

Recommendations for national policies to enhance data on migrations in Italy



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and Social Research**

2014

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The recommendations for national policies have been developed in the framework of SEEMIG- Managing migration and their effects in the SEE-Transnational Actions toward Evidence-based Strategies. SEEMIG is a strategic project funded by the South East Europe program of the European Union. Project code: SEEMIG-SEE/C/0006/4.1/X

Policy recommendations have been prepared within the framework of the SEEMIG activity *Strategies, development of transnational capacities and dialogue*, coordinated by the University of Trento and the University of Vienna.

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Suggested citation: University of Trento (2014): Recommendations for national policies to endorse data on migrations in Italy, developed within the project 'SEEMIG, Managing Migrations and their Effects – Transnational actions towards Evidence-based Strategies.'

<http://www.seemig.eu/downloads/outputs/SEEMIGPolicyRecommendationsItaly.pdf>

INTRODUCTION

The last century for Italy marked the passage from a country of emigration to an immigration country. The exodus of Italians toward America and the most developed European countries, which had begun in the late 19th century, was gradually decreasing toward the second half of the 20th century. With the economic boom of the 1960s, the country started this new phase, and it is between the 1970s and 1980s that the first waves of immigration from abroad are recorded. These flows, that acquired greater consistency over time, have been often related not only to wars or crises in the countries of origin but also, more recently, to the migration policies adopted by the country and to the various enlargements of the European Union (EU). Today these flows are still present and consistent. They contribute in fact to the increase of the resident population in Italy. The young age structure of the foreign population guarantees for Italy positive natural balances (births-deaths), which reduce the amount of the natural negative balance of the total population residing in Italy. But it is especially the positive migratory balance (immigrants – emigrants) that provides Italy with the decisive contribution for the growth of its residing population. In the country, there is a demand for labor, especially in the so-called "three D jobs" (Dirty, Dangerous, and Difficult) and in the family support and care sectors. Immigration from abroad, in this context, has played and still plays an important role as a substitute for the Italian labor force, which is no longer available for the above-mentioned activities, or for the State, which is not able to guarantee with its public welfare the necessary services required by an ageing population (in 2013 the average age of the Italian population is 44 years). Through effective migration and integration policies that are evidence-based, it is possible to avoid the danger that immigration is seen as a threat; with the right policies, indeed, it will continue to be a resource for the country as a whole.

More specifically, the SEEMIG Project focuses on migration and their effects on the labor market and human capital but one should also underline the importance of data on applications for asylum and refugee seekers. For example the incoming flows from abroad by non-EU citizens for asylum and humanitarian reasons in 2013 were over 19 thousand. Especially in a historical period like this one, traversed by political tensions at the national and international level (one could only mention what has happened and is currently happening in North Africa and the Middle East), it is highly possible that demands for asylum and refuge will grow.

With the advent of the economic crisis in Europe and the growing unemployment rates, particularly since the end of the first decade of the new century, in Italy too tensions in the labor market have exacerbated. In recent years indeed, despite clearly positive balances, a resumption of emigration to other countries has been observed. The phenomenon, becoming more evident with the worsening of the economic crisis (particularly after 2009), concerns both foreign citizens – in search of better job opportunities in countries less affected by the crisis – and Italian citizens – especially young people. In 2013 about 82 thousand Italians moved abroad (14mila more than in 2012), the highest value recorded over the past ten years. The number of foreigners who have left our country (i.e. 43,640) has increased of 5,422 units compared to the number registered in 2012.

1.1. The SEEMIG project

SEEMIG (Managing Migration in South-East Europe) is a transnational cooperation project within the framework of the EU program 'Southeast Europe' 2012-2014. The SEEMIG project wishes to facilitate the development of migration policies at the national, regional, and local level, which are evidence-based and focus on the availability of data and on the enhancement and improvement of their quality. The main objective of SEEMIG has been to better understand, deal with, and direct long-term migratory processes, which are related to the human capital and the demographics of the SEE area, as well as their effects on labor markets and national/regional economies. SEEMIG also aims at

strengthening the capacity of local and regional authorities to improve the collection and use of statistical data for the purposes of planning policies for specific sectors, and at promoting evidenced-based policies and strategies.

