



European Dimensions of the Refugee Crisis | October 2016

Facts on the European Dimension of Displacement and Asylum: ITALY

After closure of the Balkan route, Italy has again become the main point of entry for refugees and migrants arriving in Europe. Italy faces a major challenge. It is already suffering from high unemployment and its banks are on the verge of crisis. Rome needs the solidarity of its fellow European partners and is promoting joint EU reforms.

OVERVIEW

Demographic Structure

Population	60.8 million
Growth rate	-2.1%
Languages	Italian, in some areas also German, French, Slovenian
Religions	83.3% Christian, 12.4% without affiliation, 3.7% Muslim, 0.6% other
Median age (EU 28)	45.1 years (42.2 years)

(All figures for 2015, unless otherwise noted; arrows = change from previous year)

Economy & Employment

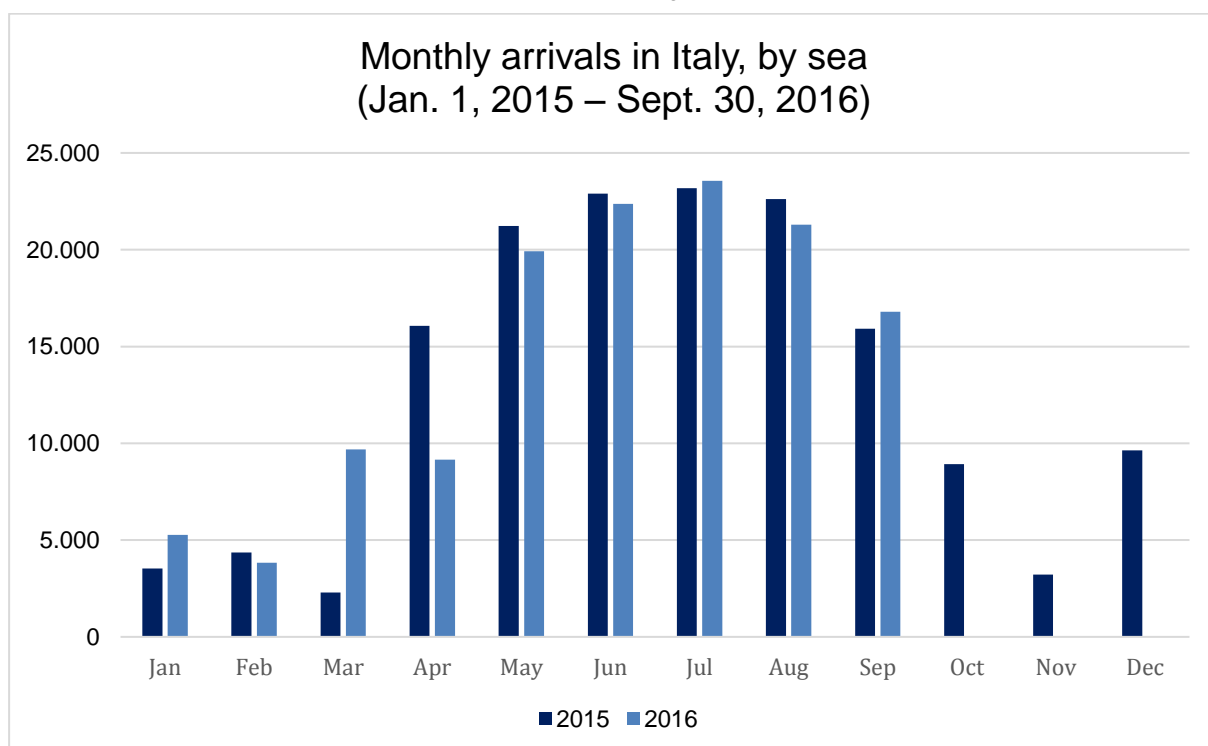
GDP (per capita)	US\$1.815 trillion (\$29,847)	↘
GDP growth rate	0.8%	↗
GNI as PPP (per capita)	US\$2.18 trillion (\$35.850)	↗
Inflation (CPI)	0.03%	↘
Unemployment	11.9%	↘
Youth unemployment (15–24 years)	40.3%	↘
FDI (inflows)	US\$20.28 billion	↘
Allocated from EU Cohesion Fund	€2.17 billion (July 2015)	
Imports of goods	€442.4 billion	↘
Share of EU	59.3%	
Exports of goods	€494.9 billion	↘
Share of EU	54.6%	
Remittances	US\$9.5 billion	↘

