

# La Dimensione Esterna della Politica di Migrazione Italiana (DEPMI II)

Secondo Working Report  
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# La Dimensione Esterna della Politica di Migrazione Italiana (DEPMI II)



## Working Report 2024

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## La Dimensione Esterna della Politica di Migrazione Italiana (DEPMI II): verso un ampliamento dello sforzo di mappatura nel Mediterraneo allargato

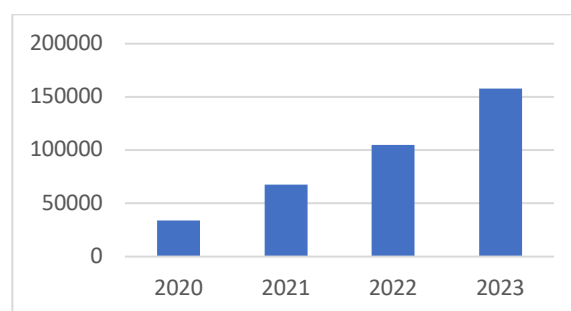
Iole Fontana

Grazie alla sua collocazione strategica al centro del Mediterraneo e al suo ruolo di frontiera esterna dell'UE, negli ultimi due decenni l'Italia è diventata un punto nevralgico per i flussi migratori globali e nell'ambito del Mediterraneo allargato. Come già suggerito [nel precedente report del 2022](#), il crescente divario tra il Nord e il Sud del mondo, accentuatosi dall'inizio degli anni 2000, insieme ad eventi come le Primavere arabe del 2011, la guerra in Libia, la crisi siriana del 2015, la pandemia del 2020, la crisi politico-umanitaria in Afghanistan del 2021, la crisi ucraina del 2022 e i recenti cambiamenti climatici in Africa e Asia, hanno dato vita a diverse ondate migratorie che hanno raggiunto i confini italiani ed europei.

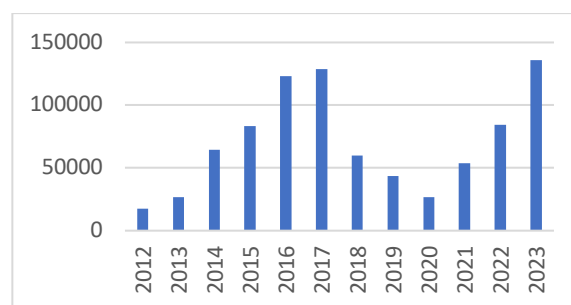
Il 2023 ha registrato un nuovo picco nei flussi migratori verso l'Italia e l'Europa, ed è stato identificato da FRONTEX 'come l'anno con il numero più alto di arrivi irregolari dal 2016'.<sup>1</sup> Gli eventi geopolitici e climatici hanno continuato a

esercitare una forte pressione sulle rotte migratorie, portando a un aumento delle persone in movimento dai Paesi del Sud globale verso il Mediterraneo centrale e l'Italia (Fig. 1). I dati osservati nei primi mesi del 2024<sup>2</sup> confermano questa tendenza crescente, con un ulteriore incremento dei flussi migratori sia lungo le rotte tradizionali che attraverso nuovi percorsi. Anche le richieste di asilo hanno mostrato un trend in aumento, rendendo il 2023 l'anno con il maggior numero di domande di asilo registrate in Italia negli ultimi dieci anni (Fig. 2).

*Fig. 1 Arrivi irregolari in Italia. Fonte: Elaborazione sulla base dei dati UNHCR.*



*Fig. 2 Richieste di asilo ricevute dall'Italia. Fonte: Elaborazione sulla base dei dati EUROSTAT.*



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fronter.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/significant-rise-in-irregular-border-crossings-in-2023-highest-since-2016-C0gGpm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205>

In un contesto in cui i fenomeni migratori sono sempre più evidentemente un 'new normal', cioè un fenomeno strutturale nel Mediterraneo, la gestione di questi flussi continua a rappresentare una sfida cruciale per l'Italia, che si trova sempre più a dover bilanciare le sue politiche interne con la cooperazione internazionale e la gestione esterna delle migrazioni.

L'intensificazione e la diversificazione delle forme di cooperazione internazionale con i Paesi di origine e transito sono diventate elementi strategici per la gestione delle migrazioni, costituendo una priorità costante per i governi italiani, indipendentemente dall'orientamento politico<sup>3</sup>. La questione migratoria è così emersa non solo come un tema rilevante di politica interna, ma anche come un elemento cruciale in grado di plasmare la politica estera, le relazioni bilaterali con i Paesi terzi e la proiezione internazionale dell'Italia in Europa e nel Mediterraneo.

Gli accordi di riammissione con Egitto e Tunisia rispettivamente nel 2007 e nel 2011; il Memorandum con la Libia del 2017; l'operazione militare NISIM in Niger del 2018; i corridoi umanitari con Etiopia, Pakistan, Niger e Libano; il dialogo politico con il Senegal; il lancio del Piano Mattei nel 2023 ad Addis Abeba, e il recente accordo del 2024 con l'Albania sono solo alcuni esempi di un ampio ventaglio di iniziative

indirizzate ai Paesi di origine e transito dei migranti. Questo insieme articolato di azioni, mirate alla gestione dei flussi migratori verso l'esterno, rappresenta quella che viene definita la Dimensione Esterna delle Politiche Migratorie Italiane (DEPMI).

Nonostante l'importanza di questa dimensione, l'analisi dell'Italia in questo contesto è stata sorprendentemente limitata. La maggior parte della letteratura si concentra principalmente sulla dimensione esterna delle politiche migratorie dell'Unione Europea, trascurando quasi del tutto l'esame approfondito delle politiche dei singoli Stati membri, inclusa l'Italia. Di conseguenza, manca un vero e proprio sforzo di sistematizzazione, ossia una mappatura e analisi complessiva degli strumenti chiave della politica migratoria esterna italiana, così come del ruolo che i Paesi terzi giocano in questo processo.

Il progetto DEPMI mira a condurre un'analisi scientifica e sistematica della dimensione esterna delle politiche migratorie italiane, attraverso la mappatura, identificazione, classificazione e valutazione dei vari accordi, strumenti politici e meccanismi di cooperazione allo sviluppo adottati dall'Italia con i Paesi di origine e transito dei flussi migratori.

In particolare, **partendo dai risultati ottenuti dal primo progetto DEPMI (2021-2022), questa**

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<sup>3</sup><https://italianpoliticalscience.com/index.php/ips/article/view/208>

**nuova fase (2023-2024) si propone di ampliare l'analisi e la mappatura, estendendo l'indagine a un numero maggiore e più diversificato di casi.** Il progetto mira a rispondere alle seguenti domande di ricerca:

- quali tipologie di strumenti diplomatici e di accordi politici e operativi, costituiscono la dimensione esterna delle politiche migratorie italiane?
- Quali caratteristiche hanno e come possono essere classificati?
- Quale ruolo viene svolto dalla cooperazione allo sviluppo?
- Che tipi di programmi e progetti contribuiscono alla dimensione esterna delle politiche migratorie italiane?

**Il progetto si pone dunque i seguenti obiettivi:**

- **costruire un dataset** che permetta di raccogliere, individuare e classificare gli strumenti, accordi politici e programmi di cooperazione allo sviluppo che costituiscono il *policy toolbox* della politica di migrazione esterna dell'Italia;
- **implementare una mappa grafica** che fornisca uno 'snapshot' immediato e permetta di 'navigare' la dimensione esterna della politica migratoria italiana, fornendo informazioni accurate, semplici ed immediate su 'cosa fa l'Italia e dove' quando si tratta di cooperazione politica con i paesi terzi nell'ambito della migrazione.

Nell'ambito di DEPMI I, l'attività di ricerca ha risposto alle domande e agli obiettivi di ricerca producendo cinque outputs principali:

- un dataset contenente 85 accordi e strumenti politici adottati dall'Italia con 14 paesi del Mediterraneo allargato per gestire i fenomeni migratori, tra la fine degli anni 1990 e il 2022.
- Un dataset sulla cooperazione allo sviluppo, contenente 280 osservazioni sui programmi e strumenti di cooperazione allo sviluppo adottati dall'Italia in ambito migratorio con i 14 paesi considerati.
- una [mappa grafica](#), interattiva, e open source che permette di 'navigare' la DEPMI in termini di strumenti e paesi, e di avere un quadro completo, intuitivo e immediato.
- 14 'DEPMI Country Profiles', che forniscono un'analisi della dimensione migratoria tra l'Italia e ciascuno dei paesi oggetto di analisi, considerando la rilevanza del paese in termini di flussi regolari, irregolari e richieste di asilo; i rapporti bilaterali di cooperazione con l'Italia in ambito migratorio, nonché gli strumenti e relative evoluzioni.
- Un [report finale](#).

Il Progetto ha inoltre ispirato tre articoli scientifici, pubblicati in riviste scientifiche e di fascia A:

- ♦ Rosina, M., & Fontana, I. (2024), 'The external dimension of Italian migration

policy in the wider Mediterranean', *Mediterranean Politics*, 1-32.

- ◆ Fontana, I. and Rosina, M. (2024), 'The Tools of External Migration Policy in the EU Member States: The Case of Italy'. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*.;
- ◆ Samuk, S. Rosina, M. and Ince-Beqo, G. (2023), Like "falling leaves": The migration of the highly-skilled from Turkey to Italy, *La Cittadinanza Europea Online*, 1-2023.

### **Da DEPMI I a DEPMI II: la necessità di un *widening***

DEPMI I si è concentrato su 14 paesi del Mediterraneo allargato e nello specifico 5 paesi del Nord Africa (Marocco, Algeria, Libia, Tunisia ed Egitto); 2 paesi dell'Europa orientale/Balceni (Albania e Moldavia); 3 paesi dell'Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh e Pakistan); 4 del Medio-Oriente (Iraq, Iran, Libano, Turchia) e 1 dell'Africa subsahariana (Nigeria). Considerando il Mediterraneo allargato come quell'area geografica che dal bacino fisico del mar Mediterraneo si estende verso l'Africa sub-sahariana, l'estremo Medio-oriente, e l'Asia, **DEPMI II si propone di estendere l'analisi ad altri 14 paesi**, questa volta con un focus più approfondito sull'area dell'Africa subsahariana, del Sahel e del Corno d'Africa. Il progetto si è pertanto concentrato sui seguenti casi studio, tutti di estrema rilevanza come paesi di origine e transito dei flussi migratori: Senegal;

Gambia; Mali; Costa d'Avorio; Burkina Faso; Niger; Eritrea; Etiopia; Ghana; Camerun; Guinea; Guinea Bissau.

Inoltre, per completare l'analisi della dimensione esterna della politica migratoria italiana nell'ambito del Mediterraneo allargato, DEPMI II si propone di ampliare il campione di analisi comprendendo anche lo Sri Lanka (13) e la Macedonia del Nord (14) che, rispettivamente nell'ambito del continente asiatico e dell'Europa orientale, sono paesi di significativi flussi migratori, regolari e non (Fig.3).

*Fig. 3 Casi studio dei progetti DEPMI I e DEPMI II*



La decisione di proseguire il progetto con una seconda edizione di follow-up che permetta un *widening* dei risultati esistenti è giustificata da diverse ragioni. La prima è che DEPMI II ha permesso di ampliare ulteriormente i due dataset esistenti, nonché la raccolta di *Migration Profiles*, aumentandone il valore come fonti innovative e

dettagliate di informazioni sulla dimensione esterna e come risorsa di grande utilità per funzionari, policy-makers e ricercatori interessati alla tematica.

Attraverso un aumento dei casi studio, il progetto permette lo sviluppo di analisi comparate in grado di esplorare l'evoluzione della DEPMI nel tempo e nello spazio, in termini di priorità di *policy* e tipologia di strumenti.

In tal senso, DEPMI I e DEPMI II rappresentano uno sforzo unico, innovativo, comprensivo e sistematico di mappatura della dimensione esterna della politica migratoria italiana, rispetto agli strumenti adottati e ai progetti di cooperazione allo sviluppo **su un numero elevato di paesi e con un'ampia copertura geografica.**

Da un punto di vista concettuale e teorico, il progetto riapplica l'approccio già implementato nel caso di DEPMI I.

La 'dimensione esterna della politica di migrazione' è intesa come il coinvolgimento dei paesi di origine e transito nella gestione dei flussi migratori attraverso un'ampia gamma di accordi e strumenti. Tali accordi e strumenti sono mappati attraverso la combinazione di due diversi aspetti:

- l'aspetto della politica estera
- l'aspetto della cooperazione allo sviluppo.

La prima rappresenta la dimensione della *politics*, vale a dire l'insieme degli sforzi diplomatici, degli accordi politici e degli strumenti operativi che riflettono la politica estera e lo spettro delle relazioni internazionali tra l'Italia e un paese partner nell'ambito della migrazione. Per analizzare la dimensione della *politics*, la ricerca si è mossa partendo dalle seguenti domande: quali tipologie di strumenti caratterizzano la DEPMI? Come possono essere classificati e che caratteristiche hanno? Per rispondere a queste domande è stato identificato un toolbox della DEPMI, composto da 9 elementi, come illustrato nella tabella.

*Tabella 1. Gli strumenti della DEPMI. Una tipologia.*

- 1) Accordi di Riammissione
- 2) Migrazione come oggetto di dialogo politico
- 3) Accordi tecnico – operativi
- 4) Quote flusso
- 5) Aspetti migratori come parte di accordi più ampi
- 6) Accordi bilaterali specifici
- 7) Accordi in materia di lavoro, migrazione regolare e mobilità circolare
- 8) Corridoi umanitari
- 9) Missioni militari

Gli accordi di riammissione (1) sono strumenti per facilitare l'identificazione, la riammissione e il rimpatrio di cittadini stranieri in situazione irregolare. Introdotti nel quadro del Testo Unico sull'Immigrazione e modificati dalla Legge Bossi-

Fini, questi accordi permettono al Ministero degli Affari Esteri e al Ministero dell'Interno di avviare iniziative con Paesi terzi per velocizzare il rilascio dei documenti necessari al rimpatrio. Spesso legati alla regolazione dei flussi migratori, questi accordi sono stati utilizzati per stabilire quote preferenziali di ingresso per i lavoratori stranieri regolari da Paesi cooperanti. Quote (4) per l'ingresso dei lavoratori non stagionali sono infatti riservate ai cittadini di Paesi che hanno concluso accordi in materia migratoria con l'Italia.<sup>4</sup>

Un altro strumento importante è il dialogo politico (2), che consente di affrontare questioni migratorie a livello bilaterale, fornendo le basi per ulteriori forme di cooperazione. Esistono anche accordi tecnico-operativi (3), come protocolli o memorandum, che regolano aspetti pratici quali la cooperazione tra forze di polizia o programmi di formazione.

La migrazione è spesso inclusa in accordi bilaterali più ampi (5), come quelli di partenariato o cooperazione, che incorporano anche la dimensione migratoria. Esistono inoltre accordi specifici che trattano questioni migratorie non coperte da altri strumenti (6).

Gli accordi su lavoro, migrazione regolare e mobilità circolare (7) riguardano la cooperazione

per l'ingresso legale di lavoratori stranieri in Italia, favorendo l'incontro tra domanda e offerta di lavoro e facilitando programmi di mobilità circolare. I corridoi umanitari (8), sono un meccanismo per garantire il trasferimento sicuro di persone in necessità di protezione internazionale da Paesi di primo asilo all'Italia, tramite la collaborazione di attori istituzionali e organizzazioni della società civile. Infine, le missioni militari (9), fanno riferimento a missioni che includono la migrazione e il controllo dei confini tra i loro obiettivi.

La metodologia adottata è di tipo qualitativo, basata prevalentemente sull'uso di fonti secondarie e primarie. Le fonti secondarie hanno permesso di ricostruire storicamente il percorso di 'cooperazione migratoria' tra l'Italia e i vari paesi oggetto dell'analisi, individuando gli accordi e gli strumenti principali adottati. Le fonti primarie (il testo degli accordi stessi laddove disponibili) hanno permesso di analizzare in maniera diretta il contenuto degli strumenti, per comprenderne gli obiettivi e caratteristiche. Gli accordi sono stati analizzati in un frame temporale ampio che va dal 2000 al 2024 al fine di poter raccogliere più dati possibili e, allo stesso tempo, analizzare l'evoluzione degli accordi e strumenti.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://integrazionemigranti.gov.it/it-it/Altre-info/e/2/o/54/id/128/Decreto-flussi-2023-25-Le-quote-in-dettaglio->

La seconda dimensione di analisi riguarda il ruolo diretto e indiretto della cooperazione allo sviluppo, attraverso il finanziamento di programmi e progetti direttamente focalizzati su un aspetto specifico del fenomeno migratorio, oppure concentrati su un'area diversa (agricoltura, food security, employability etc.) ma indirettamente rivolti alle dinamiche e alle root causes dei movimenti. Questa dimensione è stata analizzata identificando quanti e quali programmi e progetti nell'ambito della cooperazione allo sviluppo sono rivolti alla migrazione sul totale dei fondi e dei programmi di cooperazione implementati, ed eventualmente a quali aspetti del fenomeno migratorio si rivolgono.

La raccolta dati si è basata sullo studio dei rapporti di cooperazione allo sviluppo prodotti dall'Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (AICS), dal 2000 al 2023. Per ogni paese sono stati raccolti in un dataset i fondi di cooperazione programmati per ogni anno, e i relativi programmi. Per ciascuno di essi è stato poi identificato l'eventuale focus su aspetti legati all'asilo o alla gestione dei flussi migratori.

## **Gli output di DEPMI II**

### ***Il toolbox della DEPMI II: un aggiornamento del dataset degli accordi***

L'attività di ricerca in questa seconda fase del progetto ha prodotto un nuovo dataset

contenente 54 accordi e strumenti politici adottati dall'Italia tra il 2000 e il 2024, per gestire i fenomeni migratori con i 14 Paesi del Mediterraneo allargato analizzati nell'ambito di DEPMI II.

In linea con la metodologia già adottata nella prima parte del progetto, i vari accordi e strumenti sono stati classificati considerando:

- la tipologia secondo i nove elementi identificati nel toolbox;
- il paese partner;
- il contenuto dell'accordo rispetto alla dimensione analizzata del fenomeno migratorio: rimpatrio, controllo dei confini, lotta alla migrazione irregolare; asilo; mobilità; lotta ai fenomeni di human smuggling; visti; lavoro; studio etc.

Nella sua versione completa (prima e seconda fase del progetto) il dataset raccoglie circa 140 osservazioni e rappresenta una fonte innovativa, nonché il primo tentativo di raccolta sistematica e approfondita di informazioni relative alla DEPMI. È una risorsa preziosa sia per i funzionari che per i ricercatori interessati alla tematica, fornendo una solida base di dati che può essere utilizzata per condurre analisi qualitative e quantitative.

## ***Navigare la DEPMI: aggiornamento della mappa grafica***

Lo strumento della mappatura ha acquisito sempre di più una propria rilevanza metodologica come strumento che permette non solo di raccogliere e analizzare i dati, ma anche di presentare i risultati di ricerca in maniera innovativa e immediata attraverso concetti grafici (Conceição et al. 2017).

Il nuovo dataset è stato pertanto trasformato in una mappa grafica, user-friendly, interattiva, e open source che aggiorna quella precedente già prodotta in DEPMI I, e che permette letteralmente di ‘navigare’ la DEPMI in termini di strumenti e paesi, nonché di averne un quadro completo, intuitivo e immediato (Fig.4).

La mappa aggiornata per 28 paesi è visitabile a questo link:

[https://umap.openstreetmap.fr/it/map/depmi-dimensioneesterna-politica-migratoria-itali\\_711517#](https://umap.openstreetmap.fr/it/map/depmi-dimensioneesterna-politica-migratoria-itali_711517#)

*Fig. 4 La mappa interattiva della DEPMI Italiana*



Sulla sinistra è possibile ‘filtrare’ i livelli di analisi, per identificare una dimensione specifica della

DEPMI. Cliccando sui vari livelli è possibile visualizzare o nascondere tutti gli accordi e strumenti DEPMI relativi solo a quel livello. Ogni livello è poi identificato da un'icona univoca. Cliccando su ciascuna, l'utente potrà inoltre avere informazioni dettagliate sulla data e contenuto dello strumento e, dove possibile, il relativo link o fonte (Fig.5).

*Fig.5 I livelli e le icone della mappa grafica*



## ***La cooperazione allo sviluppo: dataset dei programmi su tematiche migratorie***

Il terzo output prodotto è un dataset sulla cooperazione allo sviluppo, contenente i programmi e strumenti di cooperazione adottati dall'Italia, in ambito migratorio e non, con i 14 paesi considerati nell'ambito di DEPMI II. Il dataset aggiorna quello prodotto nella prima

fase del progetto e contiene circa 1564 osservazioni, divise per programma, area, paese, ed eventuale ‘dimensione migratoria’ (root causes; asilo e protezione; controllo dei confini; prevenzione della migrazione irregolare etc.).

La fonte di raccolta sono i Rapporti sull’Implementazione della Cooperazione allo Sviluppo pubblicati annualmente dall’Agenzia Italiana Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (precedente Direzione Generale Cooperazione allo Sviluppo) tra il 2001 e il 2022. Dato che i report in questione riportano spesso solo i programmi più rilevanti, e non in tutti i report c’è una copertura sistematica anno dopo anno dei programmi e progetti implementati complessivamente, il dataset non ha pretese di esaustività. Tuttavia, fornisce una fonte originale e ricca di dati che rappresenta uno sforzo di raccolta sistematica delle attività della cooperazione allo sviluppo con determinati paesi, incluse le attività dedicate alla gestione del fenomeno migratorio nella sua molteplicità di aspetti.

**Complessivamente (prima e seconda fase del progetto), il dataset raccoglie circa 1900 osservazioni.**

### ***I DEPMI Country Profiles***

Il quarto output prodotto sono 14 nuovi ‘DEPMI Country Profiles’ (per un totale di 28 schede). Si tratta di brevi schede in inglese che forniscono un’analisi del fenomeno migratorio e della cooperazione migratoria tra l’Italia e uno dei 14 paesi terzi oggetto di analisi. Nello specifico, ogni Profile è organizzato in due sezioni. La prima sezione fornisce un’analisi della rilevanza migratoria del paese in termini di flussi regolari e irregolari verso l’Italia e di richieste di asilo. La seconda parte invece esplora i rapporti bilaterali di cooperazione in ambito migratorio, individuando strumenti, aspetti chiave ed evoluzione della DEPMI.

### **Alcuni risultati della ricerca: La DEPMI II tra ampliamento geografico, dialogo politico e accordi tecnico-operativi**

Dall’analisi preliminare di DEPMI II, che copre il periodo dal 2000<sup>5</sup> al 2024 nei 14 Paesi oggetto di studio, sono stati individuati 54 strumenti che riflettono la varietà di strumenti identificati nel toolbox. Se ci concentriamo sui 12 paesi dell’area sub-sahariana, la cooperazione in ambito migratorio si sviluppa prevalentemente dopo il 2010. In tal senso, se, come già emerso dai risultati

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<sup>5</sup> Solo nel caso della Macedonia del Nord è presente un’osservazione del 1997.

di DEPMI I<sup>6</sup>, il periodo più intenso per lo sviluppo della dimensione esterna della politica migratoria italiana con i paesi geograficamente più vicini, come quelli dei Balcani, del Medio Oriente e del Nord Africa, risale agli anni 2000, l'attività di cooperazione con i Paesi dell'Africa subsahariana è di data più recente.

Dopo i primi accordi conclusi con il Senegal nel 2007, la cooperazione si intensifica negli anni successivi, in linea con l'aumento dei flussi migratori dall'area sub-sahariana. Nel 2010 si estende a paesi come Gambia, Ghana, Niger e nuovamente Senegal, per un totale di sei accordi. Nel periodo 2015-2016, durante gli anni della crisi migratoria, il numero di accordi sale a undici, coinvolgendo tre nuovi Paesi: Camerun, Etiopia e Costa d'Avorio. L'attività di cooperazione subisce poi una nuova accelerazione negli anni 2023-2024, in linea con un nuovo incremento dei flussi, e portando alla firma di nove nuovi strumenti con sei diversi paesi (Fig. 6). Dal punto di vista della tipologia degli strumenti adottati, il dialogo politico e gli accordi tecnico-operativi risultano essere i più prevalenti (Fig.7). La predominanza del dialogo politico è indicativa della volontà di

un'intensificazione degli sforzi di cooperazione, finalizzata alla preparazione, o alla creazione delle basi, per la stipula di accordi più strutturati. Come per i paesi del Nord Africa identificati in DEPMI I, le quote flusso continuano ad essere un importante strumento di condizionalità positiva, fungendo da incentivo o ricompensa alla conclusione di accordi in ambito migratorio. Ad esempio, la Costa d'Avorio e il Gambia sono stati inclusi tra i Paesi destinatari di quote flusso lo stesso anno, o l'anno successivo, alla stipula di un accordo tecnico di cooperazione di polizia con l'Italia.

L'analisi dettagliata del dataset, gli approfondimenti metodologici e i risultati per l'area sub-sahariana saranno presentati in un articolo di prossima pubblicazione in inglese: Fontana, I., Rosina, M., e Samuk S., *La dimensione esterna della politica di migrazione italiana (DEPMI): una mappatura degli strumenti per gestire i flussi migratori con i Paesi di origine e transito*.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.esteri.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The-Siracusa-Institute\\_DEPMI.pdf](https://www.esteri.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The-Siracusa-Institute_DEPMI.pdf)

Fig. 6 Numero di nuovi accordi conclusi annualmente con 12 paesi dell'Africa Sub-sahariana, e paesi coinvolti. Fonte: elaborazione sulla base del dataset DEPMI II

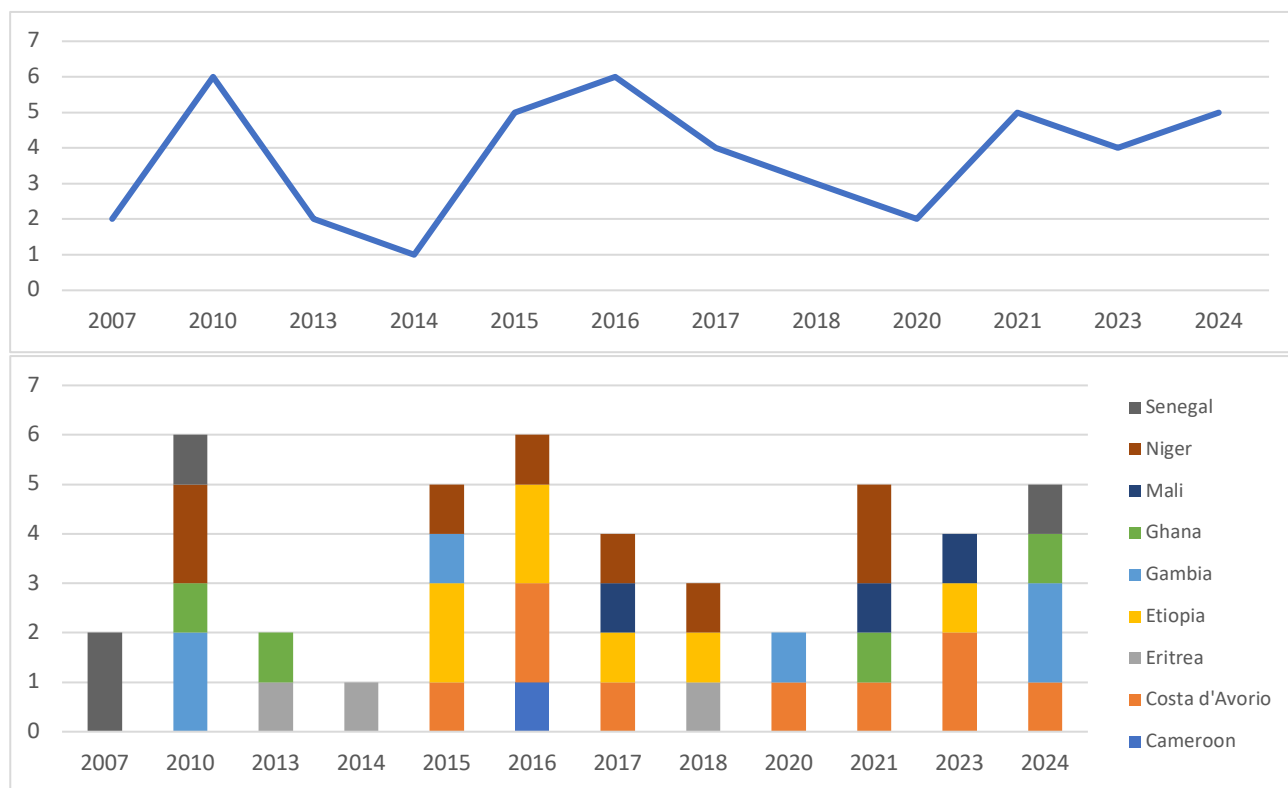
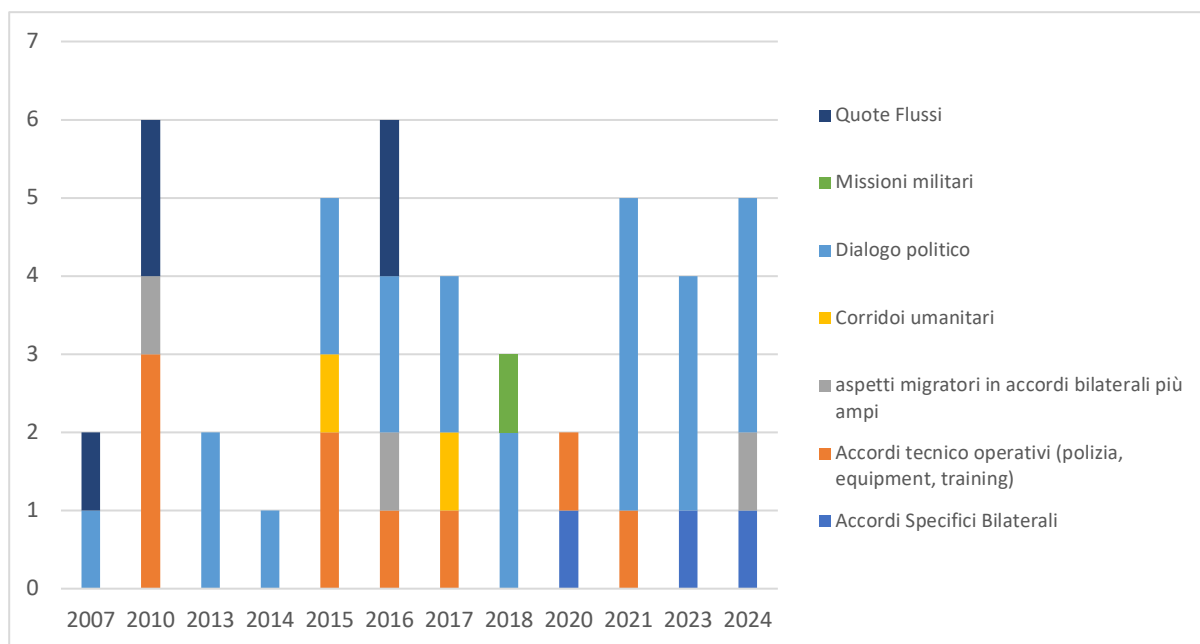
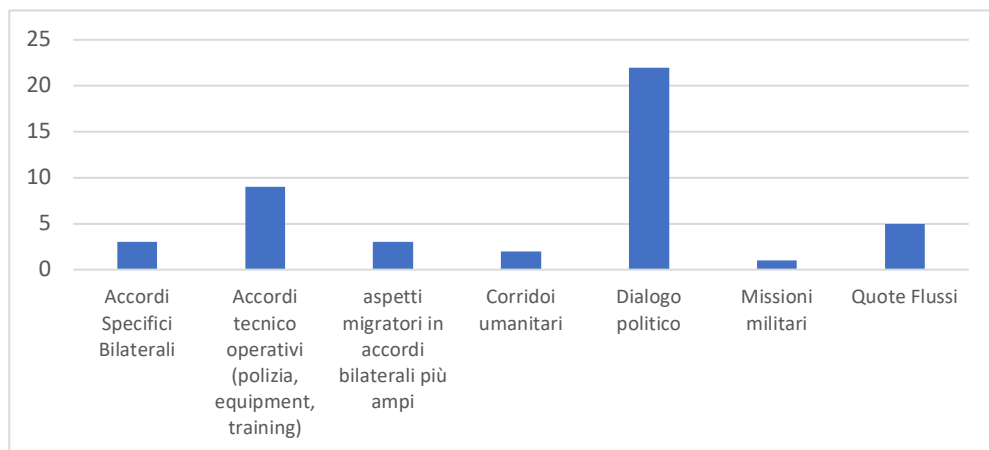


Fig. 7 Tipologie di accordi/strumenti, con 12 paesi dell'Africa sub-sahariana. Fonte: elaborazione sulla base del dataset DEPMI II.





