



Racism, racial discrimination and migration in Italy

2015/16: Research briefing

1. Introduction

This research briefing has been developed by the *European Network Against Racism (ENAR)* and *Michela Sempredon (Unesco Chair for the Socio-Spatial Inclusion of International Migrants, Università IUAV and Board representative of Cestim Onlus)*. The data included here are based on research for the 2015/16 ENAR Shadow Report on migrants'¹ experiences of racism and racial discrimination in Europe.² This research briefing focuses on three main areas: political narratives and public policy; labour market integration; and racist violence and access to justice, taking into account the various levels at which racism and discrimination on grounds of race, religion or nationality can take place.

2. Overview: Migrants in Italy

According to Eurostat, in 2015, there were 5.8 million foreign-born residents in Italy, corresponding to 9.5% of the total population. 1.8 million (3%) were born in another EU Member State and 4 million (6.6%) were born outside the EU.³ The largest groups of the foreign-born

population are from Romania (22.6%), Albania (9.8%), Morocco (9%) and China (5.3%).⁴

In 2015, the UNHCR recorded 153,842 arrivals by sea in Italy⁵ and 83,540 asylum seekers applied for asylum in Italy.⁶ Most of the non-EU asylum applicants came from Nigeria, Pakistan, Gambia and Senegal.⁷

3. Political narratives and public policies

3.1 Political and public discourse

Radical right-wing parties, such as the Lega Nord (Northern League) and Forza Nuova (New Force), took a tough anti-immigration stance with an influence on other political parties.⁸ The mainstream left has endorsed concerns over security/border control, while at the same time maintaining an open position with regard to the social and cultural integration of migrants.

Various cases of political hate speech have emerged in 2015/16, particularly by politicians of the Lega Nord party which targeted politicians

¹ The term *migrant* is used to refer to all migrants - third country nationals, refugees, regular and undocumented migrants, and asylum seekers.

² Racism and discrimination in the context of migration in Europe: ENAR Shadow Report 2015-16, http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/shadowreport_2015x2016_long_low_res.pdf

³ Eurostat Migration and Migration population statistics 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics

⁴ Eurostat Migration and Migration population statistics 2015

⁵ UNHCR 2015, <https://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/download.php?id=490>

⁶ Eurostat Asylum statistics 2015, http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyappctza&lang=en

⁷ Eurostat Asylum statistics 2015

⁸ Emanuele Massetti (2015) Mainstream parties and the politics of immigration in Italy: A structural advantage for the right or a missed opportunity for the left? *Acta Politica*, Vol. 50 (4): 486–505.

such as the ex-Minister of Integration, Cecile Kyenge⁹ and Roma communities.¹⁰

Researchers¹¹ suggest that right-wing parties no longer drive public opinion as they did in the 1990s. In the 2013 Italian general elections, votes for the Lega Nord decreased from 6.5% to 3%,¹² although since 2005 the Lega Nord has become a xenophobic authoritarian party and has heavily focused on immigration, with impact on media and political discourses.

Moreover, a more recent phenomenon of spreading racist fake news through social media and online is increasing. Websites such as 'I crimini degli immigrati' (the crimes of immigrants) report on alleged crimes committed by migrants.¹³ This online development remains scarcely controlled and there are no specific measures in place to tackle it. According to data by UNAR (National Office Against Racial Discrimination), 347 cases of online hate speech were reported in 2014 and in the following year the number increased.

3.2 Anti-immigration protests

Several anti-migrant protests were organised, in particular (but not only) against asylum seekers and their accommodation, with a higher rate of incidents in Northern Italian localities, where far-right movements have further fuelled emerging tensions. Italy does not systematically monitor these protests but examples include:

- A protest organised by the far right Casa Pound Movement on the Iseo Lake in November 2014 that was directed against 12 asylum seekers accommodated in the nearby town of Sulzano. The protesters sailed north of the lake with billboards displaying the words "lago nostrum" [our lake] while throwing black dummies into the lake. Local and national organisations, as well as the mayor, condemned the protest.¹⁴
- In May 2016, around 10,000 people participated in an anti-migrant demonstration in Rome. The crowd chanted slogans such as "Stop the invasion! This is my home".¹⁵
- 200 residents of the northern city of Goro blocked the road and chanted anti-immigrant slogans to prevent 12 refugee women and 8 minors from being accommodated in a publicly-owned hostel in Gorino in October 2016. They were accommodated elsewhere. A local official of the Lega Nord hailed the protesters as "heroes of the resistance against the tyranny of acceptance".¹⁶

3.2 The 'hotspot' approach

One of the most important recent developments affecting Italy's asylum policy was the establishment of so-called 'hotspots', centres for the identification and screening of newly arrived migrants. As Amnesty International reports, these screenings take place immediately after arrival in Italy and with a limited access to information on asylum procedures and legal advice provided to

9 UNAR news 2016,
<http://www.unar.it/unar/portal/?p=6873>

10 UNAR news 2015,
<http://www.unar.it/unar/portal/?p=5009>

11 Joao Carvalho (2013) *Impact of Extreme Right Parties on Immigration Policy. Comparing Britain, France and Italy*. Routledge: London.

12 <http://www.cattaneo.org/pubblicazione/cambiamento-o-assestamento/>

13 IDOS (2015) *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione*. Dal contagio "virale" al web-marketing dell'odio razzista (Andrisani Paola), 250-252.

14 <http://www.bresciatoday.it/cronaca/casa-pound-immigrati-lago-nostrum.html>

15 <https://www.rt.com/news/343912-rome-protest-migrants-casa/>

16 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/gorino-goro-italy-refugees-migrants-crisis-women-and-children-blocked-ferrara-a7380566.html>

those seeking asylum.¹⁷ As the 2016 *LasciateCIEntrare Report*¹⁸ describes, we have been witnessing the “transformation of first reception into detention” with these hotspots.

ASGI (Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration)¹⁹ criticised the hotspots for creating a de facto selection procedure between those who have the right to apply for asylum and ‘economic migrants’ to be detained or deported.²⁰ Those categorised as ‘economic migrants’ are denied access to asylum application and reception without taking into consideration the vulnerable conditions of migrants.

On 7 December, more than 600 migrants arrived in Taranto (Puglia) in Southern Italy. As documented by ASGI, the division of migrants was operated on the mere basis of nationality. Migrants from Nigeria were given a leaflet without any legal information on asylum procedures and their rights, without any language mediator available or any consideration for their physical or mental health condition. The leaflet was used to identify ‘economic migrants’ and to distinguish them from potential asylum seekers. The group of Nigerians had difficulties applying for asylum and after having formalised their application they received no reception assistance and could only benefit from services dedicated to the homeless.²¹

3.4 Integration

In Italy there is no specific integration plan and while the general living and working conditions of migrants have improved, particularly for those

¹⁷ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2016/11/hotspot-italy/>

¹⁸ <http://www.lasciatecientrare.it/j25/attachments/articol/193/Report%20Incastrati%20.pdf>

¹⁹ http://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2016_asilo_puglia_11.pdf

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *ibid.*

who have obtained a long-term residence permit and are settling in Italy, the same cannot be said for asylum seekers and refugees, or for migrants with a short-term residence permit.

Experts interviewed as part of this research point to the lack of political willingness to address asylum seekers’ arrival and integration as a structural phenomenon and suggest that the national government’s approach aims to ensure Italy remains a transit country.

Access to civic integration and education measures is still very much fragmented throughout the territory and is insufficiently available for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. In addition, many legal actions have been initiated to address discrimination in the provision of social benefits (i.e. third child bonus, baby bonus, maternity leave) and many are still pending, although some rulings by the Constitutional Court have been crucial in overcoming some limitations.²² The practice of denying asylum seekers residency is widespread; thus compromising their access to social benefits as a result.

More positively, in 2015, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies published the National Plan against Racism, Xenophobia and Intolerance. The plan aims to support national and local policies to prevent racism, xenophobia and intolerance through, amongst others, data collection, diversity management and the eradication of barriers in access to employment for individuals at risk of discrimination.