Political System & Relations with the EU

Type of state/government	Parliamentary republic / democracy with bicameral legislature
Current government	<p>Coalition government consisting of Partito Democratico (PD), Nuovo Centro Destà (NCD) and “Scelta Civica”/“Per l’Italia”</p> <p>Head of state since February 2015 (reelection possible): President of the Italian Republic Sergio Mattarella; head of government since February 2014 (additional terms of office possible): Prime Minister Matteo Renzi (PD);</p> <p>Parliament: Chamber of Deputies: 630 seats, elected in February 2013 for a period of five years; Senate: 315 elected members and 4 members currently appointed to serve for life, elections held in February 2013 on a regional basis</p> <p>Italians will vote on constitutional changes on December 4, 2016. The proposed issue is the streamlining and acceleration of policy-making processes.</p>
Sustainable governance	<p>Compared to 41 EU and OECD countries (Bertelsmann Stiftung, Sustainable Governance Indicators 2016):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Policy Performance: 5.35 out of 10 points; ranked 32nd, comparable to Portugal and Chile (Germany: 7.25 points) 2. Quality of Democracy: 7.2 out of 10 points; ranked 23rd, comparable to Iceland and Czechia (Germany: 8.8 points) 3. Governance: 6.16 out of 10 points; ranked 25th, comparable to Japan and Czechia (Germany: 7.05)
Human rights and protection of minorities	<p>Amnesty International, Annual Report 2015/2016 – Italy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reception conditions for asylum-seekers are inadequate; the “hotspot” approach could potentially lead to arbitrary detention. • The National Strategy for Roma Inclusion (NSRI) has not been effectively implemented. Roma families are still segregated and living in camps and have little access to social housing. • Efforts to make torture a crime in Italy have not succeeded, which makes it more difficult to prosecute possible cases of abuse on the part of the country’s law enforcement officers.
Corruption	<p>Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2015</p> <p>Country ranking: 61 out of 168 (lower = better), comp. to Oman and South Africa</p>
Freedom of the press	<p>Reporters Without Borders, 2016 World Press Freedom Index</p> <p>Status: noticeable problems</p> <p>Country ranking 77 out of 180 (lower = better), comp to. Moldova and Benin</p>
Status of EU membership	<p>Founding member of the EU and the eurozone; member of the Schengen Area and subject to the Dublin Regulation.</p> <p>Last/next EU presidency: July–December 2014/January–June 2028</p> <p>EU budget (2015): Italy covers 11.48% of the total EU budget (Germany: 21.36%) and is one of the EU’s net contributors.</p> <p>Key Italian officials on the European level: Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Vice-President of the European Commission, since November 2014; Mario Draghi, President of the European Central Bank (ECB), since November 2011, term of office is 8 years and cannot be extended.</p> <p>Italy elected 73 of the 751 Members of the European Parliament for the 2014–2019 legislative period; the strongest Italian parties are the Partito Democratico with 31 seats, the Five Star Movement with 17 seats and Forza Italia with 13 seats.</p>

SITUATION OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN ITALY

Category	Source, transit and destination country
As country of origin	According to estimates by the Italian Foreign Ministry, some 5 million Italian citizens were living abroad in 2014, most of whom were in Argentina (868,265), Germany (721,604), Switzerland (594,899) and Brazil (431,847).
As destination country for migrants	Approximately 5.54 million people with migration background live in Italy (approx. 8.3% of the overall population), including 1.5 million EU citizens. Most are from Romania (18.7%), Albania (9.3%) and Morocco (8.5%).
As transit and destination country for refugees and irregular migrants	<p>Some 144,000 people have reached the Italian coast by boat in 2016 (as of October 7). In 2015, the figure was almost 154,000 people. In 2016, most have been from Nigeria (19%), Eritrea (13%) and Sudan, Gambia and Cote d'Ivoire (7% each). More than 15% have been unaccompanied minors.</p> <p>The Central Mediterranean route remains treacherous: Some 3,050 people have lost their lives or been reported missing so far in 2016.</p>