## DEPMI COUNTRY PROFILE

### Burkina Faso



**Sahizer Samuk**

#### Migration Outlook for Burkina Faso: Relevance of flows to Italy and main data

Relevance as a country of origin	2011, 2016, 2023 are significant years in which irregular migration and asylum applications increase.
Relevance as a country of transit	A country of Transit to North Africa, not directly to Italy.
Safe country of origin list <sup>7</sup>	No
Schengen Visa Exemption	No

Burkina Faso does not seem to be one of the major migrant-sending countries to Italy, although it is on the routes of transit to North Africa. Yet, Italy has been one of the three to four countries that most of the migrants from Burkina Faso reside, along with Germany, France and Spain. The presence of Burkinabe in these countries is as such according to statistics from 2015: Italy (13, 501), France (3,505), Germany (1,254) and Spain (1,267) (ICMPD and IOM 2015). Looking at the general picture of

emigration from Burkina Faso, most of the migrants in Burkina Faso reside in Cote d'Ivoire – a neighbouring country on the west- (MgSoG 2017). In 2018, the population of Burkina Faso citizens living in Italy was 14,753 (ISTAT 2024).

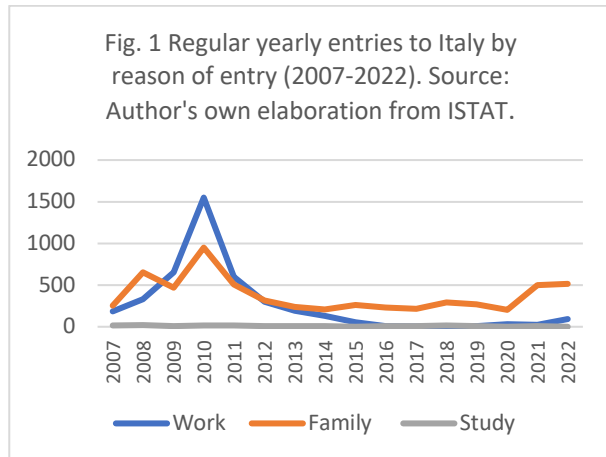
**Regular migration** from Burkina Faso to Italy demonstrates that student migration has always been low, in other words, never a two-digit number except 2007 and 2008 and even then, the numbers are 17 and 13. The only type of regular migration that kept its significance in terms of numbers and stability has been family migration. However, there is also a sharp decline in family migration: from 2010 to 2012, it becomes one third of what it was (falling from 950 to 313 respectively) (Fig.1). When it comes to migration for work, there is a peak in 2010 and then it decreases sharply and constantly every year from 2011 on. In 2015, there were 55 work permits, in 2016 there were 6 work permits, in 2017 only 3 work permits. So, the peak of 2010 in regard to the work permit, does not endure throughout the years.

The main reasons of decline of work permits from 2010 and family permits from the same period can be due to the closing factories in Italy (Corrado e Perrotta 2012). At the same time, between the years of 2010 and 2013, the international economic crisis that hit also Italy has pushed the issue of immigration to the background (Scotto

<sup>7</sup> Safe country list is determined according to the Decreto 17 Marzo 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2023/03/25/23A>

[01952/sg#:~:text=origine%20sicuri%201-,Ai%20sensi%20dell'art.,%2C%20Senegal%2C%20Serbia%20e%20Tunisia.](https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2023/03/25/23A01952/sg#:~:text=origine%20sicuri%201-,Ai%20sensi%20dell'art.,%2C%20Senegal%2C%20Serbia%20e%20Tunisia.)

2017). Also, the demand for workers might have been limited due to the economic crisis, or this demand was met by another supply of immigrants from another country.



In terms of **root causes**, Burkina Faso is a problematic country in terms of trafficked women and children who are in forced labour (US Department of State 2013). There are serious issues regarding child labour and exploitation concerning Burkina Faso's gold mines that are managed and owned by international investors (with a major percentage of the shares being foreign-owned) and the government (ILO 2006; Kids Rights 2014). Furthermore, child labour is also heavily used in cotton, garment and textile industries (ILO 2023). The main reasons of emigration from Burkina Faso are "insufficient income (42%), lack of job opportunities (36%), desire to seek work opportunities abroad (11%),

other economic reasons (5%), limited or insufficient access to services (2%), limited ability to meet their food needs (2%), gradual environmental degradation (1%), and violence or persecution against them or their families (1%)"<sup>8</sup>(IHD 2024). It should be kept in mind that Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world (ibid.). It ranks as "184th out of 191 countries in the 2021–2022 HDI report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)"<sup>9</sup>.

At the same time, it is an immigration country for Nigerian, Malian, Ivorian, Togolese, Senegalese and Ghanaian populations (IHD 2024).

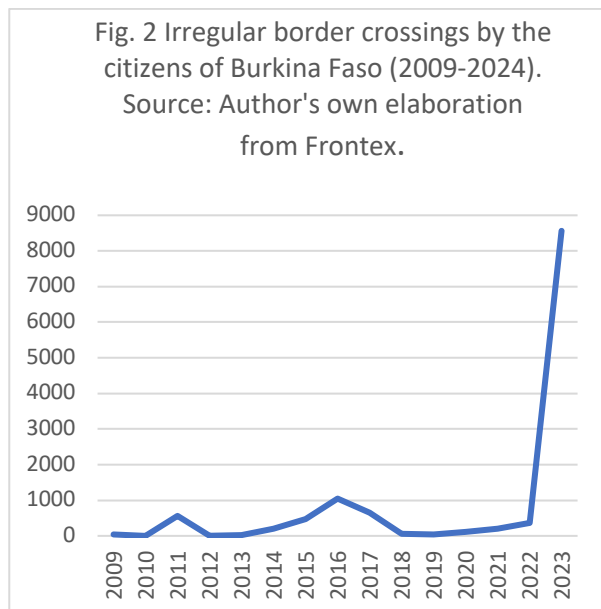
Burkina Faso is described as a **transit country** for migrants from Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali and Senegal who are traveling through Niger towards Algeria, Libya and finally, to the European countries (Bolouvi 2009). Moreover, it is both a country of destination and transit for asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants from neighbouring countries, such as the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Rwanda, Congo, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (MgSog 2017, 2; UN DESA 2015).

In terms of **irregular migration**, it is observed that about "3000 Burkinabe migrants arrived in Spain, Italy and Greece irregularly, which is the 0.3% of the total arrivals in between 2016 and 2020" (IHD

<sup>8</sup> Integral Human Development (2024). Country Profile: Burkina Faso. Retrieved from <https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/burkina-faso/>

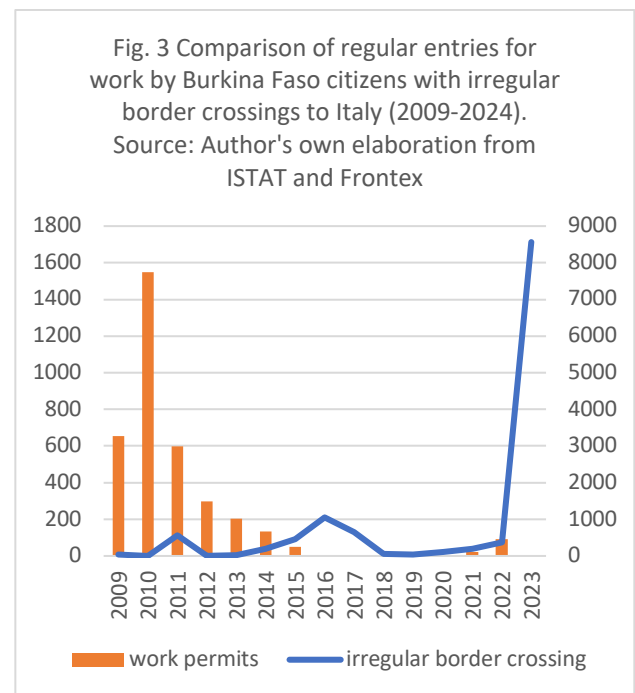
<sup>9</sup> The World Bank in Burkina Faso (2024). Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burkinafaso/overview>

2024). Fig. 2 shows that the irregular border crossings increased in 2016 to over 1000 persons whilst in 2023 it peaked to 8564 persons. Both peaks might be related to the coup d'état (in 2015 and 2022) and political instability in the country, which would mean that the irregular migration flows (after 2016 and 2023) might be mixed flows with asylum-seekers who were attacked by the militant groups, and opponents of the regime in general. In 2021, the estimate of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) was 1,407,685<sup>10</sup>.



Comparing regular entries for work with irregular border crossings, Fig. 3 shows that as the work permits granted to Burkina Faso citizens are lower, there is a slight increase in irregular migration up to 2016. The peak in 2023, as mentioned above is

the highest in terms of irregular border crossing. The link between the decreasing work permits and increasing irregular crossings is not obvious at first (see Fig.3). Nevertheless, it is still seen that there is some kind of inverse relationship between the channels for regular migration and increase in irregular migration also in the case of Burkina Faso.

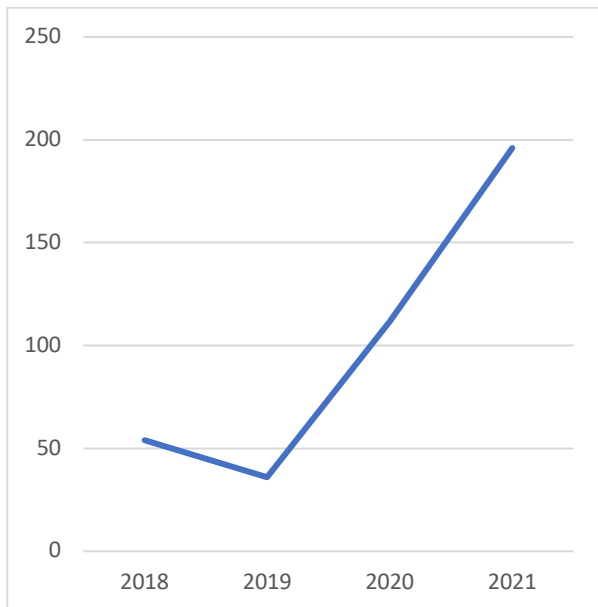


The **Covid-19 period** seems not to have affected irregular border crossings from Burkina Faso citizens across the Mediterranean route, with low numbers slightly increasing from 2019 to 2020 and reaching almost 200 irregular border crossings in 2021 (Fig.4).

<sup>10</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/unicef-burkina-faso-humanitarian-situation-report-no-4-1-july-30-september-2021>

[july-30-september-2021](#) accessed on the 16th of May 2024.

*Fig.4 Irregular Border Crossings from Burkina Faso across the Central Mediterranean Route before and after Covid-19 (2016-2021). Source: Author's own elaboration from Frontex*



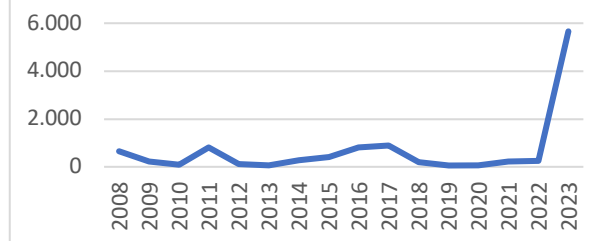
**Regarding the asylum applications** (first time applicants), (see Fig. 5 below), trends reflect key political developments in the country, with the peak in 2023, coinciding with the already mentioned surge in irregular border crossings. In 2010, after the elections, President Blaise Compaore forced his power on the people as there was dissent with the results of the elections<sup>11</sup>. Similarly, from 2015, the north of the country, capital Ouagadougou and the east began to suffer regular kidnappings and attacks by armed groups

<sup>11</sup><https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/23/timeline-burkina-faso-unrest> accessed on the 17th of May 2024.

<sup>12</sup><https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/23/timeline-burkina-faso-unrest> accessed on the 17th of May 2024.

affiliated with al-Qaeda or ISIL (ISIS).<sup>12</sup> In 2022, there have been nationwide protests in the streets of Ouagadougou as people wanted President Roch Marc Christian Kabore to resign<sup>13</sup>. Consequently, all these unrests and militant attacks on the other side, bore the result of IDPs as well as

*Fig. 5 Asylum applications by Burkina Faso citizens (2008-2023). Source: Author's own elaboration from Eurostat.*

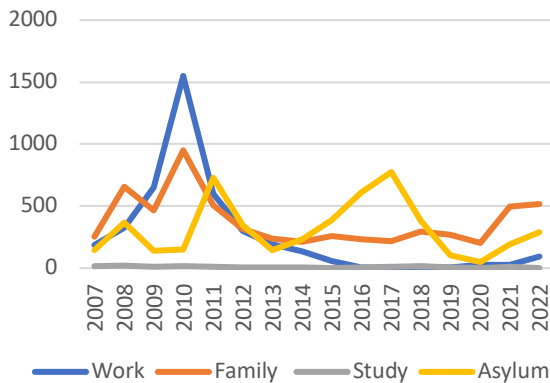


outmigration, mostly forced.

Burkina Faso citizens' asylum residence permits compared to other kind of permits (see Fig. 6 below) demonstrates that asylum permits show a wave that corresponds to the turbulence in the country. The highest number of asylum related permits granted are in the years of 2011 and 2017, with respectively 730 and 775 asylum grants.

<sup>13</sup><https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/23/timeline-burkina-faso-unrest> accessed on the 17th of May 2024.

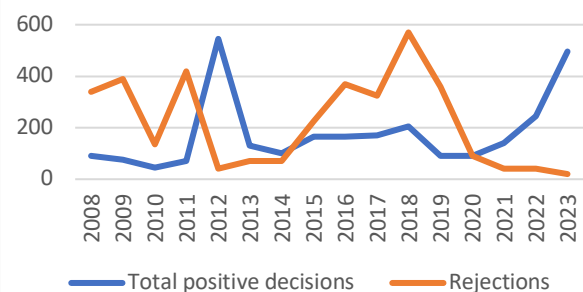
Fig. 6 Burkina Faso citizens' Asylum Residence Permits compared to other kinds of permits (2007-2022). Source: Author's own elaboration from ISTAT



Concerning the asylum decisions (total positive decisions vs. rejections) (see Fig. 7), the data reveals that rejections consistently surpassed total positive decisions from 2008 to 2011, except for 2010 when the gap between rejections and positive decisions narrowed. Total positive decisions reach a peak in 2012 and 2023. While high rejection rates from 2016 to 2020 suggest a broader restrictive approach to asylum policies during those years, partly due to the implementation of Italy's Law no. 113/2018 (the so-called Security Decree), the sharp increase in positive decisions in 2023 reflects changing circumstances, particularly linked to the

worsening human security situation in Burkina Faso, where violence from Islamist armed groups and government forces has escalated dramatically.<sup>14</sup>

Fig. 7 Burkina Faso citizens' asylum applications - total positive decisions vs. rejections (2008-2023). Source: Authors' own elaboration from Eurostat



## Italy-Burkina Faso Cooperation on Migration

### Bilateral Political Cooperation

While Italy and Burkina Faso have benefited from economic and military cooperation<sup>15</sup>, migration has not been a major area of collaboration.

Even if the so-called Mattei Plan was launched in 2023 to strengthen relations and political migration dialogue with African leaders, Burkina Faso was not included among the priority countries.<sup>16</sup> Burkina Faso did not participate to the

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/burkina-faso>

<sup>15</sup> The two countries concluded two agreements to cancel Burkina Faso's debit in 2000 and 2002; two agreements in the field of defense were concluded in

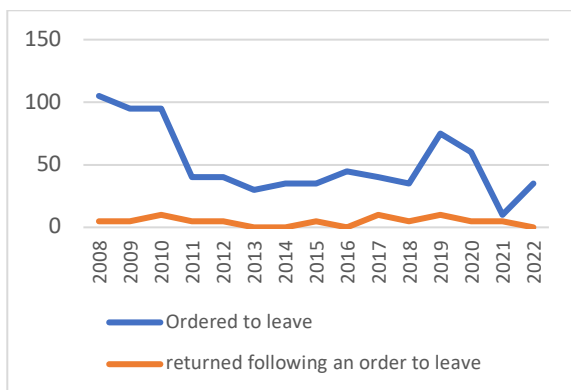
2019 and 2022. For more info see <https://itra.esteri.it/Home/Search?chart=1&arg=31> accessed on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2024.

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.esteri.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ISPI\\_FPC-Piano-Mattei.pdf](https://www.esteri.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ISPI_FPC-Piano-Mattei.pdf)

Summit for Africa organized by the Italian government in January 2024, due to the country's political instability and recent military golpe.<sup>17</sup>

There is currently no formal readmission agreement between Italy and Burkina Faso. Although the number of Burkinabé nationals irregularly residing in Italy remains relatively low, the number of individuals who are effectively returned following an order to leave is equally small (Fig. 8). In 2023, UNHCR made an announcement that all the states should evade forced return of migrants including refugees, drawing attention specially to Burkina Faso on the deteriorating conditions of human rights and the violence against civilians<sup>18</sup>.

*Fig. 8 Irregular migrants from Burkina Faso, who were ordered to leave vs. irregular migrants returning after an order to leave (2008-2022). Source: Author's own elaboration from Eurostat.*



<sup>17</sup> <https://www.lastampa.it/esteri/2024/01/30/news/soldi cinesi e mercenari russi ecco perche niger mali e burkina faso sono assenti dal summit per lafrica-14030902/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-calls-ban-forced-returns-burkina-faso-amid-escalating-humanitarian-crisis> accessed on the 15th of June 2024.

## **Bilateral Development Cooperation**

Burkina Faso is one of the historic partners of Italian Development Cooperation, with over €107 million in grants in more than 25 years.<sup>19</sup>

Following the visits to Ouagadougou of the former Minister for International Cooperation Andrea Riccardi in April and July 2012, a new Cooperation Framework Agreement was signed in September 2012<sup>20</sup>.

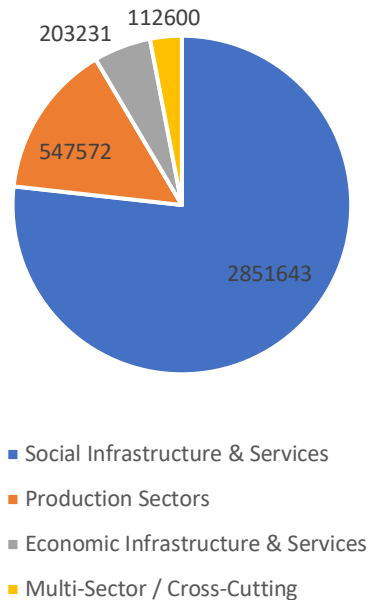
The analysis of the development funds in the annual reports of Italian Cooperation shows that in the first years of 2000s, the resources were mostly directed in three directions: health, education and rural development (agriculture) (Annual Reports on Development Cooperation 2003, 2004; 2010). Social and economic infrastructures became major targets after 2010 (Fig. 9).

Migration is mentioned for the first time in the Italian Annual Report on Development Cooperation 2015 (p.37), in line with the Sahel becoming a target region. Indeed, migration, especially in terms of addressing the root causes (Fig. 10), looks like a relevant dimension of Italian development assistance to the country, both in terms of bilateral and regional programs.

<sup>19</sup> <http://openaid.esteri.it/en/code-lists/recipients/287/> accessed on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2024.

<sup>20</sup> <http://openaid.esteri.it/en/code-lists/recipients/287/> accessed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2024.

Fig. 9 Distribution of funding by AICS (2004-2016). Source. <http://openaid.esteri.it/en/code-lists/recipients/287/>



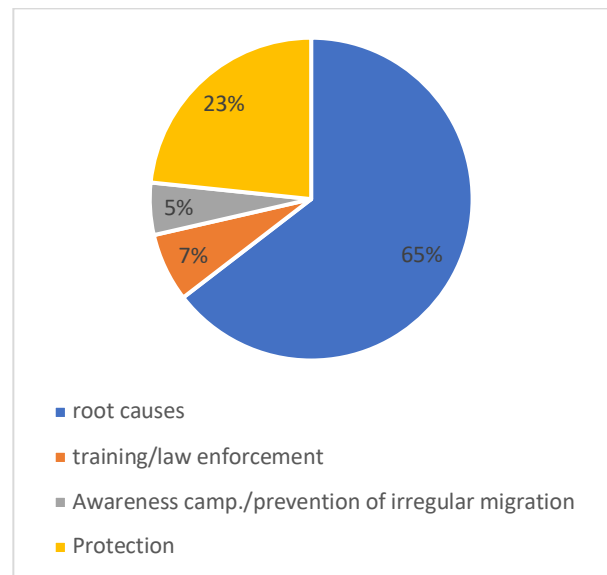
Examples include the Protocol on “Appoggio alle strutture nazionali di gestione del fondo Italia – CILSS di Lotta Contro la Desertificazione per la riduzione della Povertà, in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Senegal” (2011) or the Executive Agreement for the Execution of the “Project Supporting the Sustainable Development of Apiculture in Burkina Faso (PADDA/BF) (2023).

Other programmes supported the diaspora (such as the program Mobilising the diaspora of Burkina Faso and Identifying Priority Needs of Burkina Faso from 2005 to 2007); or gender-related

development in the country (such as the program “Migrant Women for Development in Africa (WMIDA)”<sup>21</sup> initiated in March 2008).

More recently, in 2022 and in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM),<sup>22</sup> the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs financed a new regional program to combat against transnational organised crime, with the purpose to improve border management and increase community resilience.<sup>23</sup>

Fig.10 Funds addressing migration, main priority areas. Source: author’s elaboration on AICS Reports (various years).



<sup>21</sup> <https://www.iom.int/burkina-faso> accessed on the 14th of June 2024.

<sup>22</sup> <https://niger.iom.int/news/iom-launches-new-italian-funded-project-combat-transnational-crime->

[burkina-faso-mali-and-niger](https://www.iom.int/burkina-faso-mali-and-niger) accessed on the 14th of June 2024.

<sup>23</sup> [IOM launches new Italian-Funded Project to Combat Transnational | IOM Niger](https://www.iom.int/news/iom-launches-new-italian-funded-project-combat-transnational-crime-)

### ***EU-Burkina Faso cooperation as an additional framework for DEPMI***

There are not specific migration agreements between the EU and Burkina Faso. Following the EU Agenda on Migration<sup>24</sup> and the need to prioritize intervention in the Sahel, Burkina Faso was included among the priority countries of the

EU Trust Fund for Africa. Projects include the “Migrant Protection and Reintegration: Regional Action for the Sahel and Lake Chad Region”<sup>25</sup>, with the purpose to, among other things, increase protection and assistance for vulnerable and stranded migrants, facilitate voluntary return and sustainable reintegration.<sup>26</sup>

### **Overview of DEPMI in Burkina Faso**

	Italy-Burkina Faso (2000-2023)		EU-Burkina Faso broader cooperation framework
	Political Cooperation	Development Cooperation	
Return & Readmission			EUTF
Border Control and Fight against irregular migration		yes	EUTF
Fight against human smuggling and trafficking			EUTF
Fight against Root Causes		yes	EU development fund 2014-2020 (623 million euros)
Resettlement, Asylum and International Protection			
Legal Mobility			
Visa			
Political Dialogue			

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.iom.int/news/eu-iom-launch-migrant-protection-reintegration-initiative-central-mediterranean-migration-routes-africa> accessed on the 14th of June 2024.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.iom.int/news/eu-iom-launch-migrant-protection-reintegration-initiative-central-mediterranean-migration-routes-africa>

[mediterranean-migration-routes-africa](https://www.iom.int/news/eu-iom-launch-migrant-protection-reintegration-initiative-central-mediterranean-migration-routes-africa) accessed on the 14th of June 2024.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.iom.int/news/eu-iom-launch-migrant-protection-reintegration-initiative-central-mediterranean-migration-routes-africa> accessed on the 14th of June 2024.

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U.S. Department of State, 2013, op .cit., pp. 109-110.

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## DEPMI COUNTRY PROFILE

### Cameroon



Iole Fontana

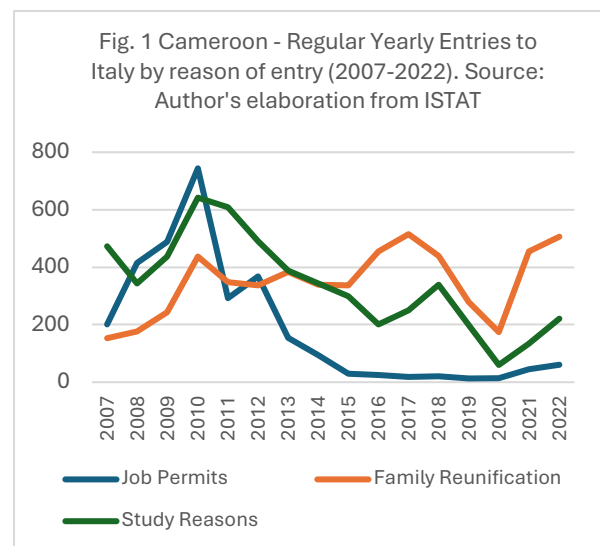
#### Migration Outlook: Relevance of flows to Italy and main data

Relevance as a country of origin	Low until 2022	Medium with important rising trends in 2023
Relevance as a country of transit	Low	
Safe country of origin list <sup>27</sup>	YES	
Schengen Visa Exemption	No	

Traditionally a destination country for intra-African migration from neighbouring countries during the 1980s, Cameroon has, in the last two decades, emerged as a country of origin for migration flows to Europe, with France being the preferred destination (IOM 2009). While movements to Italy have not been particularly significant, recent years have seen a growing trend of irregular arrivals from Cameroon along the Central Mediterranean route.

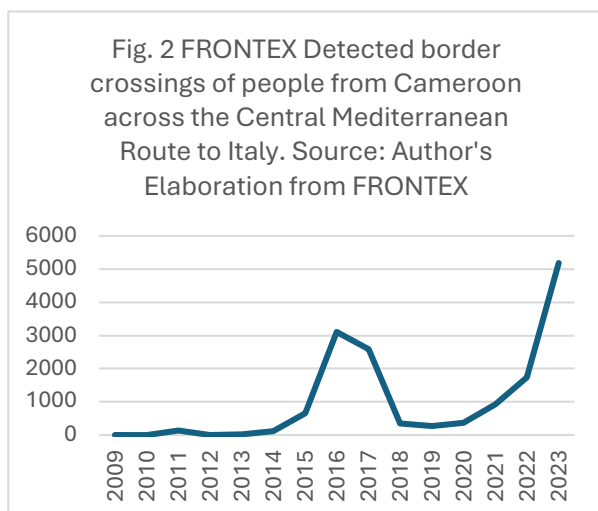
<sup>27</sup> According to the list of safe countries of origin as indicated by the Italian Decree 7 May 2024.

In terms of **regular migration** to Italy, only 15,443 individuals were regularly present on Italian territory in 2023.<sup>28</sup> Regarding annual regular entries between 2007 and 2022, and unlike other countries in this report, study and family reunification permits were the most common, showing a relatively stable trend (see Fig. 1). This suggests that educational mobility and demands for family reasons played a major role. By contrast, after a peak in 2010, regular entries for jobs and seasonal work showed a decreasing trend, with very low numbers between 2015 and 2020. This decline is partly due to the generally low numbers of arrivals from Cameroon and the closure of immigration channels, particularly for employment purposes, which was also influenced by the overall reduction of annual entry quotas established by the Flows Decree from 2011 onward (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2012).



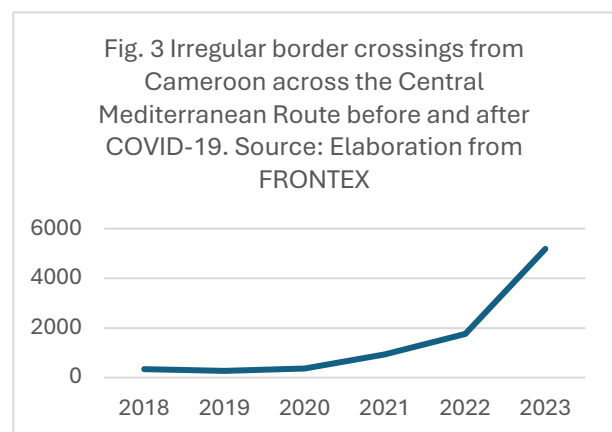
<sup>28</sup> According to INSTAT data on foreign residents.

While the number of regular migrants from Cameroon in Italy remains relatively low, the arrivals of **irregular migrants** have increased in recent years, with 2023 marking the highest number of Cameroonian arrivals ever recorded along the Central Mediterranean route, exceeding 5,000 (Fig.2) and representing a 315.6% increase (ICMD 2024). Cameroonian migrants often travel through two or more countries before they are able to head on to Italy via Libya.<sup>29</sup> The **COVID-19 pandemic** did not reduce migration flows from the country; instead, they continued to grow due to the exacerbation of already precarious economic conditions (Fig.3).



The increasing migratory flows from the country in recent years are the result of a **combination of factors**. First, high living costs, limited employment

opportunities, low salaries, and poor working conditions have been significant push factors driving many Cameroonian youths, including highly skilled individuals, to leave the country.<sup>30</sup> Second, while Cameroon served as an attractive destination for migrants due to its relative political stability and socio-economic potential until the early 2000s, the last decade has seen the country spiralling into growing instability and insecurity.