4. Labour market integration

4.1 Employment rates

Experts have stated that the economic crisis has had a disproportionately negative impact on migrant workers in Italy. The employment rate for

²² <http://www.asgi.it/notizia/corte-costituzionale-e-prestazioni-sociali-agli-stranieri-un-manuale-pratico-per-il-contrasto-alle-discriminazioni>

migrants has decreased by 8.5% (compared to 2.7% for Italians) between 2008 and 2014.²³

According to a 2014 OECD report on labour market integration in Italy, there is evidence of considerable differences between Italians and migrants in the labour market, for example with regard to salary²⁴ and type of occupation. Only 7 out of 100 migrants have a qualified job – regardless of their year of arrival in Italy.

A consistent and increasing concentration of migrant workers was recorded in the service sector, where 65.7% of all employees were migrants in 2014. This is particularly evident for the care sector: according to data by INPS (National Institute for Social Security), migrants form 77.1% of the total workforce.²⁵

60% of migrant care workers are Eastern European (Romania, Ukraine, Moldova, Albania); 20.4% are Asian (Philippines, Sri Lanka and India); 11.3% are South American (Peru and Ecuador) and 85.3% of care workers are female.²⁶ Furthermore, exploitation and degrading conditions are often experienced by workers in the care sector.

Construction and agricultural sectors continue to employ a high concentration of migrant workers. Geographical origin has been used for the selection of workers and for differences in salary.²⁷ Religion has sometimes been used in this respect as well. Experts report examples of Muslim agricultural workers being discriminated because of their potential practice of Ramadan. It is assumed that Eastern Europeans do not need to

fast and will therefore be more efficient during working hours.

In spite of governmental campaigns promoting diversity management in employment (particularly in the public sector),²⁸ access to public employment is still limited for migrants, as testified by recent legal cases.²⁹

Female minors in particular are victims of human trafficking and exploitation,³⁰ including violence, abuses, debt bondage, forced labour, poor health and psychological conditions and the difficulty for victims to be granted a residence permit.

4.2 Racial discrimination and exploitation in the workplace

In 2015, MEDU reported widespread labour exploitation of migrant workers in the agricultural sector, where isolation as well as precarious living, working and health conditions are commonplace. 83% of the agriculture and seasonal migrant workers in the Gioia Tauro Plain report that they were working without a regular contract. The salary, whether with or without a regular contract, corresponded to 30-40% less than the minimum wage.³¹

Asylum seekers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination due to their precarious status when their asylum application is pending or even rejected. Research suggests that decreasing numbers of workers in the seasonal agricultural sector are irregular, but an increasing number have a pending application for

23 IDOS 2015, Dossier Statistico Immigrazione. Occupati e disoccupati stranieri nel 2014, 255-263
24 OECD 2014,

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264216570-it>
25 IDOS 2015, Dossier Statistico Immigrazione. Occupati e disoccupati stranieri nel 2014, 255-263.

26 IDOS 2015, Dossier Statistico Immigrazione. Occupati e disoccupati stranieri nel 2014, 287-292.

²⁷ Piro Valeria (2014) Che cos'è la giusta paga? Negoziatori sul prezzo del lavoro in una serra siciliana. *Etnografia e ricerca qualitativa*, 2: 219-244.

²⁸ http://www.unar.it/unar/portal/?page_id=4894;
<http://www.unar.it/unar/portal/?p=524>

²⁹ <http://www.asgi.it/banca-dati/tribunale-di-milano-sezione-lavoro-tribunale-di-milano-ordinanza-del-4-marzo-2015>

³⁰ <https://www.savethechildren.it/blog-notizie/piccoli-schiavi-invisibili-il-dossier-2015-su-tratta-e-sfruttamento-minorile>

31 MEDU 2015, <http://www.mediciperidiritiumani.org/pdf/Terraingius-ta.pdf>

international protection. This phenomenon is described as a 'refugeeisation' of the workforce, with particular reference to the tendency to provide temporary accommodation.³²

Mohamed, a 47-year-old Sudanese agricultural worker, died following a heart attack while collecting tomatoes in a field in the Puglia region in July 2015. Work takes place in the fields in extremely hot temperatures for 9 hours or more. The salary averages around 3.5 euros per hour. Most of the workers have no regular contract.