Source: UNHCR 2016

Asylum applications and relocation

Italy had already received 72,500 asylum applications by the end of August 2016, compared to 84,000 in all of 2015. In 2015, 29,615 applications were (initially) approved; from January to August 2016 the figure was 21,692, with 63.8% of the claims processed each month being rejected. Most people applying for asylum come from Nigeria, Pakistan, Gambia and Eritrea.

The number of applications fluctuates monthly from 7,000 to 11,000. In the summer months of 2016, the difference between the number of claims submitted and those actually reviewed increased once again; in August, the last month for which figures are available, there were 11,446 applications and 6,148 reviews.

By the end of September 2016, only 1,258 people had been moved from Italy to another EU country as part of the Emergency Relocation Mechanism. Finland has now accepted the most refugees from Italy, at 322, followed by France (231) and Portugal (183) (Germany: 20, although the German government wants to begin accepting 500 a month). It is planned to relocate 39,600 people from Italy within the next two years.

A particularly critical point: no unaccompanied minors have been relocated so far.

<p>Housing for refugees</p>	<p>Italy can accommodate a total of 111,081 people at its reception centers, including 1,600 at the four functioning hotspots in Pozzallo, Trapani and Taranto and on the island of Lampedusa. Italy plans to expand its total capacity by the end of the year so it can house 124,579 people.</p> <p>The processes used have been subject to criticism, since Frontex and the Italian border police have begun pre-selecting arrivals in order to separate refugees from those who have presumably come for economic reasons. In many cases, the latter do not even have their rights explained to them and receive no further assistance.</p> <p>Yet even asylum-seekers with good prospects leave the reception centers, since the asylum procedure is often lengthy and not rarely takes longer than a year. Currently the Interior Ministry is working on an action plan to solve these problems, and the initial registration procedures have also become smoother. Fingerprints are now taken of almost 90% of those arriving in the country.</p>
<p>Status of refugees in Italy</p>	<p>Italy is a party to the Geneva Convention on Refugees, including the 1967 Protocol. It must adhere to EU law as laid out in the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and is one of the few European nations to anchor the right to asylum in its constitution (Article 10).</p> <p>Theoretically asylum-seekers must be interviewed within 30 days and a decision made within the following three days. Applicants can be granted refugee status or, alternatively, subsidiary protection. In both cases, renewable residence permits are issued for a period of five years.</p> <p>It is legal for both recognized refugees and asylum-seekers to work, the latter after a two-month period, to the extent that any delay in the decision-making process is not a result of their own actions.</p> <p>As a rule, refugees and asylum-seekers have access to the public education system.</p>
<p>Funding</p>	<p>The EU has allocated a total of €24.5 million as emergency assistance from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Internal Security Fund (ISF). Resources from the ISF are being used for a number of purposes, including €2.2 million for the Italian coast guard and €1 million for the Italian navy. Italy is also slated to receive a further €592.6 million by 2020. Moreover, the European Commission has made €1 million available to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to support the relocation process in Italy.</p> <p>In February, Italy's Ministry of Economic Affairs called on the EU to exclude 0.2% (€3.7 billion) of GDP from the EU's budget deficit rules and classify money used for combating the refugee crisis as "extraordinary expenditures."</p> <p>According to a European Commission document, Italy is already benefitting from the EU's flexible budget rules: In the fiscal years 2015 and 2016, both outlays for refugees and a number of additional expenditures (including some caused by current economic conditions) were excluded from the country's budget deficit (totaling €19 billion or 1.13% of Italy's economic output). According to the document, these items amounted to €0.5 billion in 2015 and €0.7 billion in 2016, not including another €1 billion spent on "security."</p> <p>In a position paper ("Migration Compact") published in April, the Italian government proposed several options for financing a reformed European asylum and migration policy.</p>

1. A traditional country of migration

Italy can look back on a long and diverse history of migration in which it has played the role of both source and destination country.