The first significant crisis is the **Anglophone crisis**, which began in **2016** with strikes by teachers and lawyers in the two Anglophone regions.<sup>31</sup> They were protesting against the deployment of Francophone judges and teachers who lacked knowledge of the common law and educational systems in these areas. Initially, the government appeared willing to negotiate, but as the number of protesters grew and their demands became

<sup>29</sup> <https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/cameroon/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/the-root-causes-of-camerouns-youth-brain-drain/a-68346151>

<sup>31</sup> <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/time-to-resolve-camerouns-persistent-yet-forgotten-crisis>

more ambitious, they began to call for greater autonomy for the two regions. This demand had long been advanced by Anglophone nationalists, who were determined to address the marginalization they felt and to protect their Anglo-Saxon heritage in a predominantly Francophone country. At this point, the government, as it had done in the past, resorted to violence and mass arrests and the crisis turned into a violent conflict in 2017. The situation quickly deteriorated, leading to the emergence of armed groups calling for the complete secession of the Anglophone regions from Cameroon to form the independent state of Ambazonia. The ensuing clashes have been marked by widespread atrocities committed by both separatist forces and the Cameroonian military,<sup>32</sup> leading to the displacement of over 437,000 people.<sup>33</sup> While irregular migration out of the country to Europe increased between 2016 and 2017, most of the displacement occurred within the country's borders, particularly in regions close to Nigeria. The situation remains tense, and from August 2022 to August 2023, there has been an increase of around 68,289 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Cameroon.<sup>34</sup>

Additionally, attacks by Boko Haram, combined with a changing climate, have led to large-scale displacement in the northern regions of the country.<sup>35</sup> Finally, political and ethnic tensions, exacerbated by the disputed 2018 presidential election, continue to roil Cameroon.<sup>36</sup> In this sense, while most movements have so far been internal or to neighbouring regions, irregular migration increased in 2023 and is likely to continue rising in the coming years.

The lack of legal channels for mobility and the difficulty in securing a visa to travel or work abroad further exacerbate the motives for migration.<sup>37</sup> Looking at the data for Italy, job permits show a steady decline in conjunction with the increase in irregular arrivals (Fig.4). Although the trend in irregular arrivals is influenced by a multitude of factors, as demonstrated by other cases in this report, the lack of regular migration channels seems to contribute to pushing individuals toward irregular routes.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.amnesty.it/dilagano-le-atrocita-nelle-regioni-anglofone-del-camerun/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/displaced-cameroonians-struggle-nigeria>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/regional-data-overview/middle-africa>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/295-easing-cameroons-ethno-political-tensions-and-offline>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/regional-data-overview/middle-africa>

Fig. 4 Cameroon. Irregular landings in Italy versus regular entries for job reasons, 2009-2022. (Source: author's elaboration on ISTAT and Frontex data)

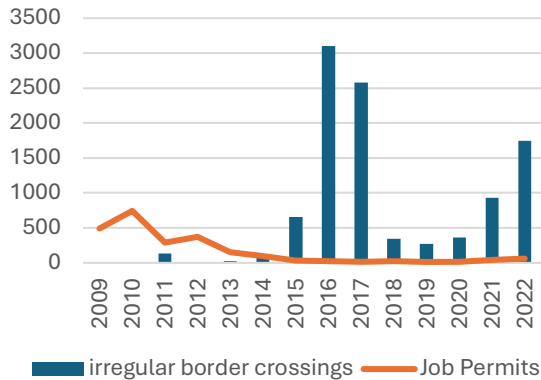
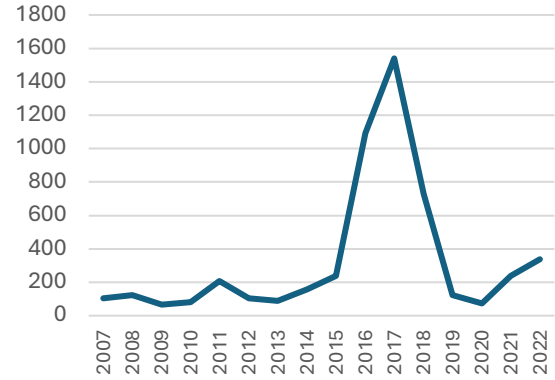


Fig. 6 Cameroon- Permits for Asylum, Asylum request, humanitarian reasons (2007-2022). Source: Author's own elaboration from ISTAT



Cameroon's role as a **transit country** for Europe-bound migrants via the central Mediterranean route is relatively minor.

In terms of **asylum**, and in line with irregular arrivals, asylum applications from Cameroon to Italy increased between 2016 and 2017, when the Anglophone crisis first erupted, and reached a new peak in 2023 due to the country's worsening security conditions (Fig.5). Residence permits for asylum request, asylum or humanitarian reasons for Cameroon's citizens followed the same trend (Fig.6), representing the most common type of residence permit if compared to other types (work, family reunification or study reasons) between 2016 and 2017 (Fig.7).

Fig. 5 Cameroon - Asylum applications to Italy (2008-2023). Source: Author's elaboration from EUROSTAT

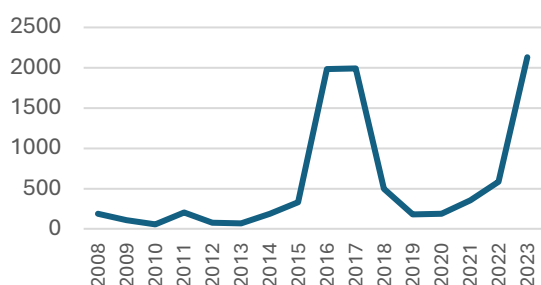
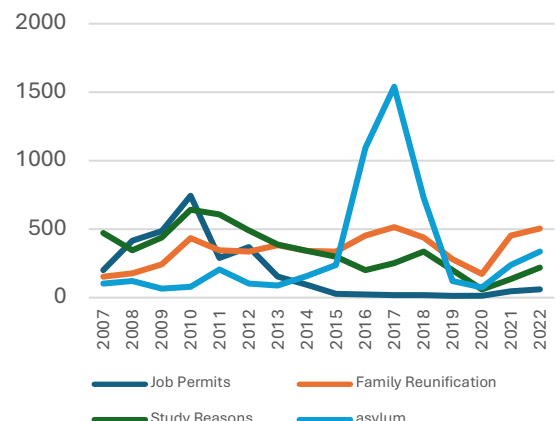
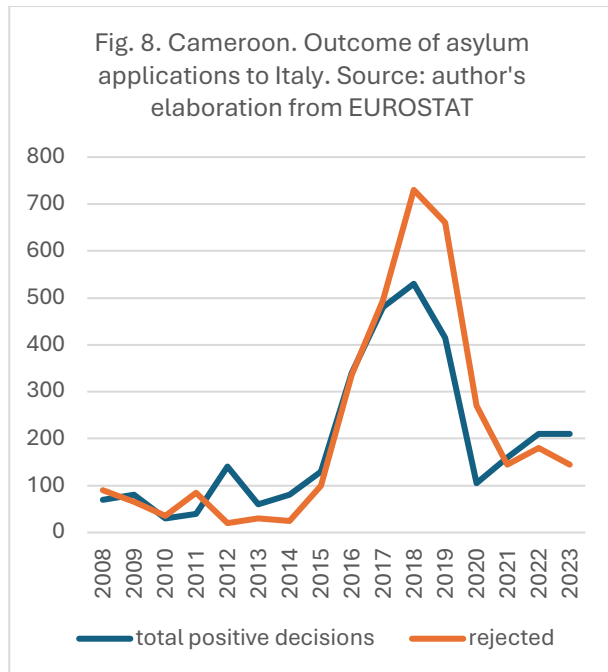


Fig. 7 Cameroon- Asylum residence permits compared to other kind of permits (2007-2022). Source: Author's elaboration from ISTAT



In terms of **asylum decisions**, positive decisions increased during the Anglophone crisis, between 2016-2018, but rejection remains the most common outcome for asylum applications of asylum-seekers from Cameroon to Italy between 2007-2023 (Fig.8). Moreover, with the Decree of 7 May 2024, Cameroon is now considered a safe country i.e., a place where there is apparently no

persecution, torture, or degrading treatment, and whose asylum applications can therefore be rejected as being manifestly unfounded.



## Italy-Cameroon cooperation on migration

### *Bilateral political cooperation*

Diplomatic relations between Italy and Cameroon were established shortly after the country's independence in the early 1960s. Economic cooperation has been reinforced since then, with various agreements on debt cancellations, financial cooperation, and the protection of investments.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, political relations were strengthened

through dialogue and numerous high-level visits since 2005,<sup>39</sup> including that of the Italian President of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella.<sup>40</sup>

Migration as a matter of cooperation was intensified in recent years, mostly in terms of **mobility**. In 2016, the two countries signed an **Agreement on Cultural, Technical and Scientific Cooperation**<sup>41</sup>, which provided a Framework for cooperation in the domain of education, including the provision of scholarships for students' mobility. According to the Registry of the Ministry of Education, Universities, and Research, in the 2016/2017 academic year, the most recent data available, there were 2,408 Cameroonian students enrolled in Italian universities, making them the largest group of African students.<sup>42</sup> However, the country is not included among those prioritized for privileged entry quotas for seasonal work, within the framework of the legal mobility opportunities provided by the Flows Decrees.

Similarly, there are no agreements in the domain of return and readmission. Although there is a gap between the number of irregular migrants from Cameroon that are subject to an expulsion order and the number of those who are actually expelled from Italy (Fig.9), the issue of repatriation is not a priority of bilateral dialogue. This is partly justified

<sup>38</sup> <https://atrio.esteri.it/Home/Search>

<sup>39</sup> <https://ambyaounde.esteri.it/it/italia-e-camerun/>

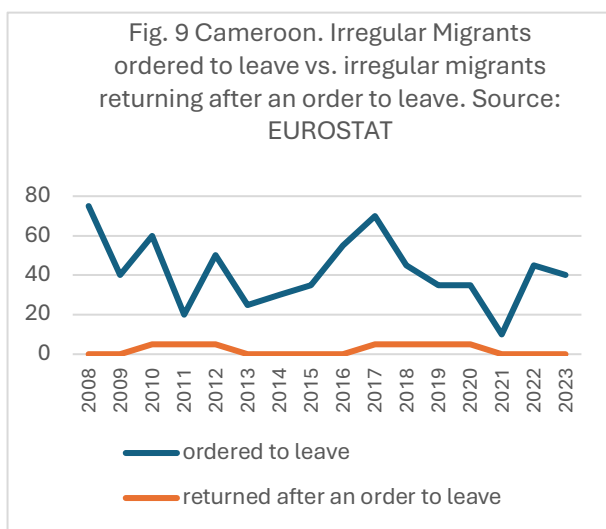
<sup>40</sup> [https://ambyaounde.esteri.it/it/news/dall\\_ambasciat\\_a/2016/03/visita-pdr/](https://ambyaounde.esteri.it/it/news/dall_ambasciat_a/2016/03/visita-pdr/)

<sup>41</sup> <https://atrio.esteri.it/Search/Allegati/50856>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.senato.it/leg/18/BGT/Schede/FascicoloSchedeDDL/ebook/51993.pdf>

by the extremely low numbers of Cameroonian migrants who are subject to expulsion orders.

Finally, there are no agreements in the domain of preventing irregular migration, which is instead addressed primarily through development cooperation by including Cameroon in regional projects that provide training courses for border guards (see next paragraph).



### ***Bilateral Development Cooperation***

Italian cooperation has been active in the country since the early 2000s, and until 2015, it focused primarily on projects related to health, rural development, and poverty reduction (AICS 2006) (Fig. 10). After 2015, migration, or programs and projects indirectly addressing various migratory dimensions, became an additional priority (Fig. 11).

Fig. 10. Italian Development Cooperation in Cameroon. Priorities (2002-2014).

Source: Author's calculation from AICS Reports (2000-2014)

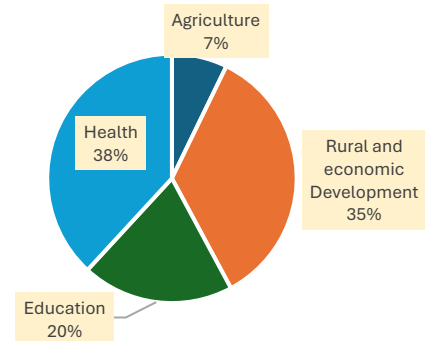
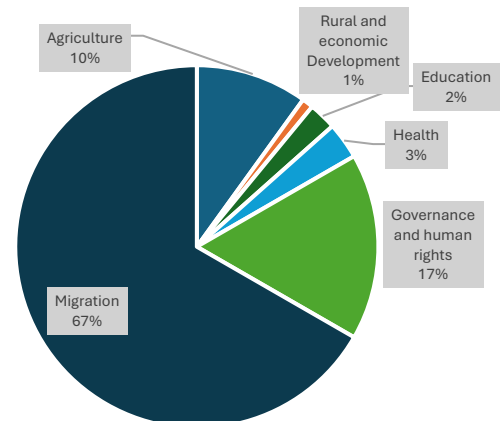


Fig. 11. Italian Development Cooperation in Cameroon. Priorities (2015-2022).

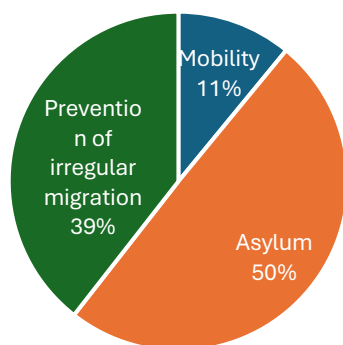
Source: Author's calculation from AICS Reports (2015-2022)



Within the framework of the previously mentioned cultural cooperation agreement, funding for mobility and scholarships increased, including contributions from local authorities and Italian universities. Additionally, in response to ongoing humanitarian crises, such as the Anglophone crisis and instability in the far north of the country, Italian cooperation launched emergency initiatives

in regions bordering Lake Chad. These initiatives, carried out through civil society organizations, aim to support vulnerable populations, including refugees and internally displaced persons (AICS 2019). Finally, additional funds were allocated to involve Cameroon in regional or multi-country programs aimed at preventing irregular migration, which included training courses for Cameroonian border guards and the implementation of awareness-raising campaigns on the risks of irregular migration (Fig. 12).

Fig. 12 Italian Development Cooperation in Cameroon. Migration Priorities (2015-2022). Source: Author's elaboration on AICS Reports 2015-2022.



### ***EU-Cameroon cooperation as an additional framework for DEPMI***

Political and economic relations between the European Union (EU) and Cameroon are framed in

the context of the Cotonou Agreement. While the country is not included among the priority countries of EU migration policy, a dialogue on migration and mobility has been ongoing, with the 4th session of the **Working Group on Migration Issues** between the EU and Cameroon taking place in November 2024 and focusing on topics related to Cameroon's migration policy, diaspora policies, the issue of Nigerian and Central African refugees in Cameroon, and EU-Cameroon cooperation on repatriation.<sup>43</sup> In this regard, there is no structured cooperation at the EU level concerning readmission, largely due to the low numbers of irregular Cameroonian migrants and the absence of specific issues raised by the Member States. As a result, readmission is managed only within the framework of Article 13 of the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement, as well as through two bilateral agreements with two EU Member States.<sup>44</sup> Finally, Cameroon is among the target countries of the **EU Trust Fund for Africa**, with over €40 million allocated to four projects focused on awareness campaigns about the risks of irregular migration, return and reintegration, support for vulnerable people in the northern part of the country, and addressing the root causes of migration<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>43</sup>[https://ambyaounde.esteri.it/it/news/dall\\_ambasciat/2014/11/migrazioni/](https://ambyaounde.esteri.it/it/news/dall_ambasciat/2014/11/migrazioni/)

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.statewatch.org/media/2262/eu-com-readmission-annex-1-cameroon.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> [https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries/sahel-lake-chad/cameroun\\_en](https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries/sahel-lake-chad/cameroun_en)

## Overview of Italy's DEPMI in Cameroon

	Italy-Cameroon (2000-2023)		EU-Cameroon broader cooperation framework
	Political Cooperation	Development Cooperation	
Return & Readmission			Art. 13 Cotonou Agreement EUTF
Border Control and Fight against irregular migration		Training courses for police and border guards	
Fight against human smuggling and trafficking			
Fight against Root Causes			EUTF
Resettlement, Asylum and International Protection		Support to Refugees and Displaced Persons in vulnerable areas of the country	
Legal Mobility	Agreement on cultural cooperation		
Visa			\
Political Dialogue			Working Group on Migration

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## DEPMI COUNTRY PROFILE

### Eritrea



Matilde Rosina

#### Migration outlook: Relevance of flows to Italy and main data

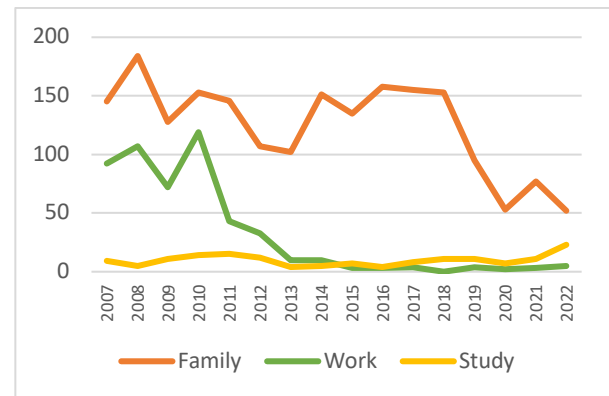
Relevance as a country of origin	High, especially in 2013-2017
Relevance as a country of transit	Low
Safe country of origin list <sup>46</sup>	No
Schengen Visa Exemption <sup>47</sup>	No

While regular migration from Eritrea to Italy is limited, irregular flows have been more substantial over the past decade.

**Regular migration** has seen very low numbers, with only about 6,000 people residing in Italy in 2023.<sup>48</sup> Since 2007, fewer than 200 family reunification permits have been issued annually, with work permits never exceeding 120, and study permits always below 25. Since 2013, fewer than 20 work permits per year have been issued,

underscoring the minimal levels of legal migration from Eritrea to Italy.

Figure 1 Eritrean regular entries in Italy by reason, 2007-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on ISTAT data)



In contrast, **irregular migration** has been more significant, particularly between 2013 and 2017 (Fig. 2). From an average of just over 900 per year in 2009-2012, irregular landings of Eritreans in Italy surged after 2013, peaking at 38,791 in 2015. Since then, numbers have declined, averaging 2,292 per year from 2018 to 2022. This decline began before the onset of the **Covid-19 pandemic**, indicating it is largely unrelated (Fig. 3). In 2018, Eritrea was the second most common country of origin for people disembarking in Italy (Ministero dell'Interno 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Decreto 4 ottobre 2019, Art 1, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2019/10/07/19A06239/sg>.

<sup>47</sup> Regulation 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018, [https://eur-](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02018R1806-20210101)

[lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02018R1806-20210101](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02018R1806-20210101).

<sup>48</sup> According to INSTAT data on foreign residents.

Figure 2 Eritrean irregular arrivals to Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route, 2009-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on Frontex data)

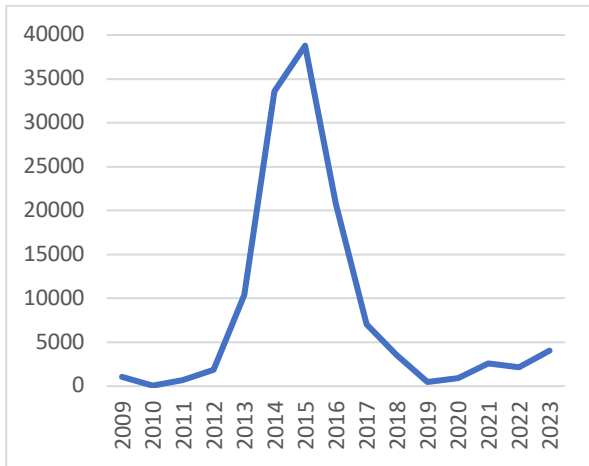
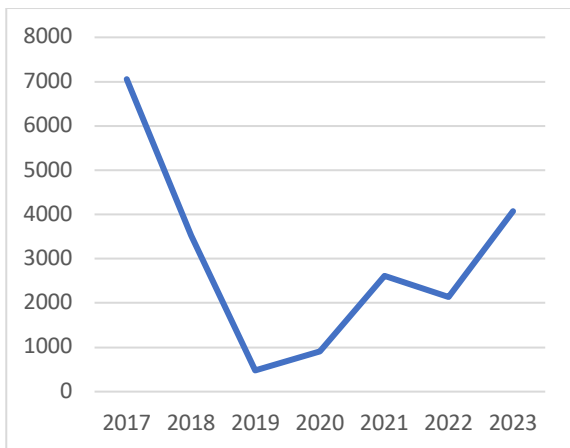


Figure 3 Eritrean irregular arrivals to Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route – focus on Covid years, 2017-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on Frontex data)



**Asylum applications** from Eritrean citizens mirror the trends observed in irregular landings (Fig. 4). Significant peaks in first-time asylum applications occurred in 2016 and 2017, with 7,395 and 6,370 applications, respectively. Between 2008 and 2023, 37% of asylum applications were approved

(Fig. 5). Positive decisions peaked in 2013 but have declined since then. Throughout the 2007-2022 period, humanitarian permits exceeded those for issued for work, study, or family reunification, reflecting the political motivations for fleeing the country (Fig. 6). Indeed, Eritrea is rated as 'not free' (3/100) by Freedom House (2024), and characterised as a **militarised authoritarian state** with no elections since 1993, widespread arbitrary detention, and compulsory indefinite military service.

Figure 4 Eritrean asylum applications in Italy (1st time applicants), 2008-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)

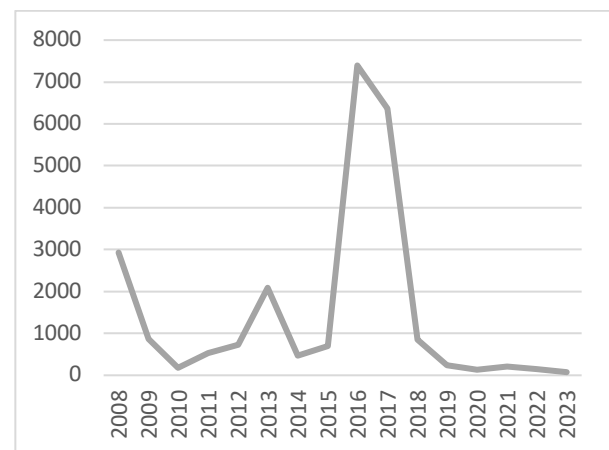


Figure 5 Outcome of Eritrean asylum applications in Italy, 2008-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)

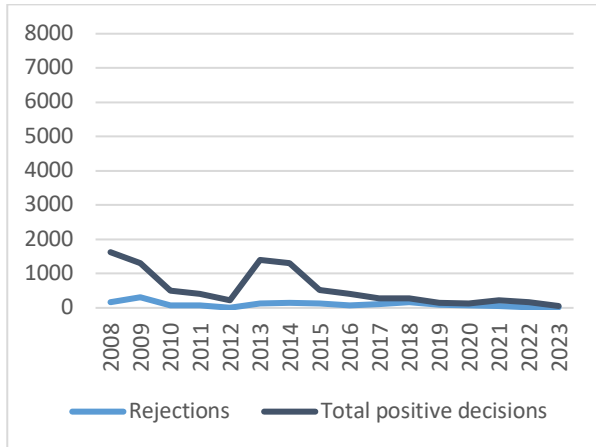
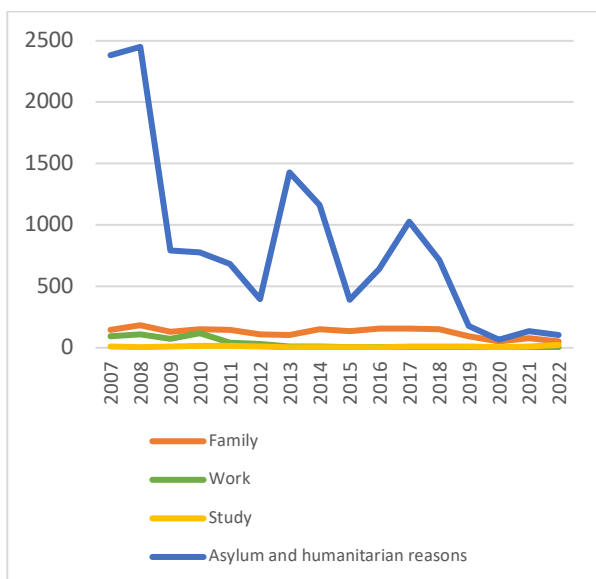


Figure 6 Eritrean entries in Italy by reason, 2007-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on ISTAT data)



## Italy-Eritrea cooperation on migration

### Bilateral political cooperation

Migration-cooperation between Italy and Eritrea is limited, mainly conducted through **political dialogue**. This started with a 2014 visit by Italian vice-minister Pistelli in Eritrea, where he met with the Eritrean Foreign Affairs Minister Saleh and the President Isaias.<sup>49</sup> As the first visit of a government minister in the country since 1997, the meeting was aimed at relaunching bilateral relations between Italy and Eritrea on various issues, also in light of the impact that developments in the Horn of Africa have on security and migratory issues in Italy. Before then, Italy's Foreign Affairs Secretary General Valensise had received Eritrean Ambassador Tekle in 2013, to discuss the shipwreck off the island of Lampedusa.<sup>50</sup> Finally in 2018, Prime Minister Conte visited Eritrean capital Asmara. As stated by the PM, pacifying and developing the Horn of Africa was crucial to stabilise bilateral relations and migratory flows.<sup>51</sup>

Cooperation has also proceeded on a **multilateral** basis, for instance through a 2023 meeting between Foreign Minister Tajani and his counterparts from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia in New York.<sup>52</sup> Tajani highlighted the need for

<sup>49</sup>[https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2014/07/20140702\\_eritrea/](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2014/07/20140702_eritrea/)

<sup>50</sup>[https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2013/10/20131016\\_italiaeritrea/](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2013/10/20131016_italiaeritrea/)

<sup>51</sup>[https://ambasmara.esteri.it/it/news/dall\\_ambasciata/2018/10/visita-del-presidente-del-consiglio/](https://ambasmara.esteri.it/it/news/dall_ambasciata/2018/10/visita-del-presidente-del-consiglio/)

<sup>52</sup>[https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2023/09/partecipazione-del-vice-presidente-del-consiglio-e-ministro-degli-affari-esteri-e-della-cooperazione-internazionale-on-antonio-tajani-a-un-incontro-con-i-ministri-degli-esteri-dei-paesi-del-corno-d/](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2023/09/partecipazione-del-vice-presidente-del-consiglio-e-ministro-degli-affari-esteri-e-della-cooperazione-internazionale-on-antonio-tajani-a-un-incontro-con-i-ministri-degli-esteri-dei-paesi-del-corno-d/)

regional cooperation, also as a way to address the root causes of irregular migration.

Italy does **not reserve quotas** for Eritrean citizens (see, for instance, Decreto Flussi 2000, 2005, 2010, 2016, 2020), and no return agreement between Italy and Eritrea has been signed. Indeed, **returns to Eritrea are extremely low**, with only 1% of the Eritreans who were ordered to leave Italy between 2008 and 2022, being effectively returned (Fig. 7).

Eritreans make up 15% of people resettled through Italy's **humanitarian corridors**, representing the second most-common nationality after Syrians (who account for 70% of resettlements) (as of January 2022).<sup>53</sup> The humanitarian corridor, however, is not in place with Eritrea itself but with neighbouring countries, first of which Ethiopia.<sup>54</sup>

Figure 7 Eritreans ordered to leave and returned by Italy, 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)



<sup>53</sup><https://www.santegidio.org/pageID/34176/langID/it/Dossier-sui-corridoi-umanitari-in-Europa.html>

<sup>54</sup><https://www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/corridoi-umanitari-profughi-dall-eritrea-in-italia-grazie-alla-cei-e-a-sant-egidio>;  
[https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/co](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/co)

## Bilateral development cooperation

Eritrea was the **top receiver** of Italian development funds in Sub-Saharan Africa, in 1998-2002 (MAECI 2002: 89). In the early 2000s, the country was affected by the legacy of the 1998-2000 conflict with Ethiopia, and the unresolved border dispute. Italy's development cooperation funds therefore targeted **post-war reconstruction**, including through the PHARPE, ERP and POWER programs (MAECI 2001-2009).<sup>55</sup> In early 2000s, draught and food scarcity affected the country (MAECI 2002: 98, 2004: 128), worsening reconstruction for a country that already ranked 148<sup>th</sup> (out of 162) on the Human Development Index (data for 2001 - MAECI 2002: 98).

If until 2006, Eritrea was a priority country for Italy's development cooperation, its role faded since then, following a '**pause**' in their **bilateral relations** (MAECI 2011: 266). Suspended political dialogue between the Italian and Eritrean governments in 2007-2008 negatively impacted the programming of new bilateral initiatives (MAECI 2008: 163).

Overall, most Italian development cooperation funds in Eritrea over the past two decades have targeted **socio-economic development (27%)** and

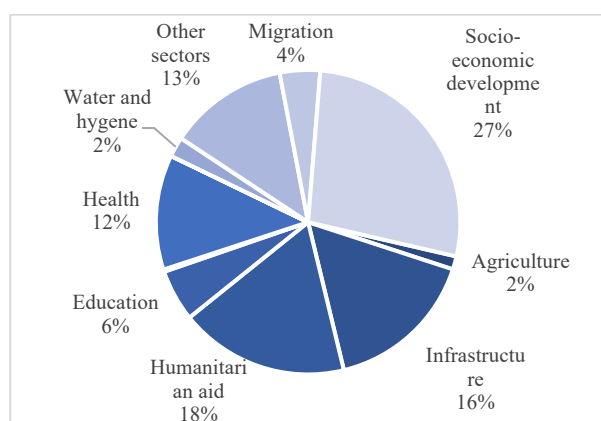
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<sup>55</sup> 'PHARPE - programma di sanita' pubblica e riabilitazione', €16.6m, 1997-2000; 'ERP - Partecipazione all'Emergency Reconstruction Programme', €28m, 2000-2005; 'POWER - Post War Emergency Rehabilitation', €22m, 2002.

humanitarian aid (18%) (Fig. 8). A more limited proportion of funds (4%) focused on migration-related goals.

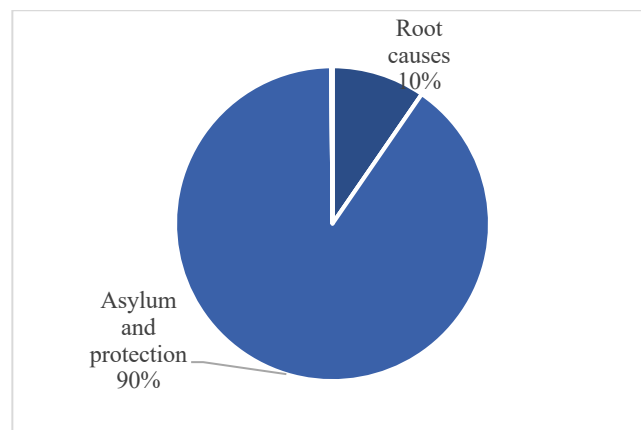
Migration programs were targeted at **asylum and refugee protection (90%)** and addressing the **root causes of migration (10%)** (Fig. 9). Asylum and refugee protection was a priority in the early 2000s, when Italy joined programs to support Eritrean refugees and internally displaced people, for a total of €9.4m. This included a 2006-7 UNDP joint program to support the return and reintegration of 60,000 people (MAECI 2007: 111).<sup>56</sup> Addressing the root causes of migration assumed relevance in the late 2010s, particularly through a project aimed at building resilience in order to prevent irregular migration.<sup>57</sup>

Fig. 8 Allocation of Italian development cooperation funds in Eritrea, 2000-2023 (Source: Author's elaboration based on MAECI 2000-2019 and AICS 2024)



<sup>56</sup> 'Aiuti agli sfollati eritrei deportati dall'Etiopia', €7.6m, 2001; 'Programma multisettoriale in favore dei rifugiati eritrei in Sudan e rientrati', €1m, 2002; 'Programma congiunto per il ritorno/reinsediamento degli sfollati - fase I e II', €712,000, 2006-2009.