1.2. Recommendations for national policies that endorse data on migrations

The present document summarizes policy recommendations to improve the availability and quality of data on migrations in Italy. The recommendations were developed by the University of Trento, which was supported by experts from national Institutions, that have been responsible for or involved in the production and dissemination of statistical data in the Work Package of the project SEEMIG 6 (WP6). The WP6 focuses on providing national/regional/local administration with useful planning tools and an assistance aimed at building the necessary skills to improve the collection and use of statistical data. To facilitate this process, the results of a foresight exercise about the socio-economic impact of different scenarios were presented and discussed with national, regional, and local policy makers within a series of *workshops*. The *workshops* have been used as the basis for the development of strategies to increase the production and use of data at the local, regional, and national level. These strategies aim at enhancing the capacity of decision makers to adapt their policies to the consequences of demographic processes related to migration and the labor market. To strengthen interactive and "bottom-up" contributions for the development of the aforementioned policies and as a prerequisite for sustainable strategies, a *focus group* with stakeholders in each country has been organized. The workshops have been followed by a revision of the strategy to gather *input* materials for the regional *roundtables* that have been organized in the city of Trento (Autonomous Province of Trento) on the topic of migration. This input material has been elaborated with the aid of all the parties concerned and represents the basis for the development of policy recommendations aimed at rationalizing policies and programs for specific sectors at the national level.

This policy paper has been drafted to provide a short, easy to read, and useful text for national decision makers and non-experts in order to identify the necessary political actions to reform the systems of data production and dissemination on migration, human capital and the labor market. These recommendations focus on national policies but will also contribute to the formulation of recommendations for transnational policies directed to South-Eastern Europe.

In the following sections, some main areas of focus for policies related to the improvement of the collection and use of national data are identified, as well as the key actions designed to address these policies and the role of the different actors involved in the process. Every action is justified and the document further clarifies the impact, the results in the short and long term, and the possible risks that might occur in carrying out the actions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICIES

The main proposals for policies related to the enhancement and improvement of the collection and use of national data are listed below.

2.1 Area of intervention No. 1 – key recommendations/key actions. Production of a more complete and correct information on migration phenomena and the presence of foreign population in Italy

To improve the more comprehensive management of migratory phenomena, one must first of all know the situations and dynamics that provoke them. If it is true (as it is true) that migrations are an unstoppable phenomenon, that is put in place by people fleeing from difficult situations or looking for better living conditions, it is also true that the host country can possibly try to manage the

phenomenon, by deriving some benefits from it and limiting the most problematic aspects. In order to avoid that the phenomenon is perceived as exclusively negative and (especially during periods of economic crisis) ends up fuelling parochial and hostile feelings and attitudes, it is important that the information about migration, directed to the public opinion and/or policy makers, is correct, comprehensive, and evidence-based. To this end, it is essential to produce increasingly accessible, complete, and qualitatively accurate statistics on this topic.

1. Area of intervention n.1 – sub-recommendation/key sub-action n.1. Administrative sources: improvement of the procedures to collect data and implementation of new sources of integrated data

The exploitation of data from administrative sources (one of the main sources for institutional statistics on migration) has greatly improved in recent years. Especially in the first decade of the new century, we have witnessed the gradual shift from the collection of data through questionnaires on paper to the collection via the Internet. This shift has allowed us to anticipate part of the quality checks at the moment of the collection of data, with obvious gains in terms of the accuracy of the information surveyed. It has further allowed us to save resources, such as those previously intended for the printing and distribution of paper models or those dedicated to the computerized recording of the completed paper questionnaires. However, further progress can be made. In particular with the transition from the Web-based collection of aggregated data (expressed as frequencies) to the collection of individual data (expressed as values of the variables collected for each person). A first example of individual data surveys drawn from administrative sources is the survey of the municipal registry lists of the resident population (LAC) used in the last population census of 2011. Further developments concern the integration between individual micro-databases and the information contained therein selected through specific "keys", i.e. through the use of an identification code which is unique for each statistical unit (individual, more specifically). On this front, the first experiments of projects such as the SIM Project (Integrated System of Microdata) have been implemented by Istat. The project aims at summarizing the information drawn from different administrative archives and at attributing to each statistical unit a unique identification code. The National Population Register (ANPR), which is being designed by the Ministry of the Interior, and the Virtual Register Statistics (ANVIS) of Istat, which is related to it, should make it possible in the medium term to renew the existing methods to collect data on migration and on the foreign resident population drawn from administrative sources. The new data collection processes will allow in the short to medium term the production of better quality data, with a greater territorial detail and richer of contents. For example, it will be possible to cross-check and integrate the information found in the various archives. The main actors in this process of renovation are the National Institute of Statistics (Istat), the Ministry of the Interior, and other administrations that produce data on migration and on foreign presence.