Until the mid-1970s, Italy was largely a country of origin, with up to 300,000 Italians leaving each year in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, mostly for North and South America. At the end of World War II, emigration focused on Western Europe, with Italian workers moving mostly to

France, Switzerland and Germany. The post-war economic boom resulted in a classic win-win situation: On the one hand, Western Europe needed additional labor; on the other, Italy benefitted from the remittances sent home by Italian migrants. A key role in this development was the freedom accorded to workers to move where they pleased, a right granted as part of European integration.

Conversely, inclusion of the Italian economy in Europe's single market and the revival of the country's agricultural and industrial sectors provided migrants with work in Italy. For example, up until the 1990s, Moroccan and Tunisian seasonal laborers typically worked Italy's fields during the summer months and spent the other half of the year in their native countries.

As the country modernized, many Italians also migrated within Italy, from the countryside to the city and from the south to the industrial centers in the north. In addition, many Italians who had left for work reasons returned home in order to be part of the economic revival. Quite a few invested the funds they had acquired abroad in real estate back home.

2. From source to destination country

Today some 5 million Italian citizens live abroad, about half of them in Europe. The country is home to some 60 million Italians and more than 5 million migrants, of whom 1.5 million are citizens of other European countries. The countries with the largest number of expatriates living in Italy are Romania (17%), Albania (9.3%) and Morocco (8.5%).

The following are the milestones on Italy's journey from a country of origin to a country of destination:

As visa requirements were introduced and the Schengen Area established, seasonal workers from North Africa were gradually replaced by workers from Romania, who remained in Italy. Many migrants also came to the country from Ukraine.

Thousands of people also fled across the Adriatic to Italy after the end of the Albanian dictatorship in 1990 and during the Balkan wars that resulted from the breakup of Yugoslavia.

More and more people also came from Africa, usually illegally, looking for better opportunities or seeking a safe place to live.

Many of them eke out an existence by working poorly paid jobs, including informally in the underground economy, especially in agriculture and construction.

Italy implemented an immigration policy and created the relevant administrative structures far too late in its transformation from a source to a destination country. In the current situation today, even though neither the policy nor the structures adequately reflect the scope of the situation by now, reforms take place and policies are adapted. Italy's integration policy, once a patchwork of emergency measures, is gradually becoming more substantial, as a Bertelsmann Stiftung study on integrating refugees into the workforce shows.

This is not the only challenge the country faces. Italy's economy has stalled and its public finances are under pressure; at the same time, unemployment is high and the future bleak, especially for young people. Highly skilled workers, especially younger ones, often leave Italy looking for a better future elsewhere. Many people feel that they have been left behind and are now competing with migrants and refugees for entry-level jobs and affordable housing. Surveys show that many Italians are growing increasingly dissatisfied – a feeling that is being directed toward the national government in Rome in particular, but also toward immigrants and refugees, who are frequently seen as the cause of structural and sociopolitical problems. On matters of regional distribution, some Italian regions, particularly those in northern Italy governed by politicians of the rightwing Lega Nord party, still oppose an even distribution of refugees between the regions.

3. Doorway to the EU

Thus, the situation was already tense when tens of thousands of refugees and migrants began arriving by boat in southern Italy in 2011 (a figure that has exceeded 100,000 annually since 2014) via the Central Mediterranean route.

In 2015, over 1 million people seeking refuge or better lives came to Europe via the Balkan route. In addition, more than 150,000 refugees and

migrants landed in southern Italy, with most arriving from Libya.

Approximately 144,000 people made the risky journey between January and October of this year. The number of vessels attempting to cross the Mediterranean depends on the weather, and 12,000 migrants reached mainland Italy in the first days of October alone.

The following trends can be seen on the Central Mediterranean route:

The Libyan coast is the main starting point for the dangerous voyage to Italy, but boats also depart from Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Turkey.

The transit route through Libya will remain a lucrative business for human traffickers, smugglers and militias as long as these individuals and their networks or clans are unable to find other sources of income and as long as no legitimate government structures exist throughout Libya that hold a monopoly on the use of force.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to arrest smugglers in the Mediterranean since they usually have refugees and others board inflatable boats and then send them unaccompanied to sea.