Fig. 9 Allocation of migration-related funds in Eritrea, 2000-2023 (Source: Author's elaboration based on MAECI 2000-2019 and AICS 2024)



### **EU-Eritrea cooperation as an additional framework for DEPMI**

Eritrea has no formal return agreement with the EU, nor a visa facilitation agreement. As a matter of fact, between 2016 and 2020, only 6% of Eritreans ordered to leave were effectively returned by EU member states (Fig. 10).

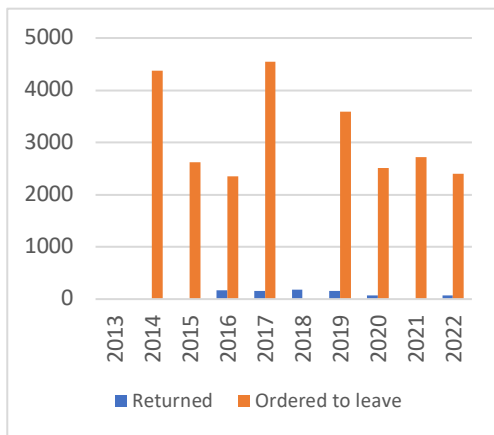
Eritrea was receiver of the **EU Trust Fund for Africa**.<sup>58</sup> It is part of the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative (the **Khartoum Process**), launched in 2014 to promote regional integration and cooperation to address issues including

<sup>57</sup> 'Building Resilience of Children, Youth and Communities to Prevent Irregular Migration', €1m, 2019-2021.

<sup>58</sup> [https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries/horn-africa/eritrea\\_en](https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries/horn-africa/eritrea_en)

irregular migration.<sup>59</sup> Finally, despite criticism of the regime,<sup>60</sup> Eritrea was among the 16 priority countries identified by the EU **New Partnership Framework** in 2016 for the establishment of ‘country packages’ (COM/2016/0385).

*Figure 10 Eritreans ordered to leave and returned by EU27, 2013-2022 (Source: author’s elaboration on Eurostat data)*



<sup>59</sup>[https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2014/11/20141127\\_conferenza\\_ministeriale\\_eu\\_horn/](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2014/11/20141127_conferenza_ministeriale_eu_horn/) ;  
[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eritrea/european-union-and-eritrea\\_en?s=97](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eritrea/european-union-and-eritrea_en?s=97)

<sup>60</sup><https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/eu-considering-partnership-with-eritrea-on-migration-despite-un-accusations-of-crimes-against-humanity-a7071466.html#>

## Overview of Italy's DEPMI in Eritrea

	Italy-Eritrea (2000-2022)		EU-Eritrea
	Political Cooperation	Development Cooperation	
Return & Readmission	/	/	/
Border Control and Fight against irregular migration	/	/	/
Fight against human smuggling and trafficking	/	/	/
Fight against Root Causes	/	Yes	EU Trust Fund for Africa
Resettlement, Asylum and International Protection	/	Yes	/
Legal Mobility	/	Scholarships	/
Visa	/	/	/
Political Dialogue	Meetings in 2013, 2014, 2023	/	Khartoum Process

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Ministero dell'Interno (2018), Cruscotto Giornaliero 31/12/2018, [http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto\\_statistico\\_giornaliero\\_31-12-2018\\_0.pdf](http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_31-12-2018_0.pdf)

## DEPMI COUNTRY PROFILE

### Ethiopia



#### Iole Fontana

#### Migration Outlook: Relevance of flows to Italy and main data

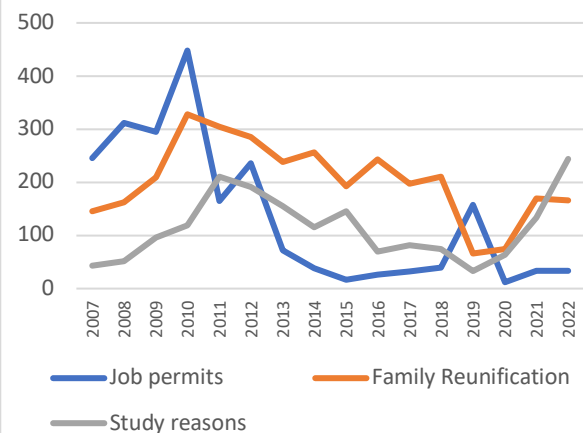
Relevance as a country of origin	Medium-High 2015-2016	Medium-Low 2023
Relevance as a country of transit	Medium, mostly for Eritrean, Sudanese and Somali migrants	
Safe country of origin list <sup>61</sup>	NO	
Schengen Visa Exemption	NO	

Once primarily a source of refugees from a country engulfed in war, Ethiopia has, in recent years, experienced evolving migration patterns, with irregular emigration growing amid domestic repression, ethnic tensions, humanitarian crises, and the search for better economic opportunities abroad, including in Europe (Adugna 2021).

In terms of **regular migration** to Italy, only 6,424 individuals were residing in Italian territory in 2023.<sup>62</sup> Regarding annual regular entries between 2007 and 2022, the data suggests that the nature

of regular migration from Ethiopia to Italy has shifted over the years. While job permits were once the predominant form of entry, family reunification has become more significant, showing a relatively stable trend (Fig.1). After 2011, there is a sharp decline in job permits, reaching very low levels between 2013 and 2022. This trend is consistent with what has been observed for other countries in this report, following a partial closure of migration channels for employment purposes in Italy (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2012). Curiously, the numbers did not increase even after Ethiopia was included in 2016 among the countries eligible for entry quotas under the so-called Flows Decree.

Fig. 1 Ethiopia - Regular Yearly Entries to Italy by reason of entry (2007-2022).  
Source: Author's elaboration from ISTAT

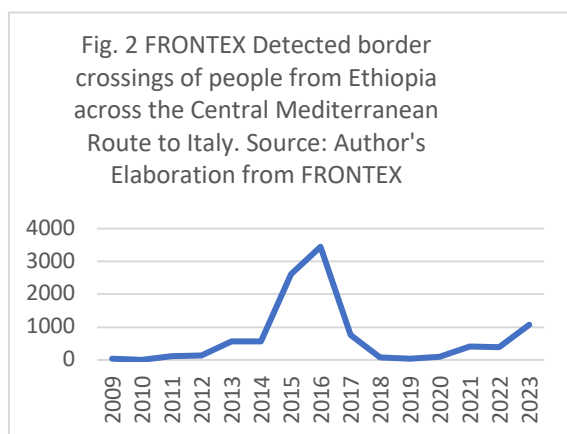


While the number of regular migrants from Ethiopia in Italy remains relatively low, the arrivals

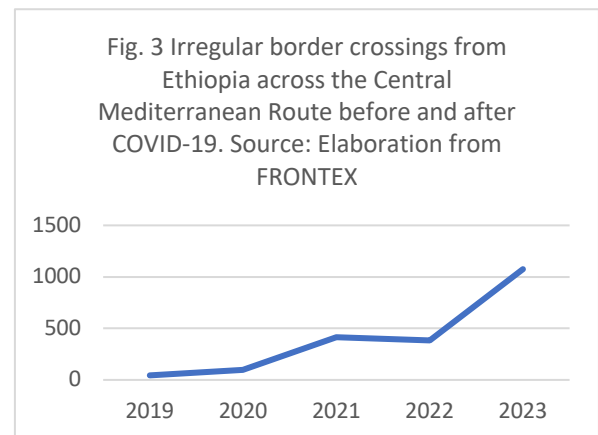
<sup>61</sup> According to the list of safe countries of origin as indicated by the Italian Decree 7 May 2024.

<sup>62</sup> According to INSTAT data on foreign residents.

of **irregular migrants** increased in 2015, with 2016 marking the highest number of Ethiopian arrivals ever recorded along the Central Mediterranean route, reaching almost 3,500 (Fig. 2). Although the number of arrivals returned to negligible levels in recent years, 2023 saw an increase with more than 1,000 landings in a single year. Data from the first few months of 2024 seem to confirm this upward trend.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, although the numbers are lower compared to other nationalities, the growing trend in irregular migration from Ethiopia suggests a need for close monitoring, especially considering that, according to FRONTEX<sup>64</sup> and some observers,<sup>65</sup> the actual figures could be higher than reported. It is believed that many Ethiopians may declare themselves as Eritreans upon arrival when applying for asylum, to avoid the risk of being returned. **The COVID-19 pandemic** did not reduce migration flows from the country that slightly continue to grow (Fig. 3).



<sup>63</sup> According to FRONTEX data on irregular border crossings, there was a 60% increase in Ethiopian arrivals in January-June 2024 compared to the same period in 2023.



Most common routes are northward across the Sahara, into Sudan and then to Libya, or eastward via Djibouti and Yemen (European Commission 2016). In terms of **root causes**, large-scale international emigration from Ethiopia has tended to occur during periods of political repression and changes of government, with the highest peaks being recorded at the international level between the late 1970s and early 1990s (Adugna 2021). In recent years, migration from Ethiopia surged again, driven by a combination of factors. First and foremost, economic reasons remained key drivers, with migration increasingly perceived as the only viable escape from poverty (ibid). Additionally, the country's ongoing political instability, rising internal tensions, and controversial policy decisions further fuelled this trend. The 2015 political elections, for instance, were reportedly

<sup>64</sup> [https://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk\\_Analysis/Fran\\_Q1\\_2015.pdf](https://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Fran_Q1_2015.pdf)

<sup>65</sup> <https://eritrealive.com/the-scam-of-false-eritrean-refugees/>

marred by irregularities and clashes.<sup>66</sup> The situation was further exacerbated by unrest in Oromia, Ethiopia's largest region and home to the country's most populous ethnic group. In late 2015 and early 2016, Oromia witnessed a wave of mass protests against the proposed expansion of the municipal boundaries of the capital, Addis Ababa, a move that threatened to displace farmers from their ancestral lands (European Parliament 2016). This was described as potentially the worst crisis in Ethiopia since the post-election violence of 2005, with security forces responding to protests with violence (ibid.). Moreover, since 2011, the country has experienced the worst drought and food crisis in 50 years, with a significant impact on the agricultural sector that employs most of the population (Collet and Ahad 2017). Due to the combination of these drivers, new migratory waves were recorded in 2015 and 2016, mostly across the Central Mediterranean route to Italy.

New tensions have emerged since 2020 with the onset of the **Tigray War**, a conflict in northern Ethiopia where government forces from Addis Ababa and their allies fought against the military and political forces of the Tigray People's Liberation Front. The toll of the conflict was staggering, not only in terms of the high number of casualties but also the immense costs of reconstruction. Every facet of life in the region –

from jobs to social services to security – has been severely impacted, with as many as 600,000 people potentially killed (Misikir 2024). The war officially ended with an African Union-brokered peace agreement in November 2022 (the so-called Pretoria Agreements), but the reconstruction bill is estimated at \$20 billion (ibid.). Moreover, climatic conditions are worsening the situation, with a new severe drought and a locust invasion slashing the expected harvest for 2024 by half (ibid.). Finally, although the peace agreements of November 2022 brought an end to hostilities the country remains in a state of significant institutional and political fragility, further underscored in November 2023, when new civilian casualties were reported.<sup>67</sup> These developments may explain the rising numbers of irregular migratory flows recorded in 2023.

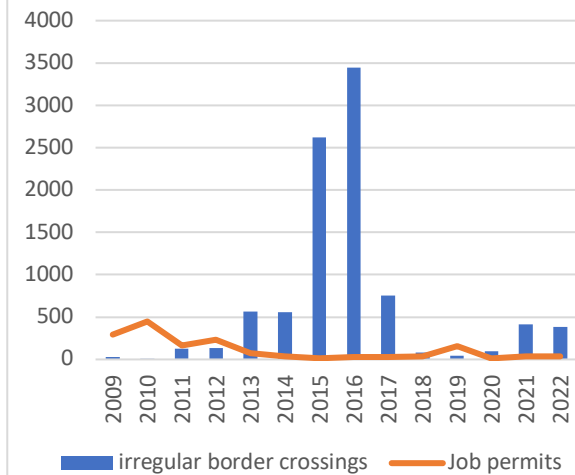
While the sharp increase in irregular border crossings to Italy in 2015 and 2016, as well as in 2023, is linked to political instability, conflict, and economic downturns in the country, the low issuance of job permits and high levels of irregular crossings suggest a possible correlation where restrictive legal migration avenues may drive individuals to seek alternative, irregular routes (Fig. 4), as argued also for other countries in this report.

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<sup>66</sup> <https://www.avvenire.it/opinioni/pagine/la-ribellione-degli-oromo-ora-fa-tremare-letiopia-2>

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.voanews.com/a/over-50-civilians-killed-in-ethiopia-attacks-rights-body/7386566.html>

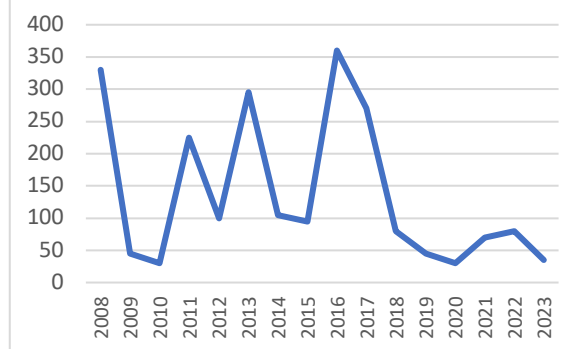
Fig. 4 Ethiopia. Irregular landings in Italy versus regular entries for job reasons, 2009-2022. (Source: author's elaboration on ISTAT and Frontex data)



In addition to being a country of origin, Ethiopia is also a **transit hub** and a destination for migrants and refugees fleeing conflicts in East Africa and the Horn of Africa (Adugna 2021). The country has an advanced regime for the protection of forced migrants, hosting thousands of refugees in several camps across its territory. However, many refugees living in Ethiopia often move onward to Europe for a variety of reasons, including safety concerns, general hopelessness, and the pursuit of work and educational opportunities (ibid). While exact figures are not available, research suggests that Eritreans, Sudanese and Somalians in refugee camps in Ethiopia engage in secondary movements from Ethiopia on a large scale, transiting through Ethiopia on their way to Europe, including via the Central Mediterranean route to Italy (Acaps 2016; European Commission 2016).

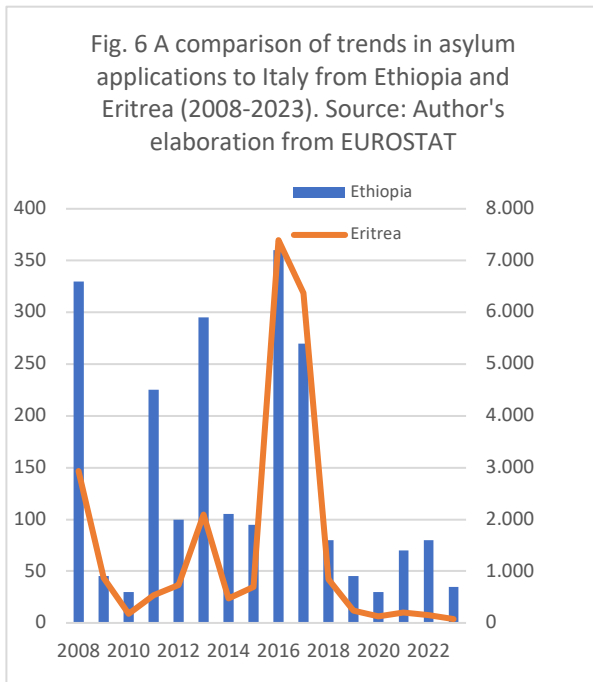
In terms of **asylum**, the number of asylum applications to Italy between 2008 and 2023 was not particularly high in absolute terms compared to other nationalities. Trends were inconsistent, with a peak recorded in 2016, in line with the high number of irregular arrivals (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5 Ethiopia - Asylum applications to Italy (2008-2023). Source: Author's elaboration from EUROSTAT



However, the actual number of Ethiopian nationals who applied for asylum in Italy might be higher, especially if, as mentioned earlier, many Ethiopians declare themselves as Eritreans upon arrival to increase their chances of being granted protection. Indeed, when observing the number of asylum applications submitted by individuals claiming to be Eritrean upon arrival, similar trends can be seen,

mirroring those of applications from Ethiopia (Fig. 6).



In terms of **asylum decisions**, given the low number of applications, positive decisions were the most common outcome (Fig. 7), and residence permits for asylum request, asylum or humanitarian reasons for Ethiopian citizens followed the same trend (Fig. 8), representing the most common permit after family reunification between 2007 and 2022 (Fig.9).

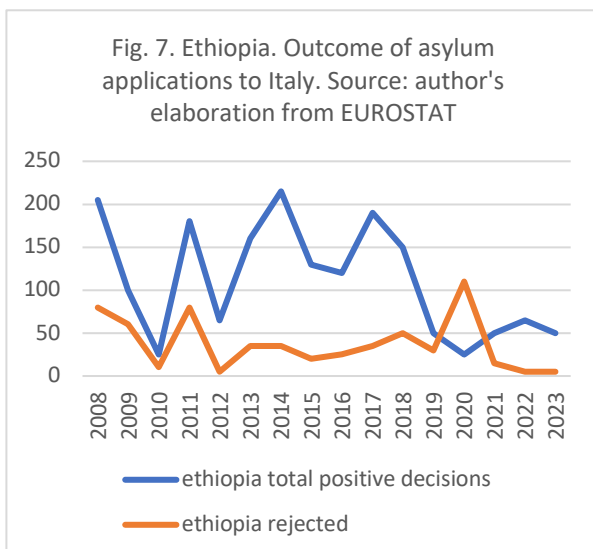


Fig. 8 Ethiopia- Permits for Asylum, Asylum request, humanitarian reasons (2007-2022). Source: Author's own elaboration from ISTAT

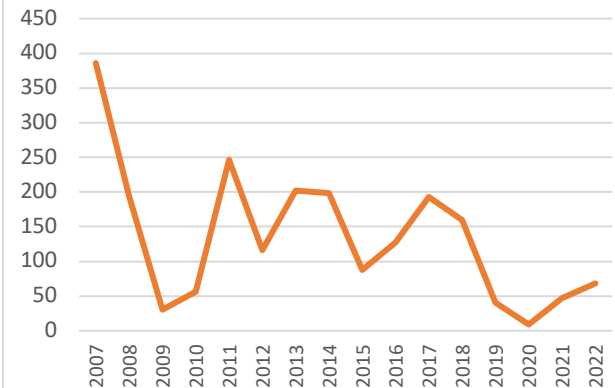
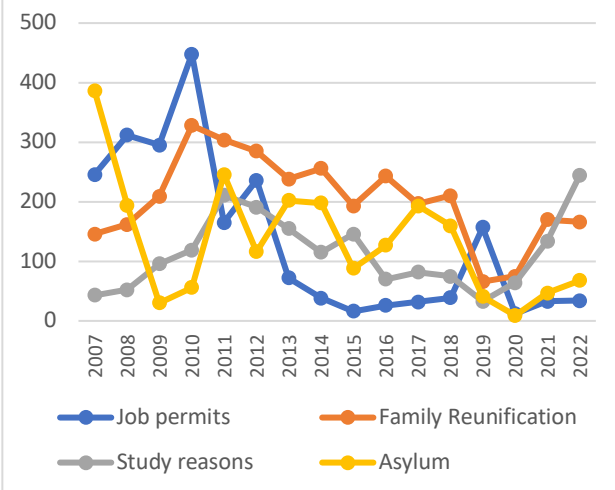


Fig. 9 Ethiopia- Asylum residence permits compared to other kind of permits (2007-2022). Source: Author's elaboration from ISTAT



## Italy-Ethiopia cooperation on migration

### *Bilateral political cooperation*

Political and economic relations between Italy and Ethiopia are defined by the over 82 agreements, concluded since the late 1950s in a variety of

sectors,<sup>68</sup> with Ethiopia being identified as a ‘priority partner’ for Italy in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>69</sup> Migration has increasingly become a matter of political cooperation starting from 2015, when the relevance of Ethiopia as a country of origin and transit increased.

**Bilateral political dialogue on migration** has been at the center of various **high-level visits** between Italy and Ethiopia. In July 2015, former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi was one of the few European leaders (along with the Swedish Prime Minister) to visit Addis Ababa in the context of the Third UN Conference on Development Aid, where he met with the Ethiopian Prime Minister.<sup>70</sup> During this meeting, Renzi called for increased aid and investment to support the country’s economic development and to address the root causes of migration.<sup>71</sup> Following this meeting, migration issues and economic cooperation were central to the discussions between former Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni and his Ethiopian counterpart in September 2015<sup>72</sup> and in January 2016.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, migration was one of the key

issues on the agenda during Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte’s visit to Addis Ababa in October 2018, where he also called for the African Union’s support in sustaining the conclusions of bilateral readmission agreements with African countries.<sup>74</sup> Finally, in April 2023, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni visited Ethiopia, emphasizing priority interests such as the management of migratory flows and the importance of ensuring the stability and integrity of Ethiopia, a country that hosts more than 800,000 refugees and 4 million displaced people.<sup>75</sup> The country was then included as a priority one in the Piano Mattei.<sup>76</sup>

However, while migration is a part of political dialogue and high-level visits, there are currently no specific cooperation agreements on migration with Ethiopia, including on **return and readmission**. No Member States, including Italy, have readmission agreements with the country.<sup>77</sup> While according to the European Union (EU), Ethiopia does not sufficiently cooperate in the repatriation of its citizens who are in irregular

<sup>68</sup> For the full list, check ‘Archivio Trattati Internazionali Online’, Ministero degli Esteri.

<sup>69</sup> <https://ambaddisabeba.esteri.it/it/italia-ed-etiochia/>

<sup>70</sup> [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiq\\_17.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiq_17.pdf)

<sup>71</sup> [https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2015-07-14/renzi-etiochia-l-europa-crei-lavoro-e-lotti-contro-poverta-102838.shtml?uuid=ACWlqHR&refresh\\_ce=1](https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2015-07-14/renzi-etiochia-l-europa-crei-lavoro-e-lotti-contro-poverta-102838.shtml?uuid=ACWlqHR&refresh_ce=1)

<sup>72</sup> [https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2015/09/incontro-del-ministro-degli-esteri/](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2015/09/incontro-del-ministro-degli-esteri/)

<sup>73</sup> [https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/approfondimenti/2016/01/vertice-unione-africana-missione/](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/approfondimenti/2016/01/vertice-unione-africana-missione/)

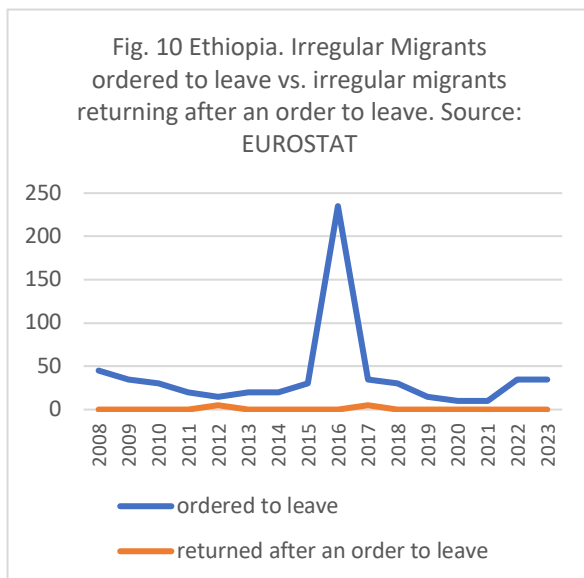
<sup>74</sup> [https://www.parlamento.it/application/xmanager/projects/parlamento/file/repository/affariinternazionali/osservatorio/approfondimenti/PI0143\\_App.pdf](https://www.parlamento.it/application/xmanager/projects/parlamento/file/repository/affariinternazionali/osservatorio/approfondimenti/PI0143_App.pdf), p.13

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.rainews.it/articoli/2023/04/giorgia-meloni-in-etiochia-aiuti-umanitari-e-migranti-i-principali-dossier-1f8b2214-997d-4af5-8d76-b21e78053a41.html>

<sup>76</sup> <https://documenti.camera.it/apps/nuovosito/attigoverno/Schedalavori/getTesto.ashx?file=0179.pdf&leg=XIX#pagemode=none>

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/new/s/2016/mar/eu-com-eeas-readmission-ethiopia-7205-16.pdf>

conditions,<sup>78</sup> in Italy, the gap between those subject to an expulsion order and those actually expelled remains low, partly due to the extremely small numbers involved (Fig. 10).



Similarly, there are no agreements in the domain of preventing irregular migration, which is instead addressed primarily through development cooperation (see next paragraph).

In terms of **legal mobility**, since 2016, Ethiopia has been included among the countries eligible for reserved entry quotas under Italy's seasonal and non-seasonal work schemes. Typically, inclusion in the so-called Flows Decree is reserved for countries that have signed cooperation agreements on migration with Italy. Indeed, according to the list

published by the Ministry of the Interior, Ethiopia is among such countries,<sup>79</sup> although there is no clear record of a specific migration agreement. Ethiopia's inclusion in the entry quotas also occurred a year before the conclusion of an informal readmission agreement with the EU, aligning with the idea that national quota schemes can complement EU external action, acting as national incentives or rewards for EU-wide agreements (Fontana and Rosina 2024).

Finally, in terms of **asylum and international protection**, a protocol was signed in January 2017 by the Ministries of the Interior and Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI), and the Community of Sant'Egidio, to open "Humanitarian Corridors" for up to 500 people from Ethiopia.<sup>80,81</sup> The protocol governs the management of migrants who demonstrate a proven condition of vulnerability due to personal circumstances, age, or health conditions, and who have been recognized as refugees by the UNHCR in a preliminary phase.

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.statewatch.org/media/2270/eu-com-readmission-annex-1-ethiopia.pdf>

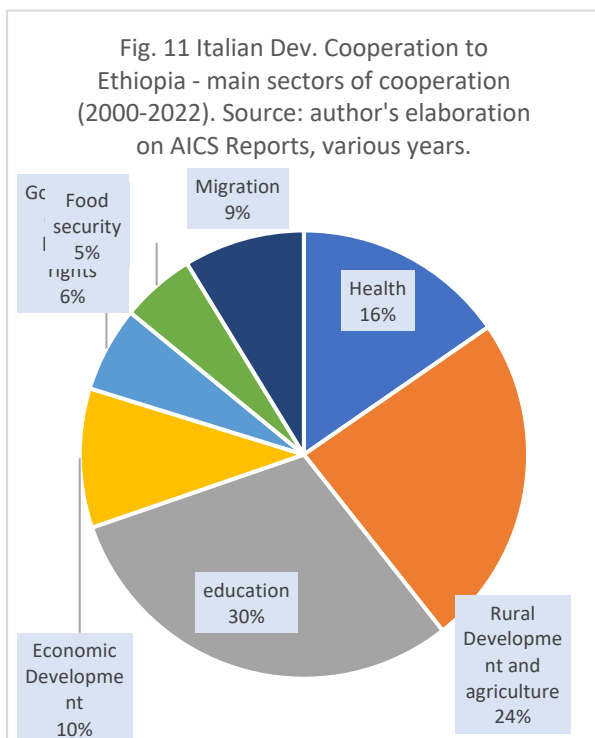
<sup>79</sup> [https://www.prefettura.it/FILES/AllegatiPag/1232/Paesi\\_che\\_hanno\\_accordi\\_di\\_cooperazione\\_con\\_l'Italia.pdf](https://www.prefettura.it/FILES/AllegatiPag/1232/Paesi_che_hanno_accordi_di_cooperazione_con_l'Italia.pdf)

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/aperto-corridoio-umanitario-etiopia>

<sup>81</sup> <https://integrazionemigranti.gov.it/it-it/Ricerca-news/Dettaglio-news/id/1754/Corridoi-umanitari-in-Italia-settanta-persone-dallEtiopia->

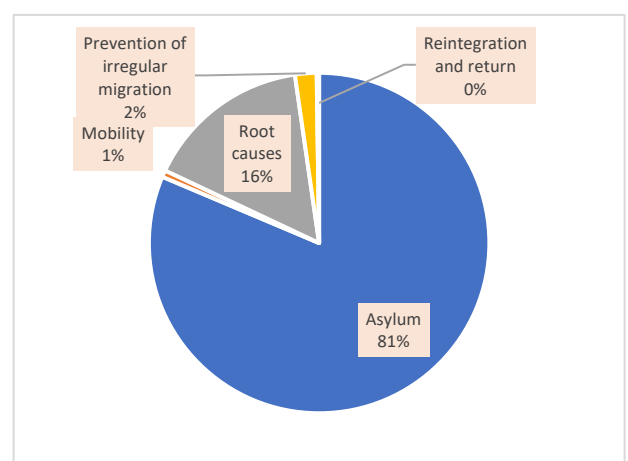
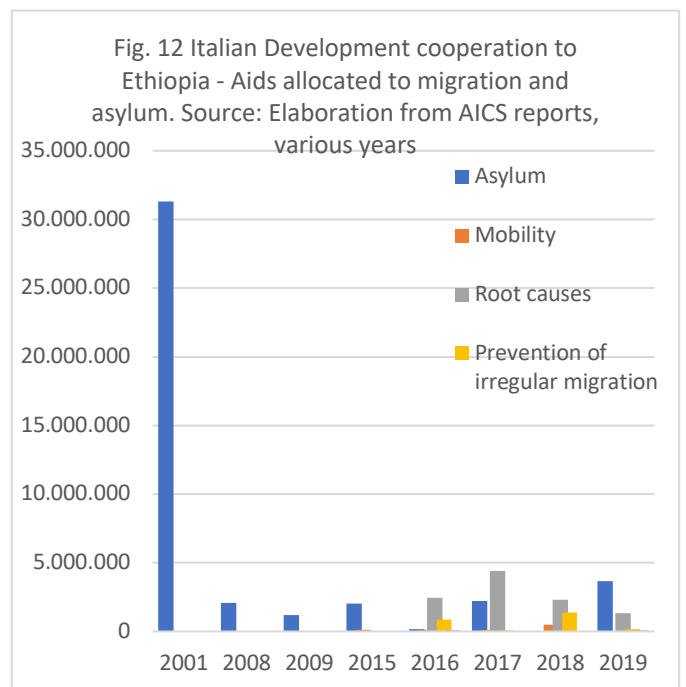
## Bilateral Development Cooperation

Italy's commitment to development cooperation in Ethiopia dates back to 1976, when the first bilateral agreement for the implementation of development projects was signed (AICS 2009, 2021). Ethiopia has been among the priority countries for Italian cooperation since 2010. Italian efforts have mostly focused on education, health, rural development, agriculture, and food security (Fig. 11).



Focusing on the migration chapter, since the early 2000s, Italian cooperation has been dedicated to supporting vulnerable populations of refugees and internally displaced persons in Ethiopia. The majority of funds (81%) have consistently been allocated to humanitarian aid, protection and

asylum programs over time. However, beginning in 2016, following an increase in migratory flows from the country and Ethiopia's recognition as a priority partner by the EU, additional funds were allocated to programs aimed at addressing the root causes of migration, including campaigns to prevent irregular migration (18%) (Fig. 12).