2. Area of intervention n.1 – sub-recommendations/key sub-actions n.2. Administrative sources: introduction of additional questions related to migrations in the collection of administrative and statistical data

Always within the area of data collected from administrative sources, it is important to work towards an expansion of the informational contents that are currently being produced and disseminated in the official statistics. Immigration in Italy is now a mature phenomenon and it is therefore necessary to have a more detailed articulation of the variables that have been so far surveyed. More specifically, in the case of official statistics, the phenomenon of second generations and that of the acquisition of an Italian citizenship are not sufficiently considered. The same thing can be said regarding emigration to other countries by foreign citizens, a phenomenon that is particularly difficult to detect in statistics, for the lack of a register of foreign residents abroad. On the mentioned fronts, important progress has been made with the inclusion in the ANPR of new questions regarding characteristics of the resident population (place of birth, citizenship and place of birth of the parents,

etc.). The first results, however, are expected with the implementation and running of the new systems, which should take place within two to three years. The main actors in this process are the National Institute of Statistics, the Ministry of the Interior, and other administrations that produce data on migration and foreign presence.

3. Area of intervention n.1 – sub-recommendations/key sub-actions n.3. Administrative sources: introduction of a PIN code for individuals

Another important issue related to the enhancement of statistical data on migrations is the use of PIN (Personal Identification Number) to identify the individual in the administrative sources databases. In Italy, in most of sources used to produce statistics on foreign population and migrations (the Population registers, the archive of Resident permits, etc.) the individuals are identified by the fiscal code (a code assigned by the Agency of Revenues for fiscal purposes). Within the ANPR/ANVIS projects, related also to the Istat SIM project, the fiscal code is used as the first key to link information on population stock and fluxes. Furthermore, linking ANVIS data to SIM data the new PIN code (the SIM code) will be assigned to the linked individuals and it will be stored inside ANVIS. So it can be expected that in the future it will be easier to “follow” the history of events for individuals for statistical purposes, including out-migrations statistics.

2.2 Area of intervention N.2 – Implementation and managing of local, national, and transnational databases, used to inform the public opinion, the research and planning of effective policies concerning migrations and integration

The availability of up-to-date and quality statistical data is a value that guarantees a correct formation of the public opinion, not only for research purposes but also and especially for the planning of evidence-based and effective migration and integration policies. These policies are of vital importance for the management of migration and the presence of the foreign population in Italy. Policies must be able to prevent and handle the phenomenon of migration and should not merely “run after” it with late provisions, which have been designed to heal already critical situations. An example of this approach is the use of regularizations and other laws that regularize the illegal presence of migrants on Italian soil. To overcome this approach and orient policies towards the anticipation and management of the phenomenon, it is important that policymakers can base their actions on up-to-date, complete, and reliable migration statistics on a continuous level. These statistics can be extremely useful for the early planning of the flows and for the management of the phenomenon as a whole. They can also be used for the assessment of the measures to be taken to promote the integration of foreigners wishing to settle in the territory of the country.

1. Area of intervention n.2 – sub-recommendations/key-sub-actions n.1. Creation and management of increasing data warehouse on the transnational, national, and local level, containing updated data on the phenomenon of migration and human capital

For a correct information of the public opinion and effective planning of immigration and integration policies, it is essential to have the availability of certified and updated statistical data. It is crucial that the population develops an opinion on the phenomenon in light of a set of publicly available and checked data that provide an objective reading that adheres to reality, in order to prevent or avoid possible tensions. Immigration and integration policies, moreover, are effective only if choices are evidence-based (and consider, for instance, past trends and the future developments of the phenomenon). It is important to strongly promote and support the attempts that have been made to plan and implement reliable databases that draw their content from a certified source at the local, national, transnational level. At the national level, some steps in this direction have already been made with the creation of a nationally unified statistical data warehouse, created for Italy by the National Institute of Statistics (<http://dati.istat.it>). On this front, further progress can be made in the short to medium term, by improving the timeliness and completeness of the information (by

extending the publication to all the different intersections that are possible between variables). Even at the local level there are databases about this topic, but in this case the various initiatives often lack of coordination and standardization, thus risking to limit the comparison and use of information. In the short to medium term, efforts should be made to complete the dissemination of the local statistical databases at a decentralized territorial level and to promote their integration within the national database. An important example of database at the transnational level is the database built for the SEEMIG Project (<http://www.seemig.eu/index.php/data>), which is the first archive of integrated statistical information on migrations, the labor market and human capital with reference to the eight countries of the SEE Area. On this front, it is important to alert policy makers to the opportunity to assign resources for the maintenance and further development of the database, which is a valuable container of certified statistical data on the phenomenon, which are also comparable. The institutional actors involved in these actions are the National Institute of Statistics and all public administrations contributing to the production of the data contained in the databases at the local, national, and transnational levels. In the end, it is crucial that researchers and statisticians work together, in order to promote such a kind of transnational initiatives and databases.