While many people were still refugees fleeing the war in Syria in 2015, the majority of migrants now reaching Italy are from West and East Africa, including Nigeria (19%), Eritrea (13%), Gambia, Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan (7% each), Guinea (6%) and Somalia (5%).

The influx increasingly includes unaccompanied young people and children (more than 15%).

Italy is receiving greater support from the EU for its efforts to save lives, protect borders and combat smugglers. Having been given multiple mandates, the Italian navy and the warships dispatched by various EU member states (including the two from Germany) are participating in EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia and in Operation Triton, carried out by Frontex, the European border and coast guard agency. In addition, 10 civil society organizations (including SOS Méditerranée and Doctors Without Borders) are maintaining 13 rescue vessels which ply the waters between Sicily and the Libyan coast. NATO is also participating, with ships and aircraft present in the Mediterranean as part of Sea Guardian, its maritime security

operation. Information gained during Sea Guardian is also being made available to EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia.

Despite that, the Central Mediterranean route is and will remain dangerous: UNHCR estimates that 3,771 people lost their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean in 2015. There have been more than 3,054 casualties in 2016, as of October.

In 2015, Italy was still allowing many of the new arrivals to simply proceed north. Now, however, that the Dublin Regulation is being enforced once again, France, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia are carrying out border patrols, and four hotspots have been established on Sicily and Lampedusa with assistance from the EU. That means Italy faces the challenge of housing arrivals within the country, processing their asylum claims, integrating recognized refugees into society and deporting those whose applications have been denied.

Numerically speaking, it would not be a major problem for a country of 60 million people to take in 150,000 refugees each year. Yet for the Italian island of Sicily, the point where most arrivals enter the country, it is indeed a considerable challenge. The reason is that the island's infrastructure, public administration and social systems cannot cope with the added burden caused by migration without additional help from Rome and Brussels.

The trend suggests that in coming years people seeking refuge or better lives will continue arriving via the Central Mediterranean route in structurally weak southern Italy – where they will require months of humanitarian aid and social assistance.

4. Strengths, weaknesses and possible improvements

Italy is not moving quickly enough to address this long-term responsibility. Similarly, it is taking too long for the EU to provide the necessary support. Eleven points must be kept in mind:

1. The crews of the rescue vessels and warships do what they can to quickly locate refugee boats and save those on board. Now that their area of operations has been expanded, Triton vessels are also present in the Adriatic between Albania, Greece and Italy. This summer, moreover,

Operation Sophia was given the additional responsibility of training the Libyan navy and coast guard and helping implement the UN weapons embargo off the Libyan coast.

A harmonization of the different mandates of the three naval rescue operations would improve cooperation among them.

The noble task of combating human trafficking is failing, since the smugglers launch the inflatable vessels containing migrants but do not travel with them. Critics thus warn that the naval operations are a further incentive for people to undertake the dangerous crossing and that smugglers are systematically exploiting the operations by dispatching boats carrying far too many persons.

2. This dilemma could be resolved if the EU were to make stabilizing and modernizing Libya a priority within a more comprehensive neighborhood policy. Even if central structures are still absent and the new unity government lacks authority, Rome and Brussels could work with local decision makers. In addition to training and cooperating with the Libyan coast guard, local-level public administrators in communities along the smugglers' routes could be supported by European teams as they develop economic resources within the community. This would create economic incentives that could serve as alternatives to smuggling and joining militias. The army and police must be rebuilt from scratch. The unity government needs a temporary UN peacekeeping force if it is to establish its authority vis-à-vis the militias.

Given that rule of law is currently lacking in Libya and the country is overwhelmed by the challenges it faces, the situation there is extremely precarious for refugees and migrants. Thus they should be moved from other locations to the coastal area on the Libyan-Tunisian border. Together with the Tunisian government and Libyan authorities, the EU could set up a reception center that would make it possible to provide assistance and accommodation for refugees and migrants and process their cases, all in a humanitarian manner.