In 2017, the Joint Declaration for the adoption of the Country Program for Development Cooperation between Italy and Ethiopia for the period 2017/19 was also signed, which included migration as a priority area of action. The resources allocated to Ethiopia amounted to approximately €18 million in grants, targeting key sectors such as health, economic and agricultural development, migration, human rights, and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene).<sup>82</sup> An additional €3.5 million was provided from the EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) (AICS 2018).<sup>83</sup>

### ***EU-Ethiopia cooperation as an additional framework for DEPMI***

The cooperation between the EU and Ethiopia is framed within the context of the Cotonou Agreement and is structured around several key pillars, including trade and economic development, regional peace, and democratic governance.<sup>84</sup> Due to the country's significance as a country of origin, transit, and destination for migration, a sectoral dialogue on migration was launched in November 2015 through the adoption of a **Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility**. This agenda provided

a broader framework for cooperation on international protection and refugee needs, legal migration and mobility, and the fight against irregular migration, smuggling, and trafficking.<sup>85</sup> In 2016, Ethiopia was identified by the European Commission as a **priority country under the European Agenda on Migration and the Partnership Framework with third countries**, with return and reintegration as priority goals.<sup>86</sup> In June 2016, the Ethiopian Prime Minister and former European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker signed a Joint Declaration towards an EU-Ethiopia Strategic Engagement, committing both sides to sectoral dialogue on various issues, including migration.<sup>87</sup>

Ethiopia was included among the priority countries of the EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), with 12 national and 14 regional actions focused on addressing the protection needs of refugees and their host communities (Regional Development and Protection Program); tackling the root causes of irregular migration by promoting economic and employment opportunities and improving migration management at the regional level.<sup>88</sup> Between December 2015 and October 2016, the

<sup>82</sup> <https://ambaddisabeba.esteri.it/it/italia-ed-etioipia/>

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/ethiopia/european-union-and-ethiopia\\_en?s=98](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/ethiopia/european-union-and-ethiopia_en?s=98)

<sup>85</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_15\\_6050](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_15_6050)

<sup>86</sup> <https://ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Working-Paper-09-Ethiopia-Final.pdf>

<sup>87</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/ethiopia/european-union-and-ethiopia\\_en?s=98](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/ethiopia/european-union-and-ethiopia_en?s=98)

<sup>88</sup> [https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries/horn-africa/ethiopia\\_en](https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries/horn-africa/ethiopia_en)

EUTF allocated €119.5 million to Ethiopia.<sup>89</sup> However, no additional funding was approved between November 2016 and November 2017. This decision may have been influenced by the September 2017 progress report on the Partnership Framework with Third Countries, which described cooperation with Ethiopia as "unsatisfactory" and noted that the return rate was among the lowest in the region.<sup>90</sup>

The issue of return continues to be a complex aspect of bilateral cooperation. Due to the challenges in negotiating and finalizing a formal return agreement, the EU and Ethiopia signed **an informal readmission arrangement in December 2017, known as the 'Admission Procedure for the Return of Ethiopians.'**<sup>91</sup> This arrangement was designed to facilitate the return and readmission of Ethiopian nationals residing irregularly in EU Member States. The agreement was accompanied by additional funding, with €150.7 million allocated to Ethiopia, including €50 million in budget support and €81 million in development assistance.<sup>92</sup> Despite the existing readmission arrangement, cooperation on readmission with Ethiopia has not improved. This has led to the imposition of

sanctions, including the suspension of the possibility of waiving certain requirements for visa applicants, lengthier application procedures, and the suspension of issuing multiple-entry visas.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup><https://ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Working-Paper-09-Ethiopia-Final.pdf>

<sup>90</sup> ibid

<sup>91</sup><https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13582-2023-INIT/en/pdf#:~:text=In%20February%202018%20the%20EU,and%20on%2028%20November%202019.>

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<sup>92</sup> <https://ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Working-Paper-09-Ethiopia-Final.pdf>

<sup>93</sup> <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13582-2023-INIT/en/pdf#:~:text=In%20February%202018%20the%20EU,and%20on%2028%20November%202019.>

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### Overview of Italy's DEPMI in Ethiopia

	Italy-Ethiopia (2000-2022)		EU-Ethiopia
	Political Cooperation	Development Cooperation	
Return & Readmission	/	/	Informal Return Arrangements (2017)
Border Control and Fight against irregular migration	/	Awareness Campaigns	/
Fight against human smuggling and trafficking	/	/	/
Fight against Root Causes	/	Yes	EU Trust Fund for Africa
Resettlement, Asylum and International Protection	Humanitarian Corridors	Yes	EU Trust Fund for Africa
Legal Mobility	Quotas (2016)	Scholarships	/
Visa	/	/	Further restriction on visa requirements
Political Dialogue	Meetings in 2015, 2016, 2018, 2023	/	Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility (2015)

## DEPMI COUNTRY PROFILE

### (The) Gambia



Iole Fontana

#### Migration Outlook: Relevance of flows to Italy and main data

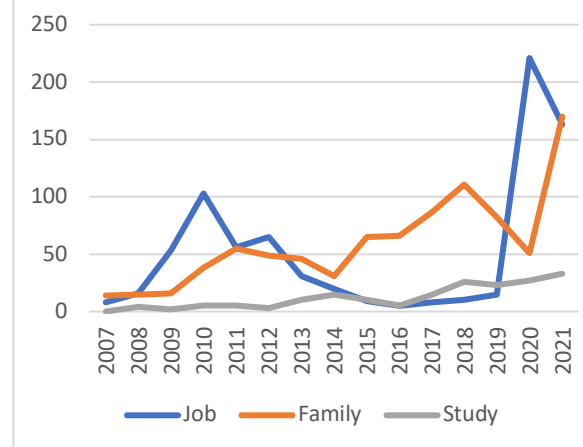
Relevance as a country of origin	High between 2014-2017. New rising trends in 2023	Low between 2018-2022
Relevance as a country of transit	Low	
Safe country of origin list <sup>94</sup>	YES	
Schengen Visa Exemption	NO	

The Gambia stands as the second-largest diaspora per capita in Europe,<sup>95</sup> and although it is the smallest country on the African continent, it has been one of the highest per capita contributors of irregular migrants to Europe across the Mediterranean compared to any other African nation (IOM 2017). While it is a significant country for flows along the Western Mediterranean route towards Spain, in the last decade, the Gambia has

also emerged as an important country of origin for migratory flows across the Central Mediterranean route, with many arriving irregularly in Italy.

In terms of **regular migration to Italy**, 22,637 individuals were regularly present on Italian territory in 2023.<sup>96</sup> Regarding annual regular entries between 2007 and 2022, job and family reunification permits were the most common, although they involved low numbers (see Fig.1). Interestingly, and unlike other countries in this report, regular entries for job and seasonal work significantly increased from 2020, if compared to previous numbers.

Fig. 1 The Gambia - Regular Yearly Entries to Italy by reason of entry (2007-2022).  
Source: Author's elaboration from ISTAT



<sup>94</sup> According to the list of safe countries of origin as indicated by the Italian Decree 17 March 2023.

<sup>95</sup> <https://migrants-refugees.va/it/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/09/2022-CP-The-Gambia-EN.pdf>

<sup>96</sup> According to INSTAT data on foreign residents.

The presence of **irregular migrants** has increased in recent years. Between 2014 and 2017, over 34,000 Gambians disembarked in Italy, with almost 12,000 arriving in 2016 alone, making them the fifth largest nationality among irregular arrivals via the central Mediterranean route. New rising trends were recorded in 2023 (Fig. 2). In this regard, **the COVID-19 pandemic** did not have a significant impact on migration flows from the country, which were already quite low but continued to increase slightly (Fig.3).

Fig. 2 FRONTEX Detected border crossings of people from the Gambia across the Central Mediterranean Route to Italy. Source: Author's Elaboration from FRONTEX.

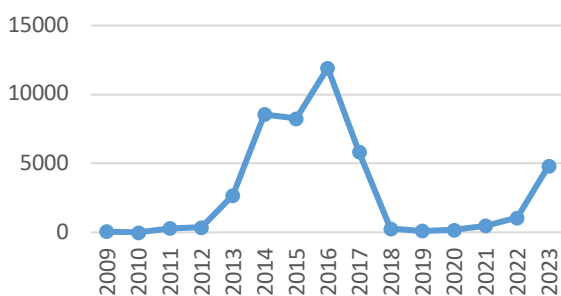
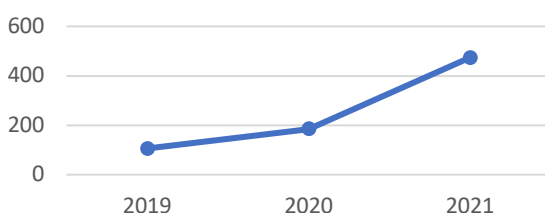


Fig. 3 irregular border crossings from the Gambia across the Central Mediterranean Route before and after COVID-19. Source: Elaboration from FRONTEX



<sup>97</sup> <https://www.iom.int/news/alternatives-irregular-migration-iom-launches-vocational-training-programme-gambians#:~:text=Banjul%20%E2%80%93%20The%20I>

Irregular migration from the Gambia is generally known among locals as the **'back way' phenomenon**, meaning that they are ready to take illegal routes or travel without documents (Strand Jagne 2014). While the sea **route** to the Canary Islands has been crowded since the early 2000s, increased surveillance on the waters off the coasts of Senegal and Spain has pushed more people to take alternative routes through the desert to Libya and then cross the sea to Italy (Conrad Suso 2019). **The root causes** of the 'back way' phenomenon are varied. Economic problems and political challenges are significant factors.

In terms of economy, the Gambia remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with many people unable to meet their basic needs for food and with unemployment rates exceeding half the population, especially among youth (Conrad Suso 2019). People below the age of 25 represent over 60% of the population (IOM 2017) and according to the 2018 Gambia Labour Force Survey, 95 per cent of Gambian irregular migrants surveyed cited 'lack of work' as their primary reason for migrating.<sup>97</sup> This is further compounded by pressure to migrate from friends, relatives, and society at large to go away and send money back home (Conrad Suso 2019; Strand Jagne 2014). Indeed, migration is considered key to remittances that account for almost 20 per cent of the

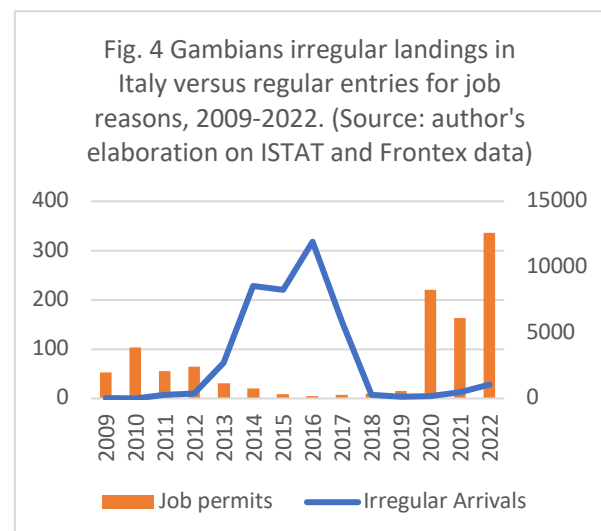
ack%20of%20access,their%20primary%20reason%20fo  
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country's GDP (IOM 2017). Environmental factors, including the country's vulnerability to climate change and declining precipitation, amplify existing economic difficulties, impacting the rain-fed agricultural system, affecting food security and households' sources of revenues. These issues add a further layer of complexity, likely to increasingly influence people's movements from the Gambia (IOM 2017).

Political factors are also relevant. The country's dictatorship under former President Jammeh until 2016, followed by instability before the installation of a new democratically elected government, contributed to significant migratory waves until 2017. Under Jammeh, the state security forces carried out forced disappearances, torture and arbitrary arrests which led to high levels of irregular migration of Gambians and cases of mass displacement when Jammeh lost the election and refused to relinquish power to the newly elected President Adama Barrow (Bintou Sallah 2017). While the country's political situation has now stabilized, contributing to the downward trends in arrivals in recent years, it still grapples with structural economic problems, bankruptcy, and corruption.

Finally, whereas the waves of irregular migration from the country are rooted in a combination of factors, the inability to secure a visa to travel or

work in Europe or most Western countries is also considered a key reason shaping Gambians' motives to move (Conrad Suso 2019). Interestingly, looking at the data for Italy, a comparison between regular entries of Gambians for seasonal and non-seasonal employment, on the one hand, and irregular sea arrivals, on the other, reveals a notable inverse relationship: as opportunities for lawful entry diminish, the rate of irregular entries surges (Fig.4).



The Gambia is also considered a **transit country**, due to its peculiar geographic location within the Senegalese's territory.<sup>98</sup> According to the IOM, many departures to the Canary Islands or Mauritania are prepared from the Gambia, which has increasingly become an important location of embarkation for Guinean and Senegalese migrants as well. While it plays a significant transit role for

<sup>98</sup> <https://migrants-refugees.va/it/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/09/2022-CP-The-Gambia-EN.pdf>

the Western Mediterranean route, its role for Italy or the Central Mediterranean route is less clear and appears to be less relevant (IOM 2022).

In terms of **asylum**, in line with irregular arrivals and the country's political developments as outlined above, applications from Gambian asylum seekers to Italy increased between 2014 and 2018, with a yearly average of almost 9,000 asylum applications between 2016 and 2017 (Fig. 5), until the country's political situation stabilized after the departure of President Jammeh. Residence permits for asylum request, asylum or humanitarian reasons for Gambian citizens followed the same trend (Fig.6), representing the most significant residence permit if compared to other types (work, family reunification or study reasons) (Fig.7).

Fig. 5 The Gambia- Asylum applications to Italy (2008-2023). Source: Author's elaboration from EUROSTAT

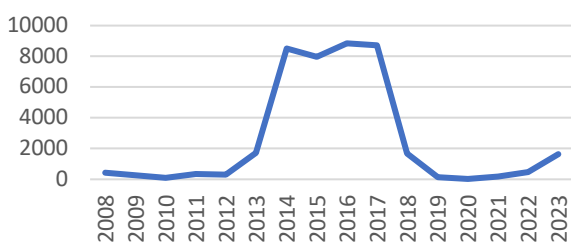


Fig. 6 Gambians- Permits for Asylum, Asylum request, humanitarian reasons (2007-2022). Source: Author's own elaboration from ISTAT

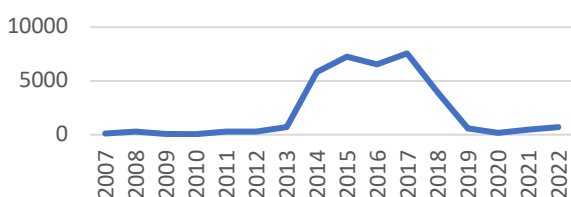
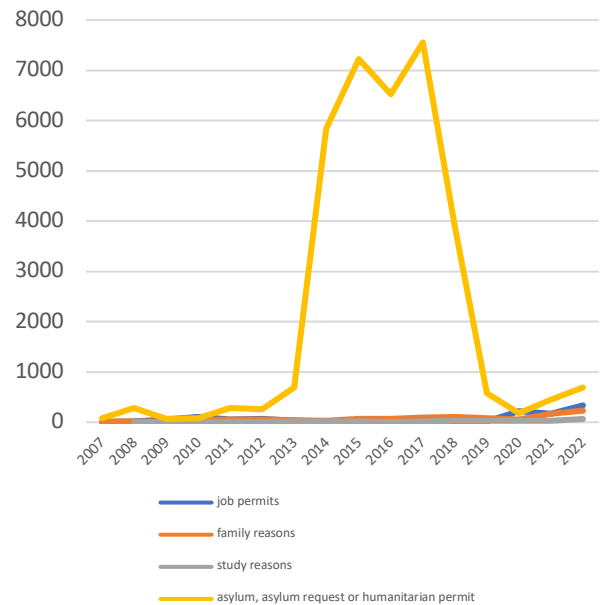
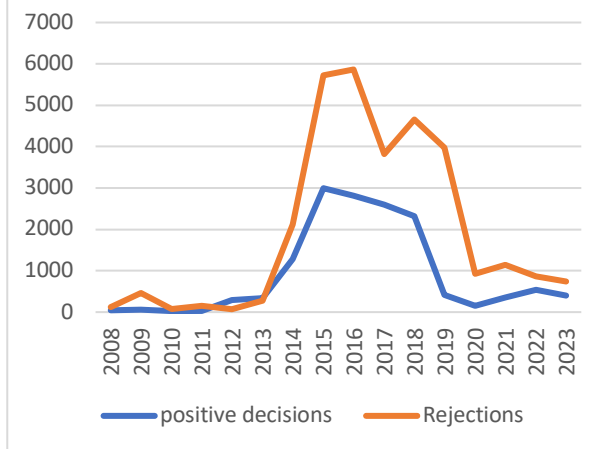


Fig. 7 Gambians- Asylum residence permits compared to other kind of permits (2007-2022). Source: Author's elaboration from ISTAT



In terms of **asylum decisions**, rejection is the most common outcome for asylum applications of Gambian asylum-seekers to Italy between 2008-2023 (Fig.8). Positive decisions increased between 2014-2018, due to the country's political situation in terms of human rights violations and the transition to the new government. Moreover, with the Decree of 17 March 2023, the Gambia is now considered a safe country i.e., a place where there is apparently no persecution, torture, or degrading treatment, and whose asylum applications can therefore be rejected as being manifestly unfounded.

Fig. 8. The Gambia. Outcome of asylum applications to Italy. Source: author's elaboration from EUROSTAT



## Italy-the Gambia cooperation on migration

### *Bilateral political cooperation*

Political and economic relations between Italy and the Gambia have not been particularly intense in the past, as demonstrated by the lack of significant agreements in the field of international cooperation between the two parties. Cooperation has intensified in recent years, with migration issues serving as a key driver of this renewed collaboration.

In terms of **fight against irregular migration and border control**, in 2010 an **Agreement for**

**Strengthening Police Cooperation in the fight against Migrant Trafficking and Irregular Migration** was signed following similar pilot projects launched with other countries such as Nigeria (2009) and Niger (2010). The goal of the agreement was to provide resources and technologies aimed at strengthening the Gambian police forces in combating irregular migration, including training courses, provision of vehicles equipped for border patrol and devices for the identification of fraudulent documents.<sup>99</sup> The agreement was renewed in 2012 for other two years.<sup>100</sup>

Building upon the 2010 Agreement, in 2015, a **Memorandum of Understanding**<sup>101</sup> was signed to renew police cooperation between the two countries, including return cooperation in terms of swift identificatory mechanisms of migrants in the context of return procedures.<sup>102</sup> A **new Memorandum** was signed in this regard in 2020.

The dimension of **fight against irregular migration and border control** is inextricably linked to **readmission and return**. The rate of Gambians being returned after being issued an expulsion order from Italy has always been very low (Fig. 9).

<sup>99</sup> <https://www2.immigrazione.regione.toscana.it/?q=norma&doc=/db/nir/DbPaesi/accordi/accordo-08-02-2010.xml&datafine=20190420&css=3>

<sup>100</sup> <https://www.migrationtreaties.unto.it/gambia/memorandum-d-intesa-sul-rafforzamento-della-cooperazione-nel-settore-della-gestione-delle-frontiere-e-della-sicurezza-tra-italia-e->

[gambia.html#:~:text=La%20Repubblica%20del%20Gambia%20%C3%A8,sessioni%20parlamentari%20\(stenografie%20parlamentari\).](https://www2.immigrazione.regione.toscana.it/?q=norma&doc=/db/nir/DbPaesi/accordi/accordo-08-02-2010.xml&datafine=20190420&css=3)

<sup>101</sup> [https://www.poliziadistato.it/statics/16/decreto-approvazione-memorandum-d-intesa-gambia\\_firmato.pdf](https://www.poliziadistato.it/statics/16/decreto-approvazione-memorandum-d-intesa-gambia_firmato.pdf)

<sup>102</sup> Note 7

Fig. 9 The Gambia- Irregular Migrants ordered to leave vs. irregular migrants returning after an order to leave. Source: EUROSTAT



This issue is not unique to Italy. According to the European Commission,<sup>103</sup> the return of irregular migrants to The Gambia from EU Member States has been particularly problematic, hindered by the lack of response from Gambian authorities to identification requests from Member States, slow and ineffective identification practices, and the refusal to conduct identification interviews.

In this context, the already mentioned **2015 Memorandum, as updated in 2020**, allegedly provided a framework to improve police cooperation on repatriation procedures. Cooperation was further enhanced in this regard in **2024**, with a new '**Memorandum to Manage Migration and Borders**'. The core of the

memorandum is allegedly the increase in repatriations of 'irregular' citizens.<sup>104</sup>

**Bilateral political dialogue on migration** has recently been at the center of a high-level meeting between the Gambian Interior Minister and his Italian counterpart, Matteo Piantedosi, last January 2024, on the sidelines of the so-called Italy-Africa summit, to 'continue collaboration on combating irregular immigration and cooperation on assisted voluntary returns'.<sup>105</sup>

Finally, in terms of **legal mobility**, in 2010, exactly when the first operative agreement for police cooperation in the fight against migration was signed, the Gambia was offered preferential treatment for the first time in terms of **annual entry quotas** for non-seasonal employment in Italy, being included among the countries listed in the so-called 'Decreto Flusso'.

### ***Bilateral Development Cooperation***

While Italian development cooperation has been active in the country since the early 2000s, The Gambia is not a priority country. Most funds target food security and rural development. However, since 2017, migration has become a focus of cooperation, with funds supporting various initiatives including law enforcement training

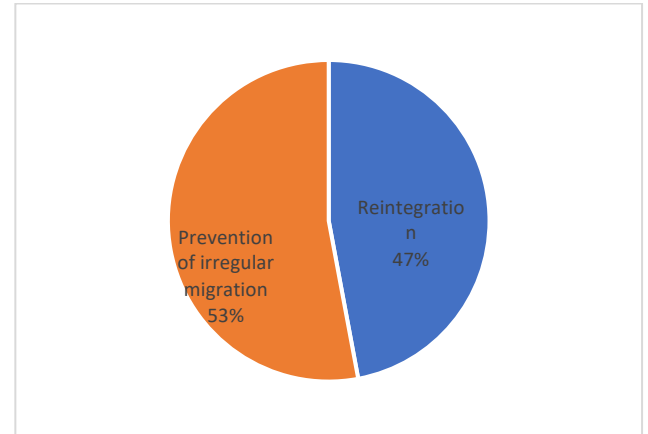
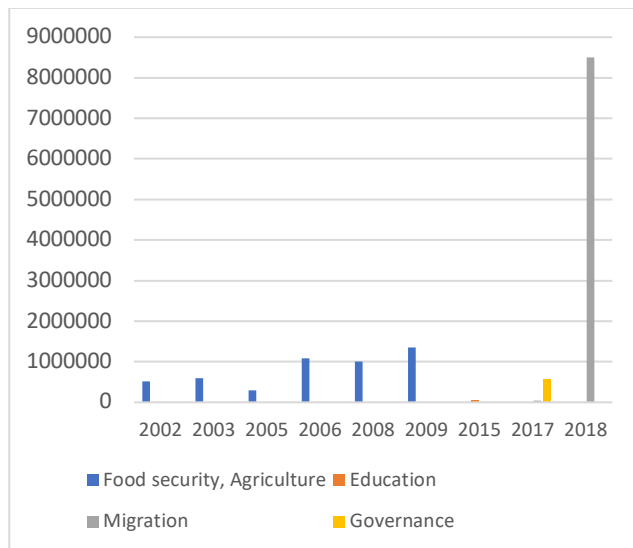
<sup>103</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A52022PC0632>

<sup>104</sup> <https://altreconomia.it/litalia-sigla-un-nuovo-accordo-con-il-gambia-sullimmigrazione-al-centro-il-tema-dei-rimpatri/>

<sup>105</sup> <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/piantedosi-ha-incontrato-vice-presidente-e-ministro-dellinterno-gambia-e-seguire-ministro-dellinterno-e-sicurezza-ivoriano>

courses for the Gambian police (€49,068), assistance to vulnerable migrants (€2,000,000), reintegration of minors (€2,000,000), and the implementation of awareness campaigns on the risks of irregular migration within the context of regional projects (€2,000,000) (Fig. 10).

*Fig. 10 Italian Development cooperation to the Gambia, main priority areas and funds allocated to migration (2000-2022). Source: Author's elaboration from AICS Reports, various years.*



### EU-the Gambia cooperation as an additional framework for DEPMI

The cooperation between the European Union (EU) and the Gambia is structured around several key pillars, including promoting good governance, green economy for sustainable growth and jobs, and development.<sup>106</sup> Under the rule of President Jammeh, bilateral dialogue was challenging, and in November 2014, the Gambian government unilaterally ended dialogue with the EU.<sup>107</sup> However, with the inauguration of the new Gambian president, the EU quickly finalized arrangements regarding the inclusion of the Gambia in the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa to address the root causes of irregular migration.<sup>108</sup> In 2017, the country was also included in the 'EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration' financed by the EUTF and co-funded by Italy (€ 22 million) among other member states, to support return, reintegration and awareness

<sup>106</sup> [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/countries/gambia\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/countries/gambia_en)

<sup>107</sup> <https://www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Working-Paper-12-The-Gambia.pdf>

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

raising campaigns.<sup>109</sup> In a bid to improve cooperation on return, the EU and the Gambia concluded a 'Good Practice Agreement on Preferable Conditions of Forced Return'<sup>110</sup> in **2018**. This **informal return arrangement** was designed to facilitate the swift return of irregular citizens. However, the implementation of the agreement has been difficult. For most of 2019 and 2020, and between March 2021 and March 2022, The Gambia unilaterally suspended the repatriation of irregular Gambian migrants from EU Member States via charter flights. Although the country lifted the unilateral moratorium on charter flights in March 2022, cooperation in repatriation operations remains problematic, with ongoing delays and slow procedures.<sup>111</sup> As a consequence, in November 2022, the European Commission has proposed to temporarily suspend the application of certain provisions of the visa code for Gambian citizens.

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<sup>109</sup> <https://www.migrationjointinitiative.org/countries/sahel-and-lake-chad/gambia>

<sup>110</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents-publications/public-register/public-register-search/?AllLanguagesSearch=False&OnlyPublicDocuments=F>

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<sup>111</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A52022PC0632>

### Overview of Italy's DEPMI in the Gambia

	Italy-the Gambia (2000-2023)		EU-the Gambia broader cooperation framework
	Political Cooperation	Development Cooperation	
Return & Readmission	Memorandum of Understanding (2015, 2020)	Two programs to support vulnerable migrants and the reintegration of minors	Informal Readmission Arrangement 'Good Practice Agreement on Preferable Conditions of Forced Return' (2018)
	Memorandum to manage migration and borders (2024)		
Border Control and Fight against irregular migration	Agreement for Strengthening Police Cooperation in the fight against Migrant Trafficking and Irregular Migration (2010) Renewal in 2012		
	Memorandum of Understanding (2015) Renewal in 2017		
	Memorandum to manage migration and borders (2024)		
Fight against human smuggling and trafficking	All agreements above		
Fight against Root Causes			
Resettlement, Asylum and International Protection	\		
Legal Mobility	Quotas (2010)		
Visa	\		Suspension of certain provisions of the visa code
Political Dialogue	Migration as a key issue of high-level political dialogue (2024)		

## DEPMI COUNTRY PROFILE

### Ghana



### Matilde Rosina

#### Migration outlook: Relevance of flows to Italy and main data

Relevance as a country of origin	High until 2017
Relevance as a country of transit	Medium-high
Safe country of origin list <sup>112</sup>	Yes
Schengen Visa Exemption <sup>113</sup>	No

Ghana is a country of origin, transit, and destination for migration.<sup>114</sup>

Starting with **legal migration**, the Ghanaian diaspora in Italy comprises over 50,000 individuals, primarily concentrated in the Northern regions of the country (Italian Embassy in Accra, n.d.). As of 2014, Italy stood as one of the top-three European countries by number of Ghanaian legal residents, alongside the United Kingdom and Germany.<sup>115</sup>

Notably, remittances from Italy constituted the fourth largest source of remittances to Ghana, totalling \$151million in 2017 (Italian Embassy in Accra, n.d.).

Work permits for Ghanaian citizens reached their peak between 2007 and 2011, with a high of 5,708 permits issued in 2010 (Fig. 1). However, they have since sharply declined, falling to fewer than 30 per year between 2017 and 2019. Entries for family reunification have shown more stability, averaging 1,213 per year from 2007 to 2022. In contrast, entries for study purposes have remained rather low, with an average of only 73 per year over the same period. In total, approximately 1,000 Ghanaian students are enrolled in Italian universities, many of whom on scholarships (Italian Embassy in Accra, n.d.).

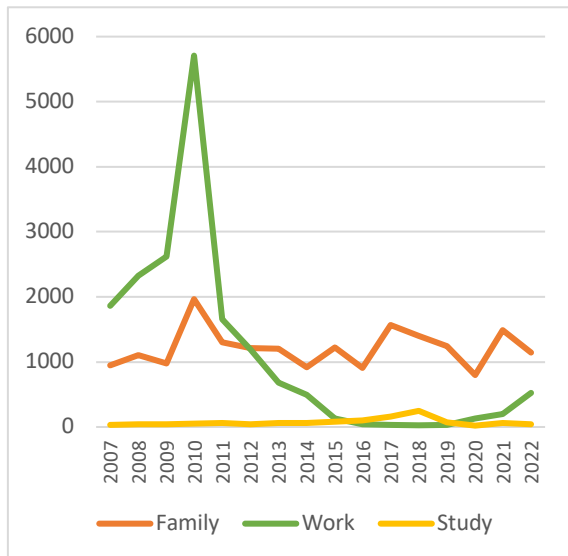
<sup>112</sup> Decreto 4 ottobre 2019, Art 1, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2019/10/07/19A06239/sg>.

<sup>113</sup> Regulation 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02018R1806-20210101>.

<sup>114</sup> [https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries/sahel-lake-chad/ghana\\_en](https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries/sahel-lake-chad/ghana_en), <https://www.icmpd.org/our-work/projects/strengthening-border-and-migration-management-in-ghana-smmig>

<sup>115</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/5249\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/5249_en)

Figure 1 Ghanaian regular entries in Italy by reason, 2007-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on ISTAT data)



**Irregular migration** flows have exhibited substantial fluctuations over the years. Notable peaks in irregular landings via the Central Mediterranean route occurred in 2011 and 2016, with 2,615 and 5,629 arrivals, respectively (Fig. 2). However, since 2017, there has been a significant drop in landings, with an average of 305 entries per year from 2018 to 2023. Importantly, this decline predates the onset of the **Covid-19 pandemic**, indicating it is largely un-related to the latter (Fig. 3).

Of particular interest is the **inverse relationship between regular and irregular** flows (Fig. 4): During periods of high regular labour migration, such as in 2010, irregular arrivals were low. Conversely, following the substantial decline in the issuance of work permits, notably between 2012 and 2017, irregular landings surged.

