonomy. The Presidency of the Council of Ministries coordinates the migration and integration policies. Ministry of Interior is responsible for enforcing the immigration issues (immigration and asylum, citizenship and religious confessions). Especially through the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration, it contributes to the implementation of the migration policies of the Government, also to ensure both the reception and assistance of asylum seekers and the first aid to irregular migrants on national territory. The link between the central government and local entities is represented by the Territorial Councils for Immigration, set up in each prefecture, with the task of conducting a needs analysis and promoting interventions to be implemented at the local level (Minister of Interior, 2016). Other ministries also play an important role in the organization of Migration and Asylum Policies, namely, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (EMN, 2019).

Integration policy is based on a multilevel national working group in the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of the Interior (EMN, 2019). The Protection System of Beneficiaries of International Protection and for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (SIPROIMI) is managed by the network of local authorities that carries out "integrated reception" projects by accessing to the national foundation for asylum policies (AMIF) and services.

Regarding border control, police forces are involved under the coordination of the Ministry of the Interior. Expulsions of foreigners who represent a danger for public order and security or are illegally resident in the country can be issued by administrative authorities (Ministry of the Interior and Prefects) or by judicial authorities, as a consequence of a criminal proceeding (Terlizzi, 2019). Since Italy is part of the Schengen Area, all EU and EEA (European Economic Area) nationals do not need a visa to cross Italian borders. Non-EU/EEA foreigners are instead required to have a valid passport if required, a visa issued in their country of origin. A proof that the foreigner has adequate financial means to cover her or his stay in Italy and return to the country of origin may be required (Terlizzi, 2019).

Short migration overview

In recent decades, Italy has transformed from an emigration into an immigration country. During the first part of the 20th century, the country was characterized by mass emigration and only at the end of the 1970's it started to receive relevant migration flows becoming in the following years one of the principal destination countries in southern Europe (Ambrosetti & Cela, 2015). Italy belongs to the so-called "Mediterranean Southern European model of migration" (King, 1999) characterized by a lack of immigration policies, a large underground economy attracting undocumented immigrants, a strong segmentation of the labour market and the use of regularizations. First, migration flows came from North Africa, especially from Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt. At the beginning of the 1990s flows from Balkans countries, particularly Albania, and from other eastern European countries has started to become relevant. Since 2007, a large part of the migrant flows is composed of immigrants coming from Eastern Europe. Over the last years, also flows from Asian countries started to be relevant in Italy. From 1996 to 2019 the foreign resident population increased from 737,793 to 5,255,503. When considering also non-resident regular and irregular immigrants, this number rises to 6,222,000 (ISMU, 2020). Indeed, irregular immigration constitutes a relevant part of the total immigrant population. One of the characteristics of immigration in Italy is the globalization of the immigrants 'origins. Romania, Albania, Morocco, China and Ukraine are the principal countries of origin of immigrants

resident in Italy (Ambrosetti & Paparusso, 2018).

The increase of immigration in Italy is strongly linked with the arrival of consistent inflows of labour migrants. The possibility to easily enter the labour market has constituted an important pull factor for migrants. The growth of immigrant stock in the last years is due also to migration networks and family reunification, caused by the stabilization process of some communities (Ambrosetti & Cela 2015). In general, the employment rates of immigrants are higher in comparison to the rates of Italians, however, they are mainly employed in low-skilled jobs and a relevant amount of immigrant workers are over-educated for the employment position. They mostly work in activities connected to care services (Ambrosetti & Paparusso 2018). Despite being considered a 'new country of asylum', Italy has received a not negligible number of asylum applications in recent decades, especially during the Yugoslav wars from the 1990s to the early 2000s, and the unrest in Northern Africa in 2011. Around 400,000 applicants claimed asylum in Italy between 1985 and 2013 (Eurostat, 2020).

Key development since 2015

From 2015 to 2018 the number of migrants arrived in Italy has increased. Migration flows rose from 250,026 to 285,500. The number of migrants from non-EU countries increased from 186,522 to 228,117. The so-called 'refugee crisis' of the years 2015-2016 has changed the characteristics of migrants arriving in Italy. Those arrived from non-EU countries for work and family motivations slightly decreased between 2015 and 2016, to increase again in later years because of the stabilization of the phenomenon of immigration in Italy. Between 2015 and 2017, the number of migrants arriving because of asylum and humanitarian motivations increased by 54%. However, in 2018, the number declined below the level of 2015. The growth in immigrants seeking asylum and protection was caused mainly by the lack of political and economic stability in most North-African and Middle-Eastern states. During the same period, Italy has experienced a relevant increase of people arriving by sea via the Central Mediterranean Route (in 2016 181,436 arrivals). In 2018, the arrivals were

only 23,370 (ISMU, 2020). This decline is the result of the Memorandum signed between Italy and Libya that has de facto moved the Italian (and the EU) border to Africa and has caused a huge debate about the respect of human rights for migrants in the detention centres in Libya.

In 2016, the Italian Government and IOM launched the campaign Aware Migrants to dissuade potential newcomers from attempting the journey across the Mediterranean Sea (Musarò, 2019). Daily news and images depicted the flows of asylum seekers as an invasion and described it as a crisis (Musarò & Parmiggiani, 2017). In the 2018 report, CENSIS depicts a generalized and sorrowful sense of the loss of national sovereignty, accompanied by an upsurge of fear of 'the other' (CENSIS, 2019). Migrants' flows are mixed in kind, with highly diverse individual profiles, original motivations or migratory trajectories and experiences, which are difficult to unravel. However, only a small part of the migrants arrived in Italy are entiled to apply for asylum (Ambrosetti & Paparusso, 2018). The refugee crisis of the last years has certainly contributed to the persistence of international immigration in Italy, but this is still due in prevalence to other factors and to economic, demographic and social imblances existing between Italy and countries of origin of these flows (Bonifazi, 2017). Top-down decision-making produced conflicts between national and local governments alongside bottom-up innovation to connect asylum seekers' reception and integration with local development. The reform of national policies on asylum[1] provoked the shutting down of many reception facilities with a consequent fall into irregularity.

For more information, see:

IOM Italy:
https://italy.iom.int/it

Foreign Affairs Italy:
https://www.esteri.it/en/

Interior Affairs Italy:
https://www.interno.gov.it/it

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[1] Law n. 46 of 13 April 2017 on "Urgent provisions for the acceleration of proceedings in the field of international protection, as well as measures to combat illegal immigration".

PERCEPTIONS

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