3. When vessels with rescued refugees come to port in Sicily, there is considerable willingness to help among locals. However it is generally not possible for both sides to have ongoing contact due to a limited or lacking knowledge of each

other's languages. In addition, most of the migrants are housed in camps and hotspots that are located outside the main residential areas and are heavily guarded by the military.

At the same time, people are becoming less accepting of migrants. According to surveys (Eurobarometer), immigration is now the second most pressing "subject of concern" in Italy after the economic crisis. A study by the Bertelsmann Stiftung (eupinions 2016/1) shows that compared to other Europeans, Italians feel particularly alienated in their own country.

This negative trend could be mitigated if people had the feeling the country's public administration functioned better. The Bertelsmann Sustainable Governance Index has proposed a number of administrative reforms: better qualified personnel, more transparent processes, technical equipment, cooperation between national and local administrators.

Despite the country's austerity measures, the public education system should be modernized. Illegal work situations should be legalized. By implementing reforms in a visible manner, the government in Rome could once again gain the respect of the public and increase acceptance of migration, which is necessary if Italy is to counteract its unfavorable demographic trends.

4. Something that did not yet work in 2015 does now: Almost all arrivals are registered and housed in permanent buildings, halls or homes. Yet in some cases it still takes more than a year for asylum-seekers to find out whether their applications have been approved. Until a decision is made, lack of prospects is the order of the day, since there are still too few integration courses, activities or programs for keeping the newcomers occupied (according to Doctors Without Borders there are only 20,000 available slots). Based on information provided by a number of individuals who have registered as refugees, they receive two hours of instruction in Italian every day and €1 to €3 in pocket money, as well as non-cash benefits. As a result, asylum-seekers have left the camps (more than 10,000 have done so, according to estimates) and are living in precarious circumstances elsewhere in the country, working illegally in agriculture, the construction sector or as domestic help in private homes.

These problems could be overcome if more – and more comprehensive – language, integration and training courses were available. For that to happen, the authorities need the help of civil society and the business community. If additional civil servants from the EU were to provide support, Italy's public administrators could process asylum applications more quickly without any loss of quality in the processing procedure.

5. With support from the European Commission, four hotspots are up and running on Sicily and Lampedusa and capable of housing 1,600 people. An additional 93,000 places are available in reception centers.

That is far too few if Italy is to accommodate more than 150,000 people by the end of the year, as is expected. NGOs have voiced criticism that the hotspots and centers are overflowing and that the hygienic conditions are poor.

Groups that are especially at risk, such as unaccompanied minors and victims of torture, require environments that are non-threatening, proper legal counsel and medical care.

The authorities and NGOs urgently need translators, lawyers, teachers, therapists, doctors, counselors, managers and technical equipment.

6. The work done by non-governmental organizations – such as Borderline, Sante Egidio and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) – is crucial. Their unstinting efforts include rescuing boats at sea and providing services such as social and cultural learning programs.

NGOs also deal with sensitive issues the authorities cannot give their full attention to. For example, the number of unaccompanied minors arriving in Italy has grown alarmingly, to over 17,000 so far this year. Many are under the age of 14.

Also alarming is that traffickers are now using Sicily to smuggle young Nigerian women into Europe's prostitution networks, a trend that has grown significantly: The IOM estimates that more than 6,000 young women have been brought in for these illicit purposes so far this year, compared to 500 in 2013.

There are too few public officials responding to this situation and only three IOM staff members, who are working tirelessly without the necessary administrative resources to address the sad fates of these women.

What is required is adequate personnel and infrastructure for both public agencies and NGOs. Better networking is also required among civil society organizations, which must work more closely with local public administrators and the EU institutions on site.

Moreover, cooperative efforts among EU member states must be increased and optimized in terms of the legal framework and law enforcement if these instances of human trafficking are to be combated effectively.

7. In Italy, asylum-seekers and recognized refugees have the right to register in the System for the Protection of Asylum-Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR). The system helps them find a job or a place in a training program. It could be made more effective if the regional SPRAR systems were better networked with each other and responded more quickly to current needs. Italian law allows for quick integration into the local job market. Newcomers could benefit from this situation if more and better integration, language and training programs were offered.