4.3 Complaint mechanisms and institutional support

There is no specific government unit responsible for criminal complaints against employers. Migrants can contact UNAR but only to report discrimination cases, not to actually file a complaint. As a result it is not surprising that under-reporting has been identified as a significant problem.³³

More positively, MEDU's report identified some measures aiming to address the exploitation of agricultural workers in the south of Italy, particularly Puglia and Basilicata. These include the creation of employment lists and economic incentives for firms employing workers with a regular contract,³⁴ but they have had little substantial impact. The Italian government has tended not to use employment law tools to fight exploitation but rather instruments of repression

32 Rigo Enrica and Dines Nick 2015, Postcolonial Citizenship and the Refugeeization of the workforce: migrant agricultural labour in the Italian Mezzogiorno.
33 IDOS 2015, Dossier Statistico Immigrazione. Discriminazioni e parità di trattamento 169-174.
34 MEDU 2015, Report Terraingiusta, <http://www.mediciperidirittiumani.org/pdf/Terraingiusta.pdf>

that are proving ineffective, as ASGI has criticised.³⁵

5. Racist violence and racial profiling

5.1 Crimes against migrants

Attacks against migrants are not recorded by Italian authorities. Government authorities do not publish data on racially motivated crimes and hate speech. However, 369 racially motivated hate crimes were reported to the OSCE/ODIHR in 2015.³⁶ Some incidents involved significant physical violence directed against migrants and asylum seekers. Several violent attacks on asylum reception centres and accommodation were reported in the media, such as in Treviso, Northern Italy, in July 2015.³⁷

In Fermo, a Nigerian asylum seeker and his wife were racially insulted in July 2016. When he reacted to racist insults addressed to his wife, he was attacked by a local man with an iron pole and killed. A detailed analysis of media coverage and hate speech has been undertaken by the association Carta di Roma,³⁸ stressing among others the fact that the voices of migrants are still largely lacking in mainstream newspapers.

ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) reported 555 cases of hate crime by police forces (more than 369 relating to racial and xenophobic episodes) in 2015.³⁹

5.2 Racial profiling at the borders

ASGI reported cases of racial profiling in border areas, such as Brenner at the Austrian border;

³⁵ <http://asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/VADEMECUM-GUIDA-PER-OPERATORI.pdf>

³⁶ <http://hatecrime.osce.org/italy>

³⁷

http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/07/17/news/la_rivolta_di_treviso_contro_i_profughi_roghi_e_scontri_via_i_neri_da_qui_-119252034/?rss

³⁸ https://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Rapporto-2016_-cartadiroma.pdf

³⁹ <http://hatecrime.osce.org/report-data/italy/2015>

Como at the Swiss border; and Ventimiglia at the French border in 2015/16,⁴⁰ Alongside numerous violations of national and international laws,⁴¹ particularly as far as minors are concerned.

Physical and psychological violence has also been reported by LasciateCIEntrare, both in detention and reception centres, on the side of police forces and reception operators.⁴²

Experts interviewed as part of this research and the 2015 IDOS Report⁴³ point to the huge problem of under-reporting of racist crimes; which becomes particularly evident when crimes are committed by law enforcement officers.

Promising practice

The National Office Against Racial Discrimination (UNAR) and the National Commission on Forensic Science have established a solidarity fund for legal protection that is aimed at anticipating legal costs for legal and administrative procedures of victims of discrimination.

40 <http://www.asgi.it/notizia/asilo-accoglienza-esclusione-ebook/>

41 For more details see ASGI (2015) Le riammissioni di cittadini stranieri a Ventimiglia. Profili di illegittimità. Available at: <http://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Documento-Ventimiglia.pdf>

42 <http://www.lasciatecientrare.it/j25/attachments/articol/193/lasciateCIEntrare%20rapporto%202016-2.pdf>

43 IDOS 2015, Dossier Statistico Immigrazione. Discriminazioni e parità di trattamento, 169-174.