Figure 2 Ghanaian irregular arrivals to Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route, 2009-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on Frontex data)

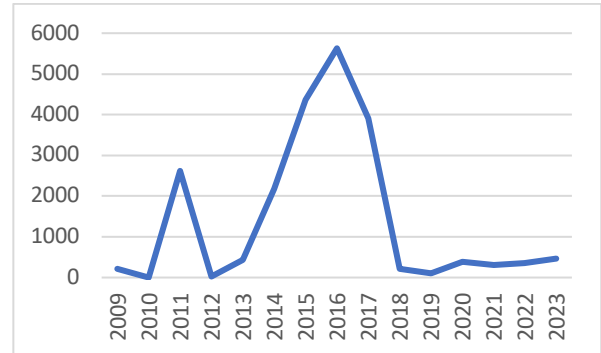


Figure 3 Ghanaian irregular arrivals to Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route – focus on Covid years, 2017-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on Frontex data)

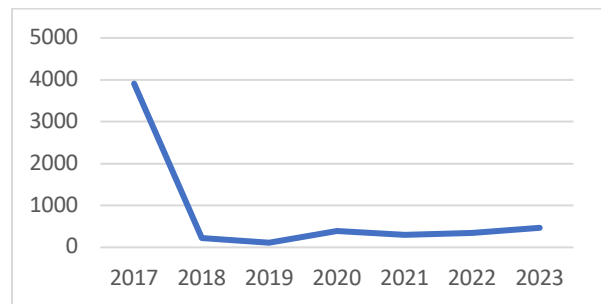
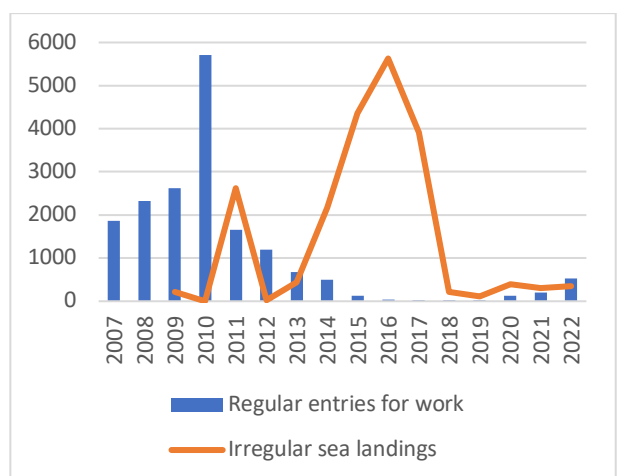


Figure 4 Ghanaian irregular landings in Italy versus regular entries with work permit, 2007-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on ISTAT and Frontex data)



The patterns in **asylum applications** from Ghanaian citizens mirror the trends observed in irregular landings (Fig. 5). Specifically, notable peaks in first-time asylum applications can be observed in 2011 and 2017, with 3,650 and 4,990 applications, respectively. Between 2008 and 2023, 38% of asylum applications were approved (Fig. 6). Importantly, while positive decisions reached their peak in 2012, they have dropped since then. In the period between 2014 and 2018, humanitarian permits were higher than those for issued for work, study, or family reunification purposes (Fig. 7).

Figure 5 Ghanaian asylum applications in Italy (1st time applicants), 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)

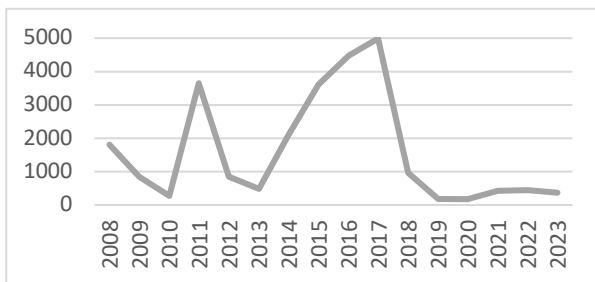
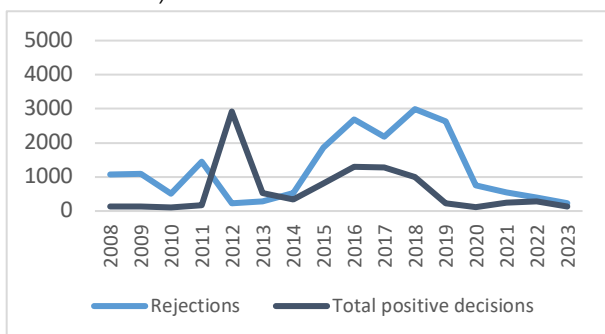
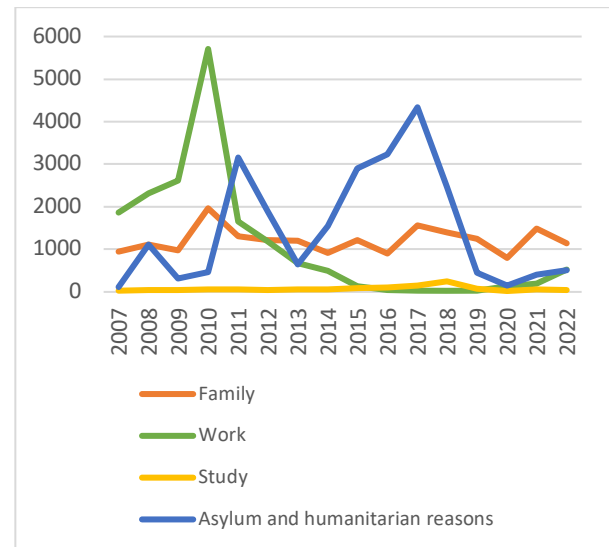


Figure 6 Outcome of Ghanaian asylum applications in Italy, 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)



<sup>116</sup>[https://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/sezioni/sala\\_stampa/notizie/immigrazione/notizia\\_16291.html](https://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/sezioni/sala_stampa/notizie/immigrazione/notizia_16291.html)

Figure 7 Ghanaian entries in Italy by reason, 2007-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on ISTAT data)



## Italy-Ghana cooperation on migration

### Bilateral political cooperation

Italy's migration cooperation with Ghana is limited, and mainly centred on political dialogue and technical agreements.

In 2000, the two countries started negotiations for a readmission agreement.<sup>116</sup> While a formal agreement was never signed, a **technical one** was concluded in 2010, to enhance police cooperation in the fight against migration, trafficking, and terrorism. The agreement foresaw an exchange of experiences and best practices, as well as **possible cooperation on the return** of irregular Ghanaian citizens.<sup>117</sup> The agreement expired in 2012, and it

<sup>117</sup><https://www2.immigrazione.regione.toscana.it/?q=norma&doc=/db/nir/DbPaesi/accordi/accordo-08-02-2010.xml&datafine=20190420&css=3>

is unclear whether it was renewed.<sup>118</sup> According to a former senior director of the Italian Police, Ghanaian ministers have repeatedly stated that they do not intend to sign a formal return agreement with Italy (Innocenti, n.d.). As a matter of fact, **returns to Ghana are extremely low**, with only 7% of the Ghanaians who were ordered to leave Italy between 2008 and 2022, being effectively returned (Fig. 8).

*Figure 8 Ghanaian nationals ordered to leave and returned by Italy, 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)*



Beyond the above, most cooperation has proceeded through **political dialogue**. In 2013, for instance, the Italian and Ghanaian ministers of foreign affairs met, discussing a defence agreement, and the possibility to renew the above-mentioned technical agreement on police

cooperation. Likewise in 2021, the Italian ambassador to Ghana met the local minister of the interior, discussing topics including investments into Ghana, security, training, the treatment of migrants in Italy, and further cooperation efforts. Finally, in April 2024, a Ghana-Italy partnership for **youth skills training** was launched. On that occasion, Italian President Mattarella visited Ghana to inaugurate the Confindustria-sponsored training academy, which will train 250 young Ghanaian citizens, who will ultimately be able to choose whether to remain in the country or go to Italy.<sup>119</sup>

Since 2007, Italy has established **reserved quotas** for Ghanaian citizens (see, for instance, Decreto Flussi 2007, 2010, 2015, 2023). Ghana was also inserted in the list of safe countries for return, in 2019.<sup>120</sup>

### *Bilateral development cooperation*

In the last two decades, Italian development cooperation funds in Ghana have targeted a range of aspects, with the largest proportions of funds between 2000 and 2023 being spent on **agriculture (51%)** and the **private sector (34%)**.

<sup>118</sup>[https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2013/11/20131113\\_ghanincbontett/](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2013/11/20131113_ghanincbontett/)

<sup>119</sup><https://gna.org.gh/2024/04/ghana-italy-partnership-for-youth-skills-training-launched/#:~:text=The%20project%2C%20a%20collaboration%20between,forklift%20truck%20operation%2C%20among%20others,https://www.pordenonetoday.it/economia/mattarella-progetto-ghana-confindustria.html>

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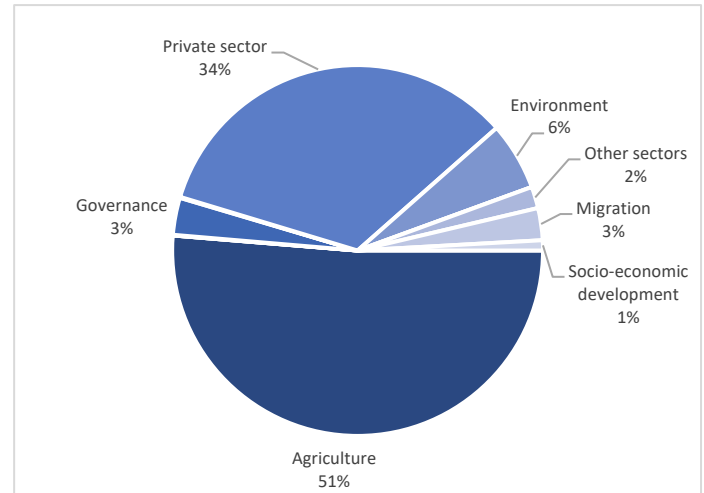
<sup>120</sup>

<https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/10/04/news/migranti-237669696/>

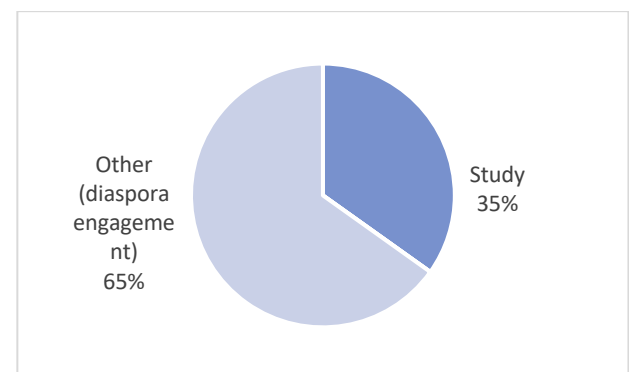
Investments have also been made in aspects related to the environment (6%), governance (3%), and **migration (3%)** (Fig. 9). Some of the largest projects targeted rural and agricultural finance, cassava production, and the development of the Ghanaian private sector.<sup>121</sup>

Between 2000 and 2023, among a total of 36 development cooperation initiatives, 11 were dedicated to **migration**-related issues, amounting to a combined investment of €2.6m (Fig. 10). These projects were focused on two key areas: supporting the **Ghanian diaspora** (with 2 projects totalling €1.7m)<sup>122</sup> and providing **scholarships** for Ghanaian students (with 9 projects totalling €900,000).<sup>123</sup> To support the diaspora, the ‘**Migration for Development in Africa, MIDA**’ project was launched in the early 2000s (MAECI 2003: 163). Implemented by the IOM, the project went on to harness the potential of the diaspora to contribute to the development of their communities of origin (MAECI 2006: 110).

*Fig. 9 Allocation of Italian development cooperation funds in Ghana, 2000-2023 (Source: Author’s elaboration based on MAECI 2000-2019 and AICS 2024)*



*Fig. 10 Allocation of migration-related funds in Ghana, 2000-2023 (Source: Author’s elaboration based on MAECI 2000-2019 and AICS 2024)*



<sup>121</sup> Respectively: ‘Rural and agricultural finance’, €42m, 2013-2016; ‘NEPAD Regional cassava processing and marketing initiative - RCPMI’, €2.5m, 2012; ‘Ghana private sector development fund’ Phase I & II, for a total of €31m, 2003-2014.

<sup>122</sup> ‘MIDA Migration for development in Africa’ projects, €1.1m and €600,000, 2003-2008.

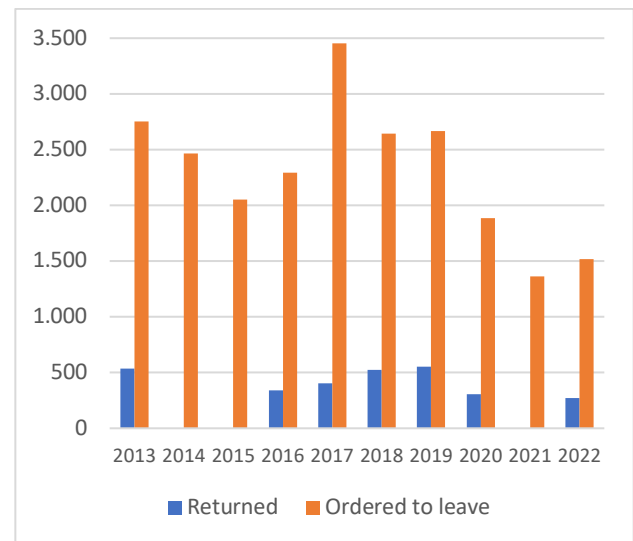
<sup>123</sup> Various scholarships, including from the Universities of Pisa, Brescia, Marche, Aquila.

## EU-Ghana cooperation as an additional framework for DEPMI

Ghana has no formal return agreement with the EU, nor a visa facilitation agreement. A **Joint Declaration on Ghana-EU Cooperation on Migration** was signed in 2016, foreseeing, among other things, greater cooperation on return matters.<sup>124</sup> However, while returns increased in 2018 and 2019, they have dropped since 2020. In 2022, 18% of all Ghanaian citizens ordered to leave were effectively returned by EU member states (Fig. 11). According to policy analyst Mouthaan (2019), EU-Ghana cooperation is stalling on readmission cooperation and the issue of few visas issued to Ghanaians.

Ghana is receiver of the **EU Trust Fund for Africa**.<sup>125</sup> It is also part of the **Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community (AFIC)**, together with another seven African countries. Established in 2010, AFIC aims to promote exchanges on smuggling and border-security between African countries and the EU. A key aspect of this collaboration is the establishment of risk analysis cells (including one in Ghana), staffed by local analysts trained by Frontex.<sup>126</sup>

Figure 11 Ghanaian nationals ordered to leave and returned by EU27, 2013-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)



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- Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo. See: <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/eight-afic-risk-analysis-cells-set-a-benchmark-in-africa-uwXHJU>

<sup>124</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/5249\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/5249_en)

<sup>125</sup> [https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries/sahel-lake-chad/ghana\\_en](https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries/sahel-lake-chad/ghana_en)

<sup>126</sup> Presently, there are eight such cells operational in Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Mauritania, Niger,

[know/migratory-map/](https://know/migratory-map/), last accessed 18<sup>th</sup>  
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irregolari-e-linadeguata-azione-antidroga/](https://www.sipad.network/il-ghana-lindisponibilita-ai-rimpatri-di-suoi-cittadini-irregolari-e-linadeguata-azione-antidroga/)

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<http://dati.istat.it>, last accessed 12<sup>th</sup>  
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Mouthaan, M. Unpacking domestic preferences in  
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019-0141-7](https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-019-0141-7)

### Overview of Italy's DEPMI in Ghana

	Italy-Ghana (2000-2022)		EU-Ghana
	Political Cooperation	Development Cooperation	
Return & Readmission	/	/	Joint Declaration on Ghana-EU Cooperation on Migration (2016)
Border Control and Fight against irregular migration	Police agreement (2010-2012), including a clause to facilitate returns	/	Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community
Fight against human smuggling and trafficking	As above	/	/
Fight against Root Causes	/	/	Receiver of EU Trust Fund for Africa
Resettlement, Asylum and International Protection	/	/	/
Legal Mobility	Quotas (2007)	Scholarships	/
Visa	/	/	/
Political Dialogue	Meetings in 2013, 2021, 2024	/	Joint Declaration on Ghana-EU Cooperation on Migration (2016)

## DEPMI COUNTRY PROFILE

### Guinea



Iole Fontana and Matilde Rosina

#### Migration outlook: Relevance of flows to Italy and main data

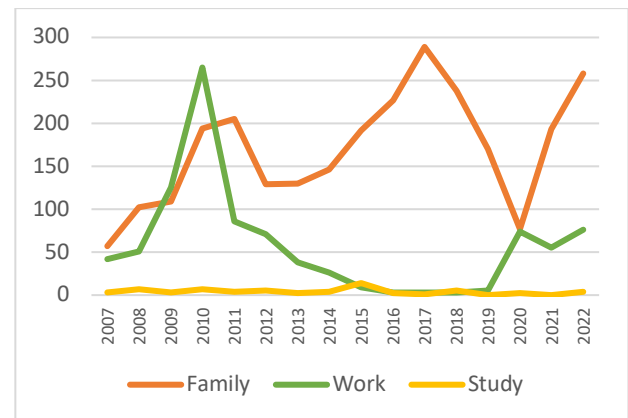
Relevance as a country of origin	High since 2015
Relevance as a country of transit	Low
Safe country of origin list <sup>127</sup>	No
Schengen Visa Exemption <sup>128</sup>	No

While regular migration from Guinea to Italy is limited, irregular flows have been more substantial.

**Regular migration** from Guinea to Italy is rather low, and mainly occurring through family reunification, peaking in 2017 with 289 permits (Fig. 1). In contrast, work permits have sharply declined since the early 2010s, from 265 in 2010 to 3 in 2018. Study permits have also been minimal,

consistently remaining below 15 per year. Only over 11,000 individuals resided in Italy in 2023.<sup>129</sup>

Figure 1 Guinean regular entries in Italy by reason, 2007-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on ISTAT data)



In contrast, **irregular migration** has been more significant, particularly since 2015 (Fig. 2). Averaging 380 landings per year from 2009 to 2014, the numbers then surged, peaking at 13,550 in 2016. After a low point in 2018-2020, irregular arrivals have increased again, reaching 18,620 in 2023. Although the **Covid-19 pandemic** years saw a low number of arrivals, this decline preceded the pandemic, indicating that the fluctuation is not necessarily related to the virus (Fig. 3).

<sup>127</sup> Decreto 4 ottobre 2019, Art 1, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2019/10/07/19A06239/sg>.

<sup>128</sup> Regulation 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018, [https://eur-](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02018R1806-20210101)

[lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02018R1806-20210101](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02018R1806-20210101).

<sup>129</sup> According to INSTAT data on foreign residents

Figure 2 Guinean irregular arrivals to Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route, 2009-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on Frontex data)

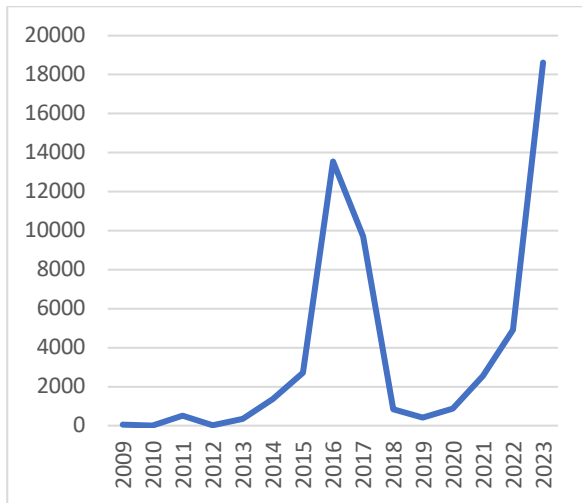
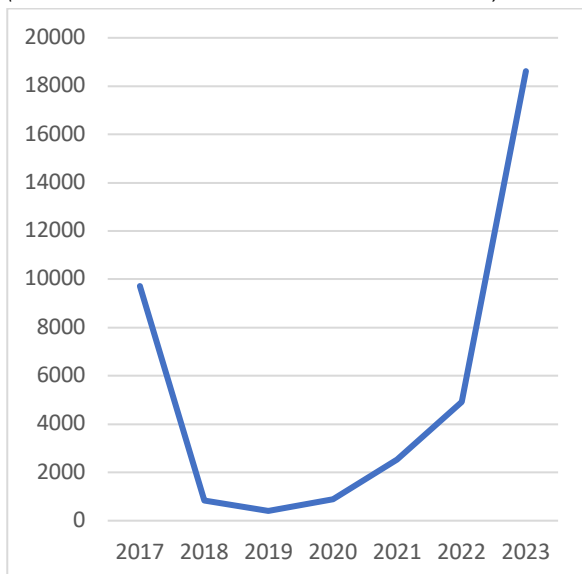


Figure 3 Guinean irregular arrivals to Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route – focus on Covid years, 2017-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on Frontex data)



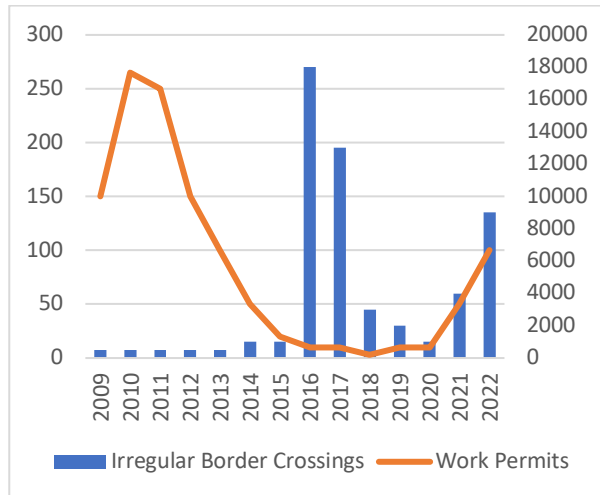
the lack of economic opportunities and the pursuit of better living standards, including a higher social status, are among the key factors driving young Guineans to migrate (IOM 2019). Additionally, the political situation in Guinea has been particularly unstable in recent years, culminating in a military coup in September 2021 that overthrew President Alpha Condé. This coup followed months of political unrest and mass protests against Condé's controversial third term, which was seen as a violation of the constitution. The military junta, which seized power in the coup, dissolved the government in February 2024, inaugurating a new era of instability.<sup>130</sup>

While the significant rise in irregular border crossings to Italy in 2016 and 2023 can be attributed to factors such as political instability and economic crises in the country, the low issuance of work permits and the reduced availability of legal migration channels, combined with the high numbers of irregular crossings, suggest a potential correlation where limited legal migration opportunities may compel individuals to pursue irregular routes instead (Fig. 4). This pattern aligns with similar trends observed in other countries discussed in this report.

In terms of **root causes**, a recent study reveals that

<sup>130</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-68314158>

Fig. 4 Guinea. Irregular landings in Italy versus regular entries for job reasons, 2009-2022. (Source: author's elaboration on ISTAT and Frontex data).



Trends in **asylum applications** from Guinean nationals parallel those of irregular landings (Fig. 5). A notable peak in first-time asylum applications occurred in 2018, following the peak in irregular landings. In 2018, 7,795 individuals requested asylum. Overall, a quarter of asylum applications lodged between 2008 and 2023 were approved (25%) (Fig. 6). Permits for asylum regularly exceeded those for work, family reunification, or study, particularly between 2015 and 2018 (Fig. 7).

Figure 5 Guinean asylum applications in Italy (1st time applicants), 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on EUROSTA Data)

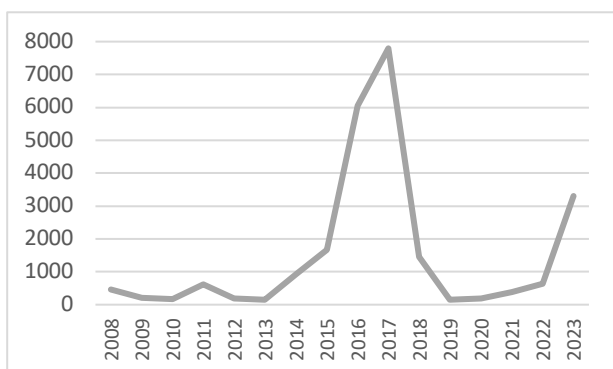


Figure 6 Outcome of Guinean asylum applications in Italy, 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)

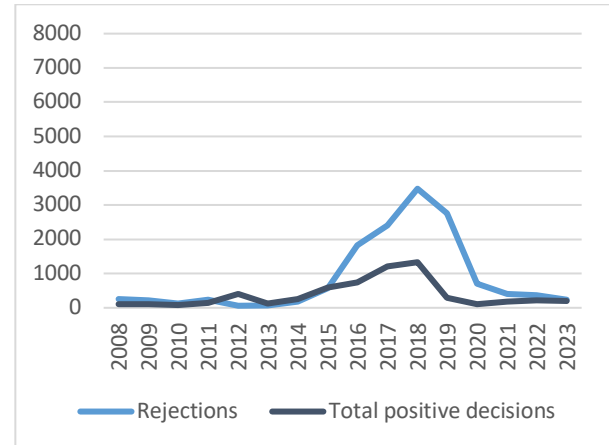
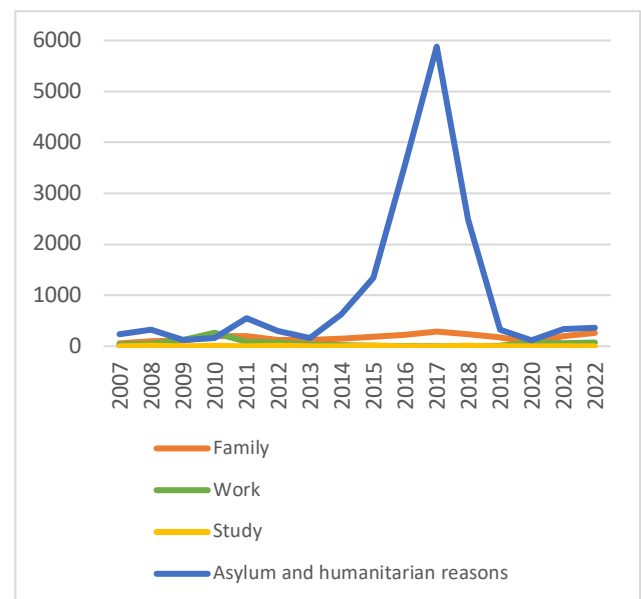


Figure 7 Guinean entries in Italy by reason, 2007-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on ISTAT data)



## Italy-Guinea cooperation on migration

### Bilateral political cooperation

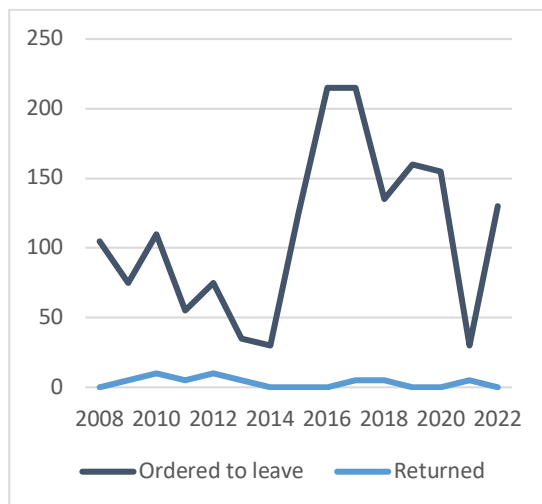
Political and economic relations between Italy and Guinea have not been particularly intense in the

past, as demonstrated by the lack of significant agreements in the field of international cooperation between the two parties. In this context of already limited bilateral relations, migration has not featured prominently as an area of cooperation or political dialogue, despite increasing irregular flows from the country.

There are no readmission agreements between Italy and Guinea, and readmission cooperation is mostly -even if unsuccessfully- managed at the EU level.

**Returns to Guinea from Italy are extremely low,** with a mere 3% of the Guineans who were ordered to leave Italy between 2008 and 2022, being effectively returned (Fig. 8).

*Figure 8 Guineans ordered to leave and returned by Italy, 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)*



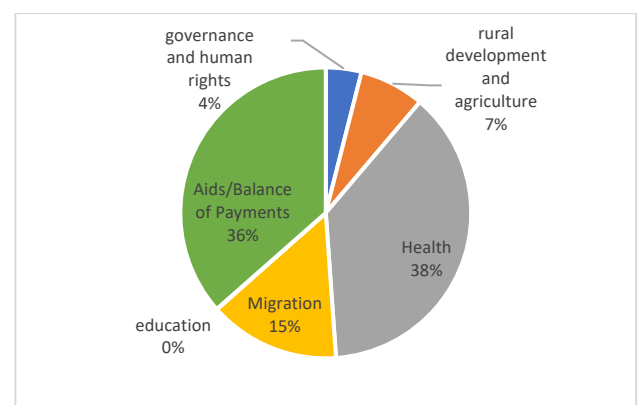
<sup>131</sup> <https://www.mur.gov.it/it/piano-mattei-ricerca-e-alta-formazione/i-principali-paesi-target-il-piano-mattei>

Finally, Guinea is not included among the priority countries for reserved quotas under the so-called Decreti Flusso, nor was it identified as one of the key target countries in the Piano Mattei, which was launched in 2023 by Giorgia Meloni's government.<sup>131</sup> Most of cooperation on migration is therefore left to development aids.

### ***Bilateral development cooperation***

Italian cooperation plays a minor role in Guinea, with funding directed towards regional multilateral programs or managed by international and local organizations.<sup>132</sup> According to AICS reports (various years), between early 2000s and 2019, most of Italian funds were allocated to support health (38%) and reduce the country's international debt (36%) (Fig 9).

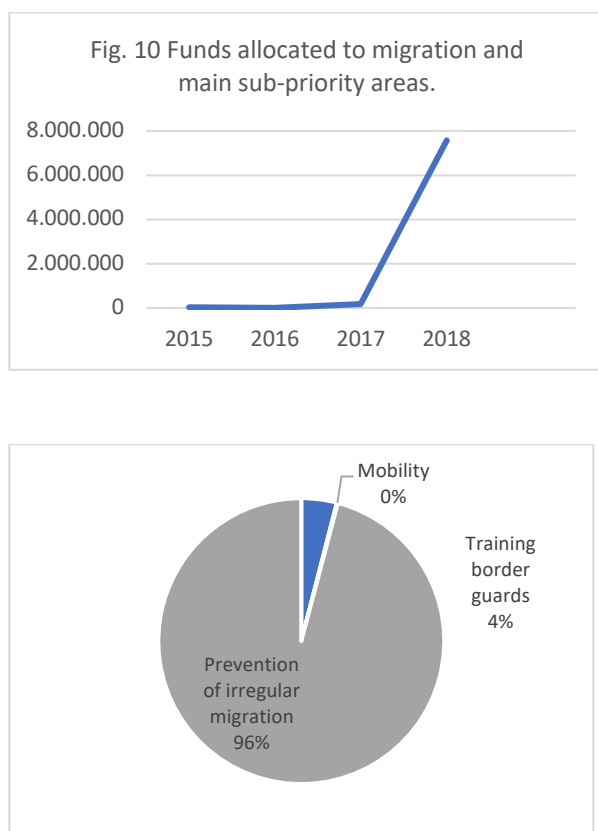
*Fig. 9 Italian Development Cooperation to Guinea, priority areas (2000-2022). Source: Elaboration from AICS Reports, various years.*



<sup>132</sup> <https://dakar.aics.gov.it/home/paesi/guinea-conakry/guinea-contesto/>

However, migration has increasingly become a focus of cooperation since 2015, with a peak in funds allocated to bilateral or multilateral programs recorded in 2018 and with most funds targeting the prevention of irregular migration, by addressing root causes and implementing awareness campaigns ( Fig.10).