2.3 Area of intervention n.3 – Improvement of the statistics on the labor market status of the foreign population

The work represents a key element for the migratory phenomena. In many cases, the job search represents the starting point that triggers off and guides the development of the migration process. In a period of economic crisis like the one that Europe is facing today, it is very important to pay special attention to the correct interpretation of the phenomena linked to the labor market and human capital, with reference to the foreign population but not only to it. The crisis induces particular tensions and stress factors in the labor market and, in addition to determining changes in the trend of stocks and flows of the foreign population (suffice it to mention the recent decline in subscriptions from abroad and the increase in cancellations), can also represent a breeding ground for theories that see immigration as a threat and not as a resource (identifying in the foreigner a dangerous potential competitor in the struggle for employment).

- 1. Area of intervention n.3 – sub-recommendation/key sub-action n.1. Continuous Labor Force Survey: enhancement of the sample “foreigners” and/or periodical distribution of specific questionnaires on the labor market of foreigners*

The continuous Labor Force Survey (LFS), harmonized at European level, constitutes the main source of labor market data for the foreign population resident in Italy. Despite the large sample, the foreign population represents a reduced quota of the total population (8.1% on the 1 January 2014, according to Istat data on residents), so the survey fails to provide reliable estimates for all the measured variables, which are very disaggregated on the territorial level. The sample reflects the distribution of the resident foreign population (representing the most ingrained component of immigration in Italy) and does not take account of temporary or seasonal presences (which constitute a frequent presence in the labor market of foreigners). A strengthening of the sample would result in the ability to produce more reliable statistics on the phenomenon. We must raise awareness among institutional actors interested in labor market data (not only in the case of Istat, which produces those same data) about the opportunity to invest resources in this direction. A first step forward regarding the representativeness of the foreigners in the LFS sample has been taken recently with the introduction of the rule whereby for a foreign family that has not been interviewed another foreign family must be selected. Another important aspect is the experiment carried out in 2008 to include within LFS a specific questionnaire on foreigners: "The integration of immigrants and their descendants into the labor market". A new questionnaire has been distributed in 2014 and it is therefore important, for the purposes of the analysis of the dynamics of the phenomenon, that the

distribution of these questionnaires becomes periodical and constant. The different actors involved in these activities are the National Institute of Statistics and all the administrations that use data on the labor market.

2. Area of intervention n.3 – sub-recommendation/key sub-action n.2. Continuous Labor Force Survey: harmonization of the definition of family and standardization of the concepts used to identify the foreign population

The consolidation of the foreign population on the Italian soil is turning obsolete the classical definition of "foreign population", based solely on the individual's citizenship. Concepts such as foreign origin, foreign origin, etc. are becoming more and more important today. These concepts should be applied also in the context of the definition of the LFS sample, and if this has not been possible, it is also because the basic lists for the extraction of the sample refer only to the variable citizenship. Another limit concerning the lists is the concept of "family", which is also used within the LFS. For the Italian Law, the unique requirement of cohabitation (household) is insufficient to identify a family. An additional concept that comes into play is that of kinship or affective bond, which can create some problems to the representativeness of foreigners within the sample. Different foreigners, indeed, may reside in the same house or live in the house of their Italian employer (for example, in the case of domestic workers, housekeepers or caregivers); despite of this, they alone constitute a family. This situation limits the chances of interviewing with the LFS foreign nationals. It is therefore necessary, especially in the above mentioned areas, to promote additional and updated exploratory studies, which are designed to test the feasibility of a possible extension of the concepts of family and of foreign population, according to international standards. The opportunity to introduce the change in the current definition might be represented precisely by the transformations that the archives, from which the basic lists have been drawn, are currently going through (see paragraph 2.1); another important factor may be the availability of a greater number of variables on families and on the foreign population. This is, however, an area in which a lot remains to be done. The main institutional actors and/or endorsers for the actions above are the National Institute of Statistics and all the administrations that use data on the labor market.