8. In Catania, officials from a number of institutions – the EU border protection agency Frontex, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the European Commission, Europol, the EU's naval operations and Italy's border protection agency – are all working under one roof ("EU House"). This promotes cooperation, although there is too little staff to adequately respond to the many tasks at hand.

9. The European Commission in Brussels has recognized Italy's administrative and financial performance, is allocating additional funds from various EU sources and has taken a flexible stance regarding the increased debt resulting from the current situation. An excessive deficit procedure (EDP) has not been initiated.

Responding to the influx of migrants is a burden for Italy's public administration and budgets, and the financial assistance from Brussels is a key source of support.

Yet this cannot distract from the fact that the country's policy makers, business community and society at large must finally implement the reforms that have been stalled for many years. They must also increase the efficiency of Italy's public administration and put a stop to the rampant corruption.

Consistently combating organized crime would help the country strengthen rule of law. That, in turn, would promote private investment and local-level entrepreneurial activities. If they want to improve social systems and infrastructure, Italy's southern regions need cooperative partnerships that bring together private- and public-sector investors. Were the regions to offer more rule of law and stronger economies, migrants would also benefit from a more robust environment when they arrive.

10. Rome is right when it maintains that the EU's asylum and migration policy must not only be reformed, it must also receive greater funding from the EU budget and be made part of a stronger foreign, defense and neighborhood policy.

In terms of Community funding, Italy has proposed a restructuring of the instruments used to finance Europe's joint foreign policy. It has also proposed a new (still to be developed) funding instrument for foreign-policy measures in the area of migration, a new EU investment fund for developing countries, and jointly issued "Eurobonds" to underwrite programs related to asylum and displacement.

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) should focus on North Africa and provide greater strategic support to help the countries there promote rule of law, economic growth and job creation. Tunisia is a prime example. Yet the Arab world's only democracy needs more targeted aid in its efforts to create training positions and jobs in its impoverished regions and to further reform and strengthen its security sector.

In September, the Renzi government also submitted a proposal to Brussels for a stronger European defense policy. It offers concrete steps toward a "Union of European Defense" that could potentially be based on the model used for the Schengen Agreement.

Yet this good intention is weakened by the fact that the Italian government itself is not prone to taking concrete steps, on the one hand, and, on the other, has received little support from other member states, especially when it comes to accepting recognized refugees from Italy.

11. The Italian government recognizes that it must do more to integrate migrants, resettle them nationally, deport them when necessary and provide them with adequate information. Rome is currently preparing an action plan to address these issues.

Many initiatives have met with criticism, in that shortening the approval process for asylum claims is at odds with the notion of examining each individual case in detail. Detaining asylum-seekers after the initial interview until a decision is made, or while an individual's identity or documents are being checked, is legal in Italy. Moreover, there is resistance in the mainland regions to migrants being resettled there from Sicily. Information campaigns such as Aware Migrants, which is designed to prevent people from taking the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean, are seen as slapdash and ill-conceived.

Moreover, cooperative efforts by the Italian and Sudanese police to deport migrants could lead to democratic Italy becoming dependent on a dictator who is shunned by the international community.

In view of this dilemma, as part of their common foreign and neighborhood policies, Europeans must rethink how they want to deal with those countries of origin that lack legitimate governments or are ruled by dictators.

5. European solidarity and national reform backlog

Given its hard-hit banks, sputtering economy and ongoing influx of migrants, Italy truly needs the solidarity of its European peers. It would be easier to request it if the country were to finally implement its long-delayed reforms and get the country back on its feet, socially and economically.

When it comes to creating a European asylum and migration policy, the Italian government can count on its own citizens, since surveys show

that, compared to elsewhere in Europe, the Italian public particularly endorses the idea of the EU playing a greater role in the area of asylum and migration policy (eupinions 2016/1).

Asylum-seekers whose applications have been approved should be quickly relocated to other EU member states, as agreed. When it comes to refugees who have been identified as economic migrants, Italy must learn to deal with them using improved migration, integration and employment policies – especially given the country's unfavorable demographic trends.

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