Fig. 10 Funds allocated to migration in time and main priority areas. Source: Elaboration from AICS Reports.



### ***EU-Guinea cooperation as an additional framework for DEPMI***

EU-Guinea relations were governed until 2023 by the Cotonou Agreement, which was replaced in 2023 by the new Samoa Agreement<sup>133</sup>.

In 2017, Guinea became part of the EUTF after a high-level mission by four EU Member States. Three national programs were launched under the EUTF, to address vulnerability and the root causes of migration.<sup>134</sup> Following the high-level visit, a **non-binding readmission agreement** was concluded in July 2017.<sup>135</sup> Four meetings of the Joint Working Group have taken place since the adoption of the informal readmission arrangement, until the coup of September 2021.<sup>136</sup> Despite the readmission agreement, between 2016 and 2020, only 3% of Guineans who were ordered to leave were effectively returned by EU member states (Fig. 11).

<sup>133</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/guinea/european-union-and-guinea\\_en?s=356](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/guinea/european-union-and-guinea_en?s=356)

<sup>134</sup> [https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries/sahel-lake-chad/guinee\\_en](https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries/sahel-lake-chad/guinee_en)

<sup>135</sup> <https://www.statewatch.org/media/3155/eu-com-readmission-cooperation-overview-letter-to-libe-28-1-22.pdf>

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

Figure 11 Guineans ordered to leave and returned by EU27, 2013-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)



dal Ministro degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale) ('MAECI year').

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Frontex (2024), *Detections of irregular border crossings (updated monthly)*, <https://frontex.europa.eu/we-know/migratory-map/>, last accessed 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

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## Overview of Italy's DEPMI in Guinea

	Italy-Guinea (2000-2022)		EU-Guinea
	Political Cooperation	Development Cooperation	
Return & Readmission			Informal Readmission Arrangement (2017)
Border Control and Fight against irregular migration		Yes	
Fight against human smuggling and trafficking			
Fight against Root Causes			
Resettlement, Asylum and International Protection			
Legal Mobility			
Visa			
Political Dialogue			Joint Working Group

## DEPMI COUNTRY PROFILE

### Guinea-Bissau



**Matilde Rosina and Iole Fontana**

#### Migration outlook: Relevance of flows to Italy and main data

Relevance as a country of origin	Low
Relevance as a country of transit	Low
Safe country of origin list <sup>137</sup>	No
Schengen Visa Exemption <sup>138</sup>	No

Migration from Guinea-Bissau to Italy is limited.

Starting with **regular migration**, the number of Bissau-Guineans residing in Italy as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 was 2,348.<sup>139</sup> No data is available concerning yearly permits granted by Italy to citizens of the country, suggesting their limited significance.

**Irregular migration** flows have also been small (Fig. 1). Like other sub-Saharan countries, irregular landings of Bissau-Guinean citizens increased

between 2014 and 2017. However, even at their peak in 2016, the numbers were just 450. Due to the consistently low volume of such flows, the **pandemic** does not appear to have significantly influenced these migration patterns (Fig. 2).

Figure 1 Irregular arrivals from Guinea-Bissau to Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route, 2009-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on Frontex data)

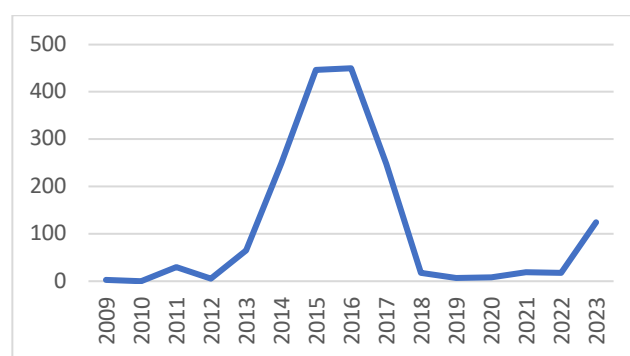
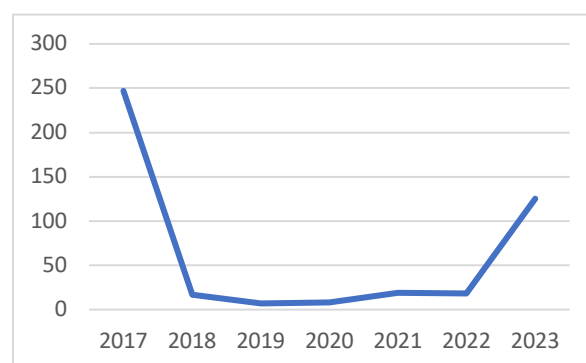


Figure 2 Irregular arrivals from Guinea-Bissau to Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route – focus on Covid years, 2017-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on Frontex data)



<sup>137</sup> Decreto 4 ottobre 2019, Art 1, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2019/10/07/19A06239/sg>.

<sup>138</sup> Regulation 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal->

[content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02018R1806-20210101](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02018R1806-20210101).

<sup>139</sup> ISTAT (2024), [http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCIS\\_POPS\\_TRCIT1#](http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCIS_POPS_TRCIT1#)

Asylum applications from Bissau-Guineans have been relatively higher than irregular landings, reflecting possible backlogs (Fig. 3). Overall, a third of asylum applications lodged between 2008 and 2023 from Bissau-Guinean nationals were accepted (33%) (Fig. 4).

Figure 3 Bissau-Guinean asylum applications in Italy (1st time applicants), 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)

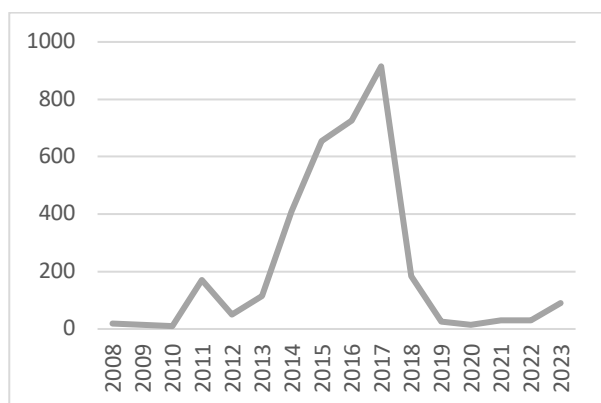
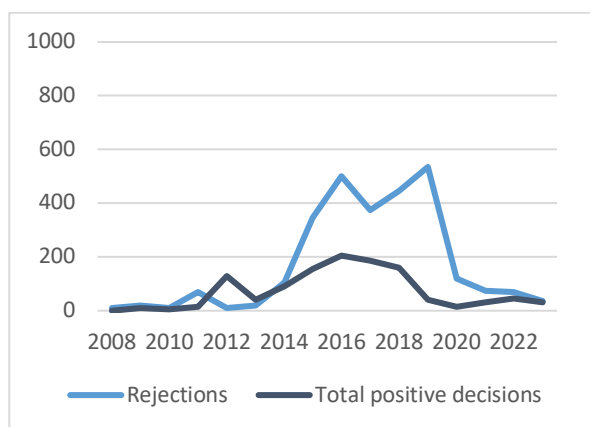


Figure 4 Outcome of Bissau-Guinean asylum applications in Italy, 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)

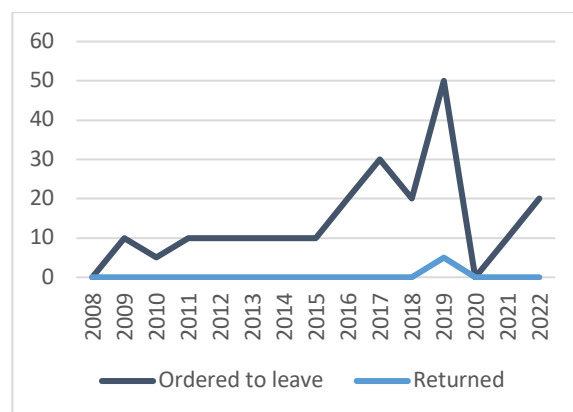


## Italy-Guinea Bissau cooperation on migration

### Bilateral political cooperation

Migration cooperation between Italy and Guinea-Bissau is virtually inexistent. No return agreement is foreseen, and Italy does not reserve quotas to nationals of the country (see, for instance, Decreto Flussi 2000, 2005, 2010, 2016, 2023). Indeed, **returns to Guinea Bissau are extremely low**, with a mere 2% of those who were ordered to leave Italy between 2008 and 2022 being effectively returned there (Fig. 5). Furthermore, no instances of political dialogue concerning migration were found, and Italy does not have an embassy in Guinea-Bissau, relying instead on the one in Senegal.<sup>140</sup> No technical or migration-specific agreements, and no military missions were found by the research team.

Figure 5 Guinea-Bissau nationals ordered to leave and returned by Italy, 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)



140

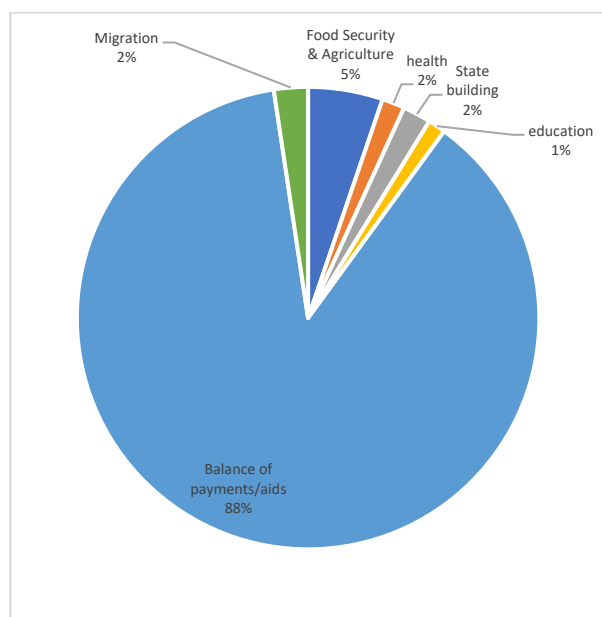
[http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/iv\\_rapporto\\_emn\\_italia\\_cover\\_2.pdf](http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/iv_rapporto_emn_italia_cover_2.pdf)

[t/sites/default/files/allegati/iv\\_rapporto\\_emn\\_italia\\_cover\\_2.pdf](http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/iv_rapporto_emn_italia_cover_2.pdf)

## Bilateral development cooperation

Italian development cooperation has been present in Guinea-Bissau since 2003. Since then, most funds have been allocated to support international debt relief, food security, and agriculture (Fig. 6). Migration became a focus of development cooperation in 2017 and 2018, with Guinea-Bissau being included in two regional programs aimed at reducing vulnerability, addressing the root causes of migration, and preventing irregular movements.

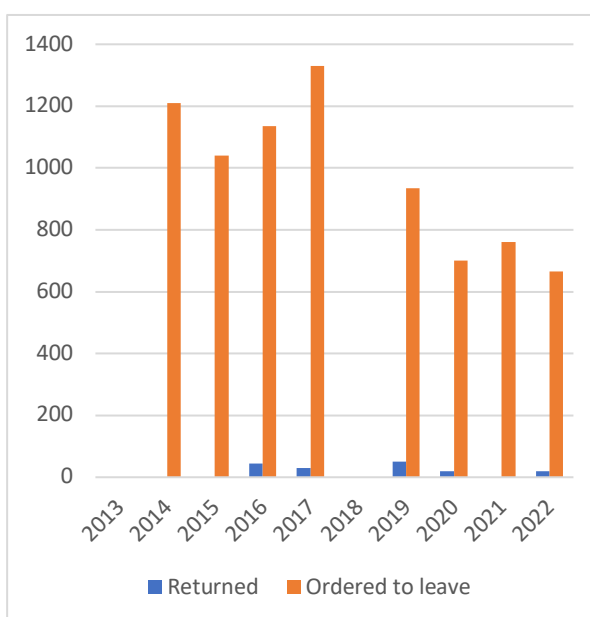
Fig.6 Italian Development cooperation to Guinea-Bissau (2000-2022). Source: Authors' elaboration from AICS Reports, various years.



## EU-Guinea Bissau cooperation as an additional framework for DEPMI

EU-Guinea Bissau migration cooperation is equally limited. Guinea Bissau was not a receiver of the EU Trust Fund for Africa,<sup>141</sup> and it has no formal return agreement with the EU, nor a visa facilitation agreement. Indeed, only 4% of Bissau-Guineans ordered to leave were effectively returned by EU member states between 2016 and 2020 (Fig. 7).

Figure 7 Guinea-Bissau nationals ordered to leave and returned by EU27, 2013-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)



<sup>141</sup> [https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries\\_en](https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries_en)

## Overview of Italy's DEPMI in Guinea Bissau

	Italy-Guinea Bissau (2000-2022)		EU-Guinea Bissau
	Political Cooperation	Development Cooperation	
Return & Readmission	/		/
Border Control and Fight against irregular migration	/		/
Fight against human smuggling and trafficking	/		/
Fight against Root Causes	/	Yes	/
Resettlement, Asylum and International Protection	/		/
Legal Mobility	/		/
Visa	/		/
Political Dialogue	/		/

## Sources

AICS (2024), OPENAID Database, <https://openaid.aics.gov.it/en/>, last accessed 18th March 2024.

EUROSTAT (2024), Immigration enforcement statistics (including migr\_eipre, migr\_eirtn, migr\_eiord, migr\_asydcfsta, migr\_asyappctza), last accessed 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

Frontex (2024), *Detections of irregular border crossings (updated monthly)*, <https://frontex.europa.eu/we-know/migratory-map/>, last accessed 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

ISTAT (2021), 'Ingressi nell'anno di cittadini non comunitari, per cittadinanza', <http://dati.istat.it>, last accessed 12th November 2021.

Italian Senate (2001-2019), *Yearly Reports on the Implementation of Italy's Development Cooperation* (Relazione sull'Attuazione della Politica di Cooperazione allo Sviluppo, presentata dal Ministro degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale) ('MAECI year').

## DEPMI COUNTRY PROFILE

### Ivory Coast



Iole Fontana

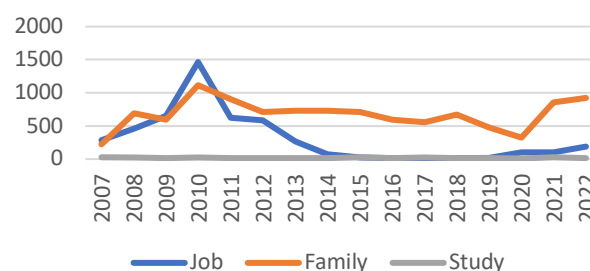
#### Migration Outlook: Relevance of flows to Italy and main data

Relevance as a country of origin	High between 2015-2017	Low between 2018-2021	Very high between 2022-2023
Relevance as a country of transit	Medium-Low		
Safe country of origin list <sup>142</sup>	Yes		
Schengen Visa Exemption	NO		

Traditionally recognized as a destination for immigrants during the colonial era (Bouquet 2023), Ivory Coast has recently emerged as the second most frequent destination for intra-African migration (Caritas 2021). At the same time, in recent years the country has increasingly become a source of emigration to Europe, including Italy (Lunardini 2023).

In terms of **regular migration**, 28,559 individuals from the Ivory Coast were officially present on Italian territory in 2023.<sup>143</sup> Regarding annual regular entries between 2007 and 2022, job and family reunification permits were the most common, compared to those for study reasons (see Fig.1). However, while entries for family reunification remained stable—with only a slight reduction in 2020 due to the pandemic—regular entries for job and seasonal work significantly decreased after reaching a peak in 2010.

Fig. 1 Ivory Coast - Regular Yearly Entries to Italy by reason of entry (2007-2022).  
Source: Author's elaboration from ISTAT

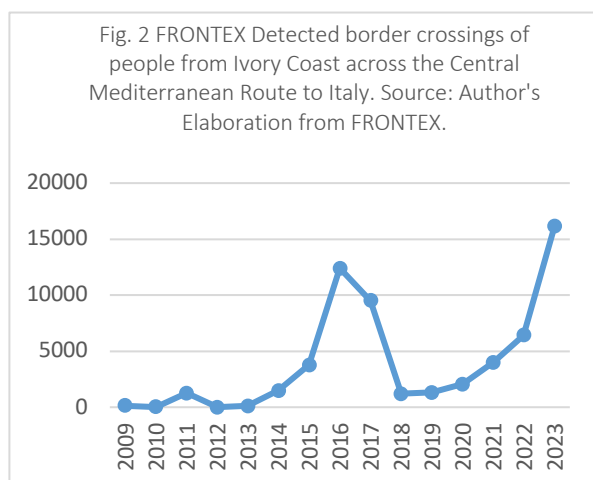


While the number of regular migrants from the Ivory Coast in Italy remains relatively low, the presence of **irregular migrants** is significantly larger and has seen an increase in recent years. In 2016, over 12,000 Ivorians arrived in Italy, becoming the fourth largest nationality among irregular arrivals via the central Mediterranean

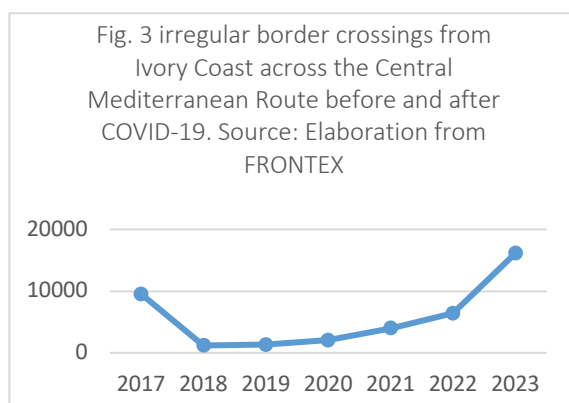
<sup>142</sup> According to the list of safe countries of origin as indicated by the Italian Decree 17 March 2023.

<sup>143</sup> According to INSTAT data on foreign residents.

route, and rising to become the second largest in 2017 (Fig. 2).



Although there was a decline in irregular arrivals between 2017 and 2021, numbers surged again, reaching an all-time high in 2023 with figures exceeding 16,000. This peak continued to mark Ivorians as the second largest group by nationality for irregular arrivals in Italy, trailing only behind Tunisians. In this regard, **COVID-19 pandemic** did not reduce flows from Ivory Coast, which rather continued to grow during and after 2020 (Fig.3).



<sup>144</sup> [Le vere ragioni che spingono gli ivoriani a fuggire verso l'Italia](#), Agi, 15 Luglio 2017;

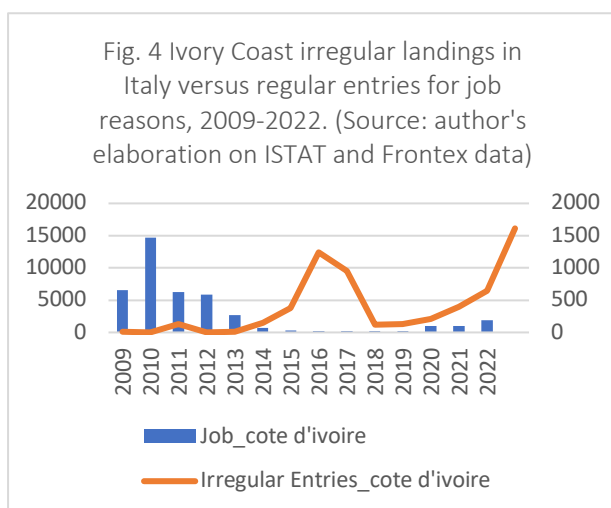
This recent high rate of irregular migration can be attributed to **two main factors**.

Firstly, the decade after the country's second civil war in 2010-2011, saw an increasing number of Ivorians taking the Central Mediterranean route to Europe (ICMPD 2022). The Ivory Coast has then experienced a period of political stabilization and notable economic growth, with the latter being relatively robust (Caritas 2021). Despite these positive developments, many Ivorians decide to leave in search of a better life due to a lack of confidence in the future and concrete prospects at home (Bouquet 2023), compounded by a widespread sense of disillusionment<sup>144</sup> and youth unemployment. The pursuit of improved living conditions and economic opportunities in Europe is considered one of the main drivers of irregular migration. Moreover, the spiral of violence linked to the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2020 (van Baalen and Gbala 2023) was also a contributing factor.

Secondly, there is a significant issue with identity misrepresentation among migrants. It is highly likely that a considerable number of those declaring themselves as Ivorians upon arrival are not, in fact, Ivorian. This phenomenon is partly due to the fact that, in recent years, more than 22% of the population in the Ivory Coast consisted of foreigners who have claimed Ivorian nationality as

part of their migration strategy (ibid.). Indeed, the migration corridors to Ivory Coast from Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea are the largest ones.<sup>145</sup> Identification missions conducted by the Ivorian government from 2009 to 2018 in various EU Member States, including Italy, have discovered that only 15% of individuals who had declared themselves as Ivorian upon arrival could actually prove their Ivorian nationality (Lunardini 2023).

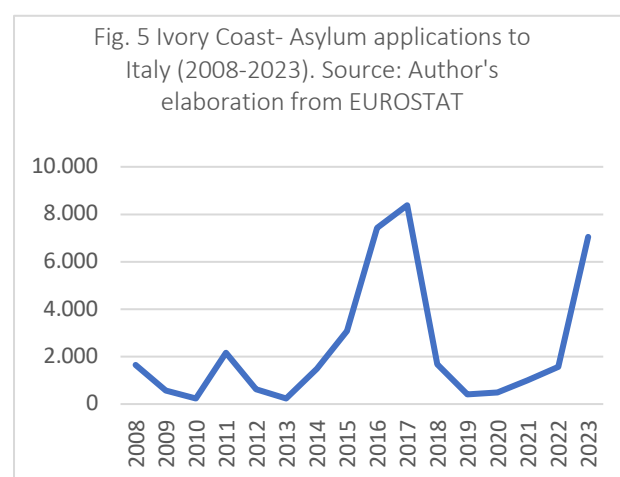
Whereas the increase of irregular movements from Ivory Coast is rooted in a combination of factors, the lack of legal avenues for entry into Italy, particularly for seasonal and non-seasonal employment, might have also contributed. A comparison between regular entries of Ivorians for employment purposes and irregular sea arrivals reveals a notable inverse relationship: as the opportunities for lawful entry diminish, the rate of irregular arrivals surges (Fig. 4).



<sup>145</sup> <https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/ivory-coast/#:~:text=Ivory%20Coast%20constitutes%20one>

The Ivory Coast's role as a **transit country** for Europe-bound migrants via the central Mediterranean route is relatively minor. However, its status as the first destination for west African migrants (UNDESA 2020) suggests it could become a more significant transit point, as migrants from other countries may subsequently journey to Europe after a stay in the Ivory Coast.

In terms of **asylum**, and in line with irregular arrivals, applications from Ivorian asylum seekers to Italy have increased between 2014 and 2018, with a peak value in 2017 (Fig. 5) - when Ivorians accounted for the 6<sup>th</sup> nationality in terms of asylum applications to Italy. Residence permits for asylum request, asylum or humanitarian reasons for Ivorian citizens followed the same trend (Fig.6), representing the most common type of residence permit if compared to other types (work, family reunification or study reasons) (Fig.7).



[%20of,for%20migrants%20within%20Western%20Afri](#)  
[ca.](#)

Fig. 6 Ivorians- Permits for Asylum, Asylum request, humanitarian reasons (2007-2022). Source: Author's own elaboration from ISTAT

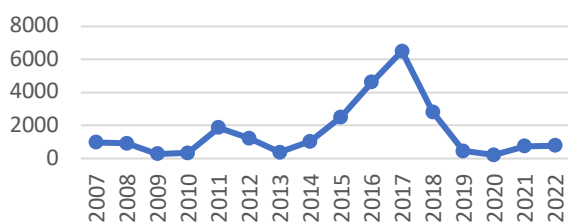
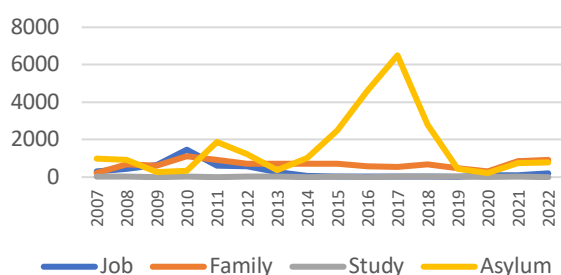


Fig. 7 Ivorians- Asylum residence permits compared to other kind of permits (2007-2022). Source: Author's elaboration from ISTAT

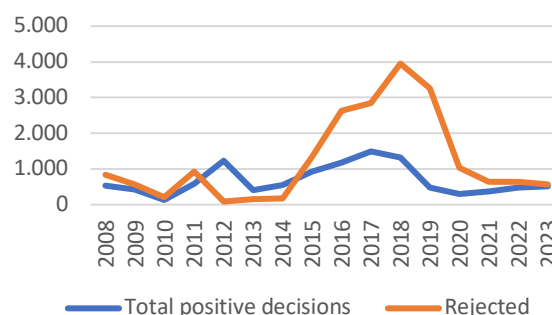


This is related to the high number of Ivorian asylum-seekers fleeing the country after the second civil war and the general country's instability.

In terms of **asylum decisions**, rejection is the most common outcome for asylum applications of Ivorian asylum-seekers to Italy between 2007-2023 (Fig.8). Positive decisions increased between 2011-2013, following the country's political crisis of 2011. Moreover, with the Decree of 17 March 2023, Ivory Coast is now considered a safe country

i.e., a place where there is apparently no persecution, torture, or degrading treatment, and whose asylum applications can therefore be rejected as being manifestly unfounded. This is also in line with the recommendation by UNHCR in 2021 to terminate the refugee status of Ivorians hosted in third states and facilitate their voluntary repatriation in light of the fundamental and lasting changes occurred in the country in terms of political stabilization.<sup>146</sup>

Fig. 8. Ivory Coast. Outcome of asylum applications to Italy. Source: author's elaboration from EUROSTAT



## Italy-Ivory Coast cooperation on migration

### *Bilateral political cooperation*

Political and economic relations between Italy and Ivory Coast are defined by the over 18 agreements, concluded since the 1970s in a variety of sectors.<sup>147</sup> In this context, cooperation on migration is recent and was intensified only in the latest years.

<sup>146</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/it/notizie-storie/comunicati-stampa/lunhcr-raccomanda-la-cessazione-dello-status-di-rifugiato-per-gli-ivoriani/>

<sup>147</sup> For the full list, check 'Archivio Trattati Internazionali Online', Ministero degli Esteri.

**Bilateral political dialogue on migration** has been at the center of three high-level visits: former Minister Paolo Gentiloni flying to Ivory Coast twice, in 2016<sup>148</sup> and 2017<sup>149</sup>, to discuss economic relations and security, including migration as a key issue of diplomatic relations; and Interior Minister Piantedosi visiting Abidjan in March 2023 to strengthen bilateral cooperation on migration.<sup>150</sup> In the context of bilateral dialogue, in 2016 Ivory Coast was offered for the first time preferential treatment in terms of **annual entry quotas** for non-seasonal employment in Italy,<sup>151</sup> being included for the first time among the countries listed in the so-called 'Decreto Flusso'.

In terms of **fight against irregular migration and border control**, in 2015 a **Technical Agreement** was signed between the **Italian and Ivorian Police to provide technical assistance and training**, cooperate in the fight against migrant smuggling and provide swift identificatory mechanisms of migrants in the context of return procedures.<sup>152</sup> Technical cooperation was further strengthened in 2019, with Rome hosting various meetings with the

Ivorian Police representatives<sup>153</sup> and in 2021 with a **Technical Protocol** for the implementation of four border check points in view of strengthening border control.<sup>154</sup>

In 2020, Italian Interior Minister Lamorgese and the Ivorian Minister for Security and Civil Protection signed a **Memorandum of Understanding for the Strengthening of Cooperation on Migration and Security issues**.<sup>155</sup>

The goal of the memorandum was to provide a 'strategic framework for cooperation'<sup>156</sup> in order to, among the other things, offer alternatives to irregular migration by improving local economic opportunities, improve border control through the exchanging of information and improved border control checks, and fight against irregular migration and migrants' smuggling.<sup>157</sup> The content of the memorandum was reinforced in 2023, when, during the already mentioned official visit by Minister Piantedosi, a **Cooperation Agreement on Migration and Security**<sup>158</sup> was signed with the goal to cooperate on the prevention of irregular migration. During the same high-level visit, the

<sup>148</sup> [https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/approfondimenti/2016/08/nigeria-e-costa-d-avorio-due-le/](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/approfondimenti/2016/08/nigeria-e-costa-d-avorio-due-le/)

<sup>149</sup> <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/gentiloni-africa-tappe-tunisia-angola-ghana-e-costa-d-avorio--AEQQtiHD>

<sup>150</sup> <https://ambabidjan.esteri.it/it/italia-e-costa-davorio/>

<sup>151</sup> <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/notizie/pagine/decreto-flussi-2016-10032016>

<sup>152</sup>

<https://www.migrationtreaties.unto.it/FILE/2020%20Italy-%20Ivory%20Coast%20Factsheet.pdf>

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/italia-costa-davorio-insieme-contro-limmigrazione-illegale-incontro-lamorgese-e-ministro-ivoriano-esteri-camara>

<sup>155</sup> <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/firmato-accordo-italia-e-costa-davorio>

<sup>156</sup> <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/italia-costa-davorio-insieme-contro-limmigrazione-illegale-incontro-lamorgese-e-ministro-ivoriano-esteri-camara>

<sup>157</sup>

<https://www.migrationtreaties.unto.it/FILE/2020%20Italy-%20Ivory%20Coast%20Factsheet.pdf>

<sup>158</sup> <https://it.esteri.it/Search/Allegati/53911>

Italian and Ivorian Ministers participated in the launch ceremony of the Civit-IOM project, funded by Italy and implemented in collaboration with IOM to create border outposts and specialized training programs on border control, the fight against migrant smuggling, and human trafficking.<sup>159</sup>

The dimension of **fight against irregular migration and border control** is inextricably linked to **readmission and return**. The rate of Ivorians being returned after being issued an expulsion order has always been very low (Fig. 9), mostly due to difficulties encountered in the identification of migrants. For this purpose, the already mentioned **2020 Memorandum** provided a framework to implement repatriation procedures through ‘identification by the competent authorities of the Ivory Coast embassy in Italy’.<sup>160</sup> Similarly, the **2023 Cooperation Agreement on Migration** stresses among its key goals ‘identification and readmission’ of migrants in an irregular status, foreseeing the possibility to elaborate a Protocol on operative procedures for the implementation of identification and return.<sup>161</sup>

Fig. 9 Ivory Coast- Irregular Migrants ordered to leave vs. irregular migrants returning after an order to leave. Source: EUROSTAT



Finally, regarding **legal mobility**, after the country was included for entry quotas for non-seasonal employment by the Decreto Flussi in 2016, it has been consistently included in all subsequent flow decrees up to 2023. Moreover, Ivorian students are admitted to annual scholarship procedures announced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>162</sup>

### ***Bilateral Development Cooperation***

Italy has been implementing development projects in the country since the early 2000s, when projects were mainly focused on the health sector in terms of fight against AIDS, and on providing assistance to the high number of internal displaced people and refugees. Migration has increasingly featured

<sup>159</sup> <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/ministro-piantadosi-visita-ufficiale-costa-davorio>

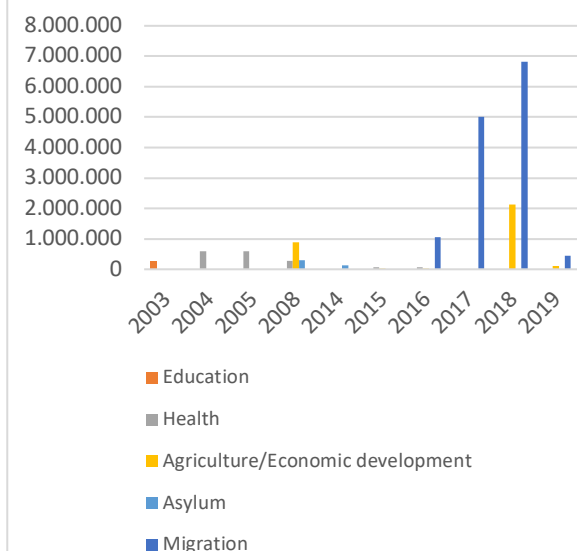
<sup>160</sup> <https://www.migrationtreaties.unto.it/FILE/2020%20Italy-%20Ivory%20Coast%20Factsheet.pdf>

<sup>161</sup> <https://itra.esteri.it/Search/Allegati/53911>

<sup>162</sup> [https://ambabidjan.esteri.it/it/news/dall\\_ambasciata/2022/05/borse-di-studio-a-favore-di-cittadini\\_0/](https://ambabidjan.esteri.it/it/news/dall_ambasciata/2022/05/borse-di-studio-a-favore-di-cittadini_0/)

as a key sector of cooperation in recent years, starting from 2016 (Fig.10), when about 14 million were committed over three years (2016-2018) to NGOs operating in countries of origin of migration flows from Africa to Europe – including Ivory Coast (along with Ethiopia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan) (Italian Development Cooperation Report 2017, 2018). The same approach was confirmed for the following three years with ‘particular attention’ to be devoted to countries of ‘priority importance’ for migratory routes – Ivory Coast included (Documento Triennale di Programmazione 2019-2021).

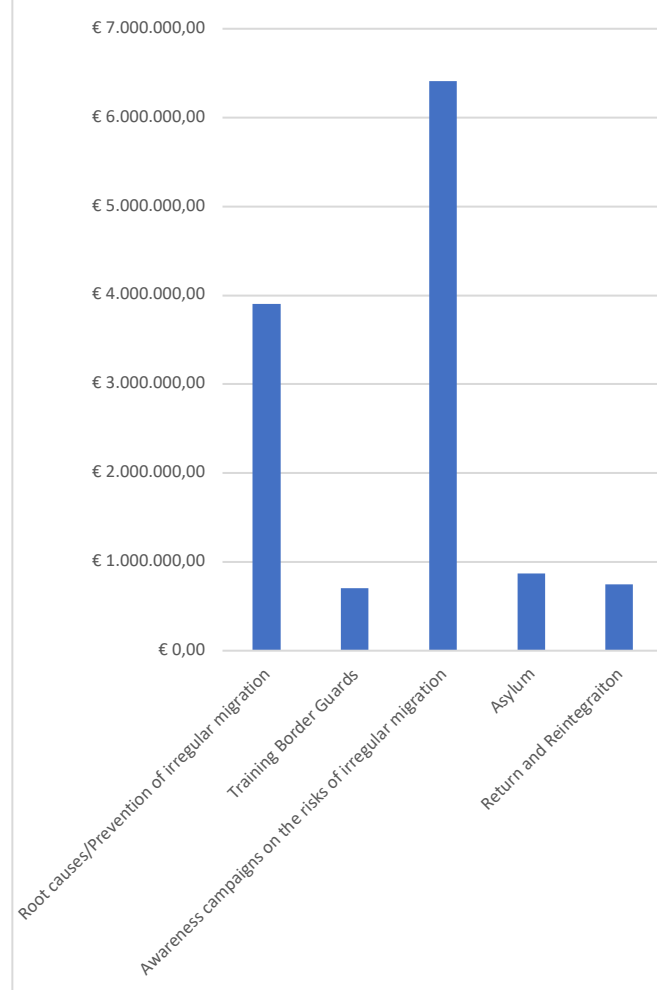
Fig. 10 Main sectors of Italian Development Cooperation in Ivory Coast. Source: Author's Elaboration from the Italian Development Cooperation Reports (2001-2019)



<sup>163</sup> Please note that of the amount showed in Fig 10 and 11, programs on raising awareness on irregular migration and programs on training border guards are regional, therefore the amount indicated is actually divided among the countries of the region involved in

Of funds addressing migration, most projects were tailored to raise awareness on the risks of irregular migration<sup>163</sup>, while promoting economic and employment opportunities to address root causes and prevent irregular migration (Fig. 11).

Fig. 11 Main goals of cooperation projects on migration (2003-2019). Source: Author's elaboration on Italian Dev. Cooperation Reports (2001-2019).



such regional programs. However, it still provides an indicator of the relevance of Ivory Coast as a country being included in these kinds of programs tailored to address different dimensions of migration governance.

### ***EU-Ivory Coast cooperation as an additional framework for DEPMI***

The cooperation between the European Union (EU) and Ivory Coast is structured around several key pillars, including economic growth and development, and democratic governance.<sup>164</sup> Migration has also emerged as a significant sector of cooperation following the Valletta Summit in 2015, when dialogue and reciprocal commitments on migration management were launched.<sup>165</sup> A high-level dialogue on migration was then held in Abidjan on 16 April 2016, focusing on the five priorities agreed in La Valletta: addressing root causes of irregular migration; asylum; legal mobility; cooperation on preventing irregular migration; and return and readmission. On this latter aspect, the EU and Ivory Coast agreed ‘that the implementation of an effective policy for the systematic return of irregular migrants is a key aspect of managing migration and the best way of discouraging people from putting their lives in danger’.<sup>166</sup> Two years later, in 2018, the EU and Ivory Coast signed an **informal readmission arrangement** in the form of a ‘Joint document on the procedures for identification and readmission of migrants presumed to be Ivorian nationals staying irregularly in the EU’<sup>167</sup>. Following the signature of the agreement, political dialogue on

migration was intensified: Ivorian authorities participated to two Joint Working Groups and deployed four liaison officers in EU embassies, with EU liaison officers being in turn deployed in Abidjan to facilitate identification requests and operational cooperation.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/countries/cote-divoire\\_en#:~:text=The%20EU%2DC%C3%B4te%20d'Ivoire,and%20the%20Global%20Gateway%20Strategy.](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/countries/cote-divoire_en#:~:text=The%20EU%2DC%C3%B4te%20d'Ivoire,and%20the%20Global%20Gateway%20Strategy.)

<sup>165</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2015/11/11-12/>

<sup>166</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/5178\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/5178_en)

<sup>167</sup> <https://www.statewatch.org/media/2266/eu-com-readmission-annex-1-cote-divoire.pdf>

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

### Overview of Italy's DEPMI in Ivory Coast

	Italy-Ivory Coast (2000-2023)		EU-Ivory Coast broader cooperation framework
	Political Cooperation	Development Cooperation	
Return & Readmission	<i>Memorandum of Understanding for the Strengthening of Cooperation on Migration and Security (2020)</i>	Reintegration programs promoted in cooperation with UNHCR	Informal Readmission Arrangement on Standard Operating Procedures (2018)
	Cooperation Agreement on Migration (2023)		
Border Control and Fight against irregular migration	Memorandum of Understanding for the Strengthening of Cooperation on Migration and Security (2020)		
	Technical Protocol (2015) Technical Protocol (2021)		
	Cooperation Agreement on Migration (2023)		
Fight against human smuggling and trafficking	Memorandum of Understanding for the Strengthening of Cooperation on Migration and Security (2020)		
Fight against Root Causes	Memorandum of Understanding for the Strengthening of Cooperation on Migration and Security (2020)	The greatest part of projects by Italian Development Cooperation addresses root causes as a mean to prevent irregular migration	
Resettlement, Asylum and International Protection	\	Support to the reintegration of Refugees and Displaced Persons	
Legal Mobility	Quotas (2016)		
Visa	\		\
Political Dialogue	Migration as a key issue of high-level political dialogue (2016, 2017, 2023)		High Level Dialogue on Migration (2016)

## DEPMI COUNTRY PROFILE



Mali

Matilde Rosina

### Migration outlook: Relevance of flows to Italy and main data

Relevance as a country of origin	High
Relevance as a country of transit	High
Safe country of origin list <sup>169</sup>	No
Schengen Visa Exemption <sup>170</sup>	No

Over the past decade, migration from Mali to Italy has primarily involved individuals seeking **international protection**, following the unstable political and economic situation in the African country.

**Legal migration** from Mali to Italy has been low between 2007 and 2022 (Figure 1). As an example, in 2022, 348 Malian citizens were granted entry permits for either family, work or study purposes.

<sup>169</sup> Decreto 4 ottobre 2019, Art 1, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2019/10/07/19A06239/sg>.

<sup>170</sup> Regulation 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal->

Considering the 2007-2022 period, 57% of these permits were for family reunification, 40% for work reasons, and only 3% for study purposes.<sup>171</sup> Interestingly, work permits fluctuated significantly across years, peaking in 2010 and 2022.

Figure 1 Malian regular entries in Italy by reason, 2007-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on ISTAT data)



If regular entries have been limited, **irregular** ones have been more substantial, although also subject to fluctuations (Fig. 2). Malian landings in Italy increased particularly in 2014-2017, following the 2012 armed rebellion in the North of Mali and the subsequent military coup. They then slowed down in 2018-2022, only to surge again in 2023, reflecting the unstable political situation in the

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02018R1806-20210101>.

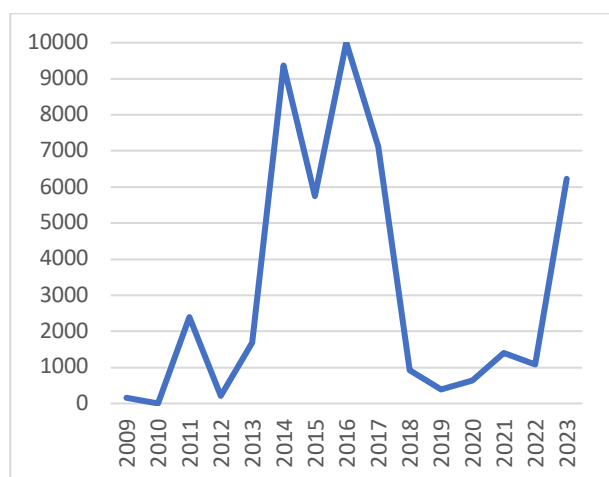
<sup>171</sup> Percentages are calculated based on the sum of permits for family, work, and study purposes (they exclude asylum and other purposes).

country (see below). In 2017, Mali was among the top 5 countries of origin for migrants disembarking in Italy.<sup>172</sup>

The 2012 rebellion, coupled with pre-existing high levels of poverty and food insecurity, have been key drivers of migratory in the mid-2010s.<sup>173</sup> On the contrary, Covid-19 does not seem to have played a key role in affecting migration flows, which started decreasing already in 2018 (hence, before the pandemic lockdowns) (Fig. 4).

As for migrants who are apprehended as irregularly staying in Italy, their number has been rather low, amounting to 185 in 2020 (Fig. 3).

*Figure 2 Malian irregular arrivals to Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route, 2009-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on Frontex data)*



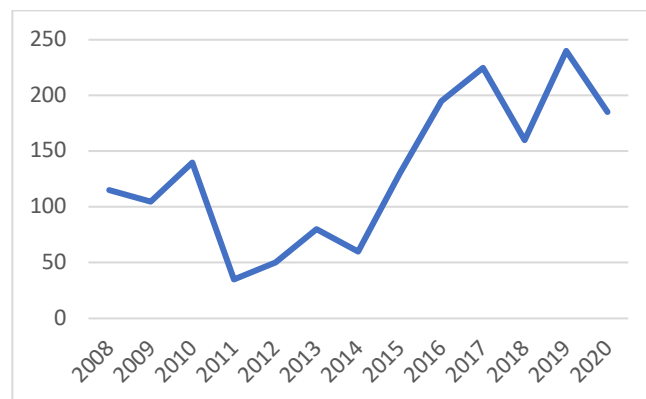
<sup>172</sup>

[http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto\\_statistico\\_giornaliero\\_31-12-2017.pdf](http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_31-12-2017.pdf)

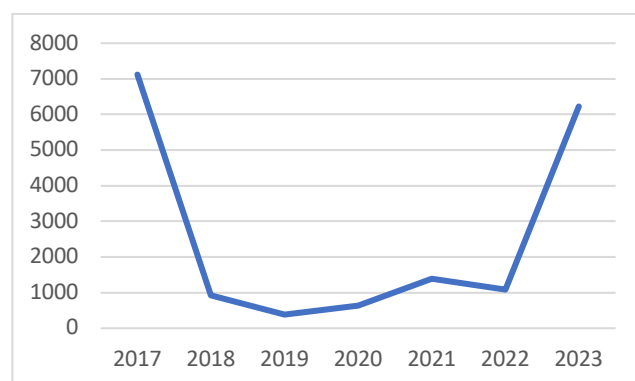
<sup>173</sup>

<https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/migr>

*Figure 3 Malian irregularly staying in Italy, 2008-2020 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)*



*Figure 4 Malian irregular arrivals to Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route – focus on Covid years, 2017-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on Frontex data)*



The number of **asylum applications** by Malian citizens parallels trends in irregular landings (Fig. 5). Peaking at 9,760 in 2014, first-time asylum applications have decreased since then – gradually first, more significantly then, particularly since

[ated files/Country/docs/Mali\\_Migration\\_Crisis\\_2013.pdf](#); <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/mali/#:~:text=Since%20the%20early%201990s%2C%20Mali%27s,drugs%2C%20arms%2C%20and%20cigarettes.>

2018. In recent years, asylum applications have been on the rise again, reaching 3,050 in 2023. Between 2008 and 2023, 48% of asylum requests were approved (Fig. 6).

Once more, the above reflects ongoing trends in the country of origin. Indeed, comparing the number of (a) asylum permits to (b) work, study, and family permits, we can see that the former greatly outnumber the latter, showing that **most migration from Mali to Italy involves people seeking international protection** (Fig. 7).

Figure 5 Malian asylum applications in Italy (1st time applicants), 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)

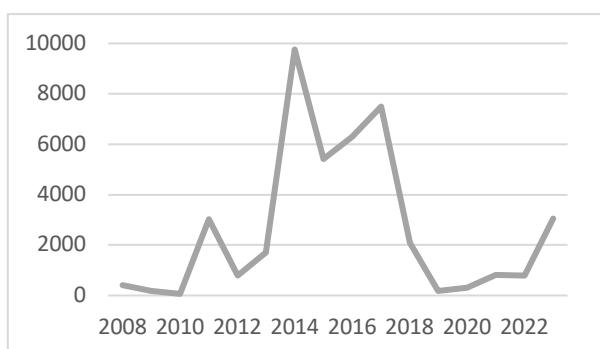


Figure 6 Outcome of Malian asylum applications in Italy, 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)

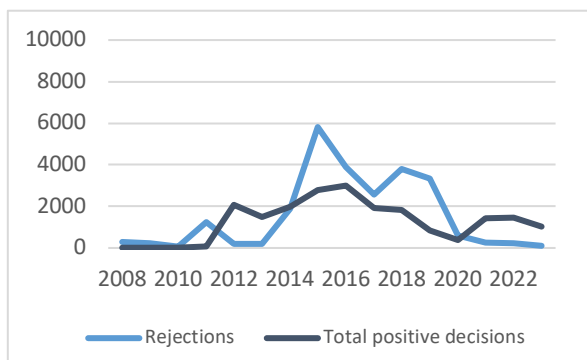
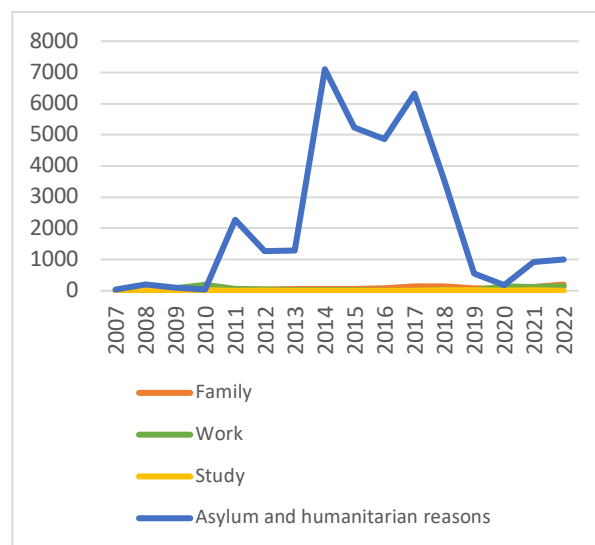


Figure 7 Malian entries in Italy by reason, 2007-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on ISTAT data)



## Italy-Guinea Bissau cooperation on migration

### *Bilateral political cooperation*

While Italy-Mali cooperation on migration has been limited, it has increased in recent years.

To start with, Italy does not have a return agreement with Mali, and only **3%** of Malian citizens ordered to leave were effectively returned by Italy, between 2008 and 2022 (Fig. 8). Since 2017, however, Rome has established **reserved quotas** for Malian citizens (see Decreto Flussi 2017-2023).

Most migration-cooperation between the two countries has advanced via **political dialogue**, with Italian and Malian ministers having had a few bilateral meetings concerning migration, over the past years. In **2017**, at a meeting between Italian Interior Minister Minniti and Malian minister Coulibaly, it was agreed that Italy would support

the establishment of reception centres in Mali and the stabilization of the country.<sup>174</sup> In May **2021**, a **Joint Declaration** was signed between the two states to strengthen cooperation on migration and security. Aiming to fight migrant smuggling and trafficking, the Declaration also includes references to information campaigns, the delivery of support to migrants in Mali, and re-integration opportunities for returning Malian citizens.<sup>175</sup> In July **2023**, a meeting was held in Rome with representatives from the IOM and police officials from Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, to share best practices on the fight against irregular migration, smuggling and trafficking.<sup>176</sup>

The enhancement of Italy's cooperation efforts with Mali is further testified by the fact that, in August 2023, an **Italian Embassy** was established in Mali's capital city Bamako.<sup>177</sup> In December 2023, a new centre was also opened in Bamako to process **visa requests** for Malian citizens (who previously had to rely on the Dakar Embassy).<sup>178</sup> The growing emphasis on collaboration with Mali reflects the EU's decision to prioritise Bamako in migration matters, as will be discussed below.

Figure 8 Malian nationals ordered to leave and returned by Italy, 2008-2020 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)



### Bilateral Development Cooperation

Mali's economic and political situation has been challenging. With 65% of its territory being made up of desert (MAECI 2004: 151), Mali's human development index is among the lowest on the globe, ranking 188 out of 192 countries (UNDP 2024). Education and literacy rates are below the regional average (MAECI 2004: 151), and life expectancy does not reach 60 years (UNDP 2024). Since 2010, the risk of Islamist terrorism has spread across the country, and in 2012 a rebellion by

<sup>174</sup> <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/italia-mali-fronte-comune-sicurezza-immigrazione-e-controllo-frontiere>

<sup>175</sup> [https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2021/05/incontro-del-ministro-luigi-di-maio-con-il-ministro-dei-maliani-all'estero-e-dell-integrazione-africana-al-hamdou-ag-ilene/](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2021/05/incontro-del-ministro-luigi-di-maio-con-il-ministro-dei-maliani-all'estero-e-dell-integrazione-africana-al-hamdou-ag-ilene/) ; [https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2021/12/nota-farnesina-cooperazione-migratoria-si-rafforza-limpegno-del-maeci-nel-sahel/](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2021/12/nota-farnesina-cooperazione-migratoria-si-rafforza-limpegno-del-maeci-nel-sahel/)

<sup>176</sup> <https://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/it/news-e-media/news/2023/tratta-degli-esseri-umani-visita-in-italia-di-una-delegazione-oim-e-di-paesi-del-sahel/>

<sup>177</sup> As of March 2024, the Embassy still has limited functions. See [https://www.viaggiasesicuri.it/schede\\_paese/pdf/MLI.pdf](https://www.viaggiasesicuri.it/schede_paese/pdf/MLI.pdf).

<sup>178</sup> [https://ambdakar.esteri.it/it/news/dall\\_ambasciata/2023/12/nuovo-centro-visti-a-bamako-mali/](https://ambdakar.esteri.it/it/news/dall_ambasciata/2023/12/nuovo-centro-visti-a-bamako-mali/) [https://ambdakar.esteri.it/it/news/dall\\_ambasciata/2023/12/nuovo-centro-visti-a-bamako-mali/](https://ambdakar.esteri.it/it/news/dall_ambasciata/2023/12/nuovo-centro-visti-a-bamako-mali/)

independentist groups led France, the African Union, and the United Nations to intervene militarily (MAECI 2010: 322, 2013: 145). The ensuing 2012 coup started a new political transition (MAECI 2013: 145), but the country has been in ‘a quasi-permanent state of crisis’ since then (Freedom House 2024). Of note, according to Freedom House (2024), Mali’s situation is deteriorating: If in 2017, the country was deemed as ‘partly free’ (with a Freedom Index of 45/100), in 2023 it was judged as ‘not free’ (with its Freedom Index plummeting to 26/100).

In recent decades, Italian **development cooperation funds** in Mali have targeted a range of aspects, including poverty reduction, rural development, food security, gender aspects, health, and migration (MAECI 2000-2019). Throughout the 2000-2024 period, the largest proportions of funds were spent on **agriculture** (18%), **humanitarian aid** (17%), **water** (16%), and **migration** (15%). Some of the largest projects targeted the enhancement of the aqueduct in Bamako,<sup>179</sup> humanitarian aid,<sup>180</sup> and the fight against desertification.<sup>181</sup>

The **focus on migration-related projects** has been particularly strong **since the mid-2010s** (Fig. 9). Between 2000 and 2010, migration-related projects accounted for only 4% of all projects (€850,000). By contrast, in 2011-2024, they accounted for 19% of all development expenditure (€11.2m).

**Migration-related projects** primarily targeted: asylum and protection matters (18%, or €2.2m), the root causes of migration (17%, or €2m), and the prevention of irregular migration (8%, or €1m) (Fig. 10). As an example, funds aimed at addressing the root causes of migration aimed to strengthen economic opportunities for the youth in areas with high emigration.<sup>182</sup> Most funds, however, were used for ‘other purposes’ (57%, €6.8m) (Fig. 10). This included a €5m project to support Malian returnees and internally displaced people,<sup>183</sup> an intervention to support Malian IDPs’ food security,<sup>184</sup> and a program to fight trafficking in minors and re-integrate 500 children returning from Cote d’Ivoire.<sup>185</sup>

<sup>179</sup> ‘Acquedotto di Kabala/Bamako’ €10m, 2010-2015.

<sup>180</sup> ‘Iniziativa di Emergenza per favorire la resilienza e la protezione delle popolazioni colpite dalla crisi umanitaria in Mali’, €5m, 2022-2023.

<sup>181</sup> ‘Fondo Italia/CILSS di lotta contro la desertificazione per la riduzione della povertà’ - fondo LCD-RPS - MALI’, €3.9m, 2004-2010.

<sup>182</sup> ‘Rafforzamento dell’empowerment economico dei giovani nelle aree ad alta partenza (Kayes e Segou) in Mali’, €2m, 2021-2022.

<sup>183</sup> ‘Iniziativa Regionale di Emergenza per il rafforzamento della resilienza di migranti di ritorno, sfollati interni in Mali e Paesi limitrofi’, €5m, 2020.

<sup>184</sup> ‘Intervento di assistenza sanitaria, protezione e sicurezza alimentare per gli sfollati nel nord del Mali’, EUR1m, 2014.

<sup>185</sup> ‘Sostegno al programma nazionale di lotta contro il traffico di minori e di reinserimento dei bambini espatriati in Costa d’Avorio’, €850,000, 2002-2004. Notably, this was the only migration-related project that was launched in the country before 2013.

Fig. 9 Allocation of Italian development cooperation funds in Mali (Source: Author's elaboration based on MAECI 2000-2019 and AICS 2024)

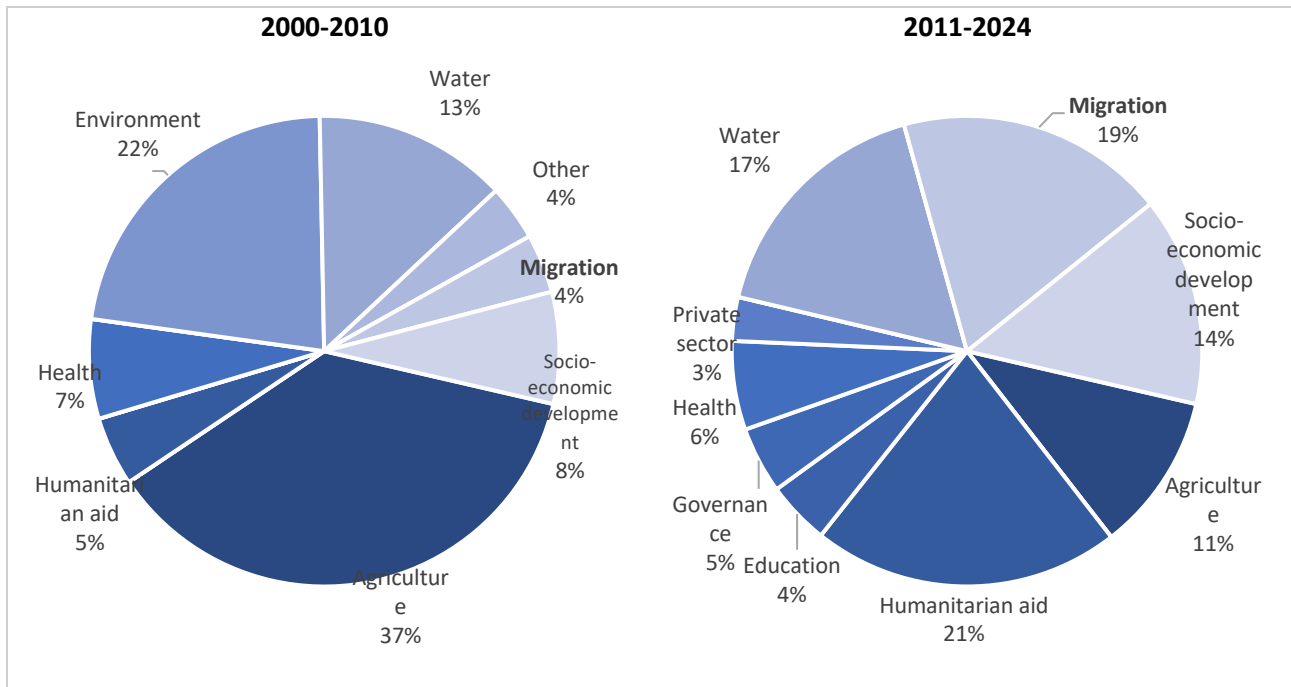
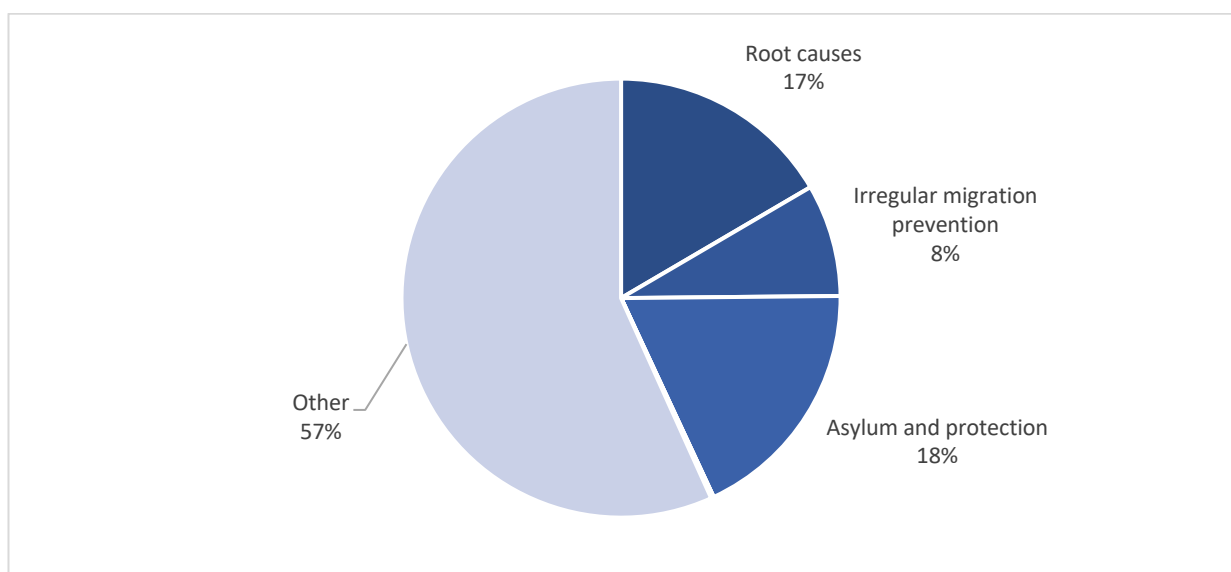


Fig. 10 Allocation of migration-related funds in Mali, 2000-2023 (Source: Author's elaboration based on MAECI 2000-2019 and AICS 2024)



## ***EU-Mali cooperation as an additional framework for DEPMI***

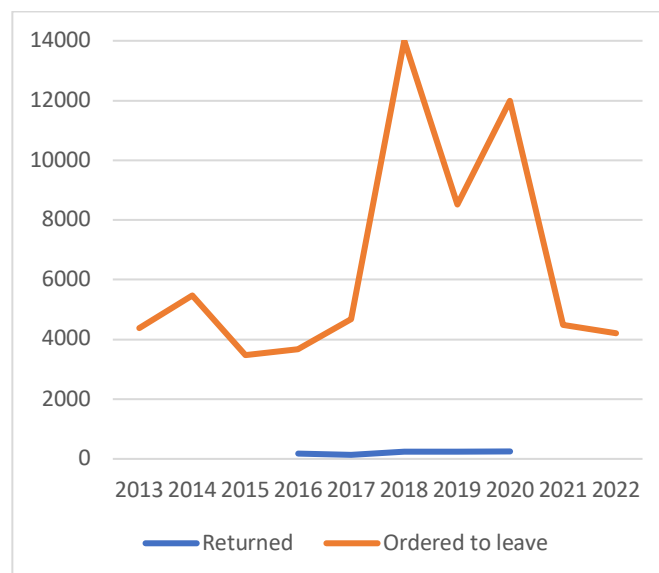
While the EU does not have any formal agreements with Mali on readmissions, visas, or mobility, Mali was identified as a priority country by the **EU Migration Partnership Framework**,<sup>186</sup> given its importance as a country of origin and transit (Collett and Ahad 2017). The country is also a receiver of the **EU Trust Fund for Africa**.<sup>187</sup>

Despite EU efforts, progress has been slow, as Mali has proved less willing than Niger to cooperate with the EU (Collett and Ahad 2017). In 2016, Mali and the Netherlands signed an agreement to enhance returns. Yet, this was met in Mali with protests and discontent: 6.8% of the country's GDP came from remittances in 2015, making migration-control measures highly unpopular (ibid.). Overall, in 2016-2022, only **2.3%** of Malian migrants who were ordered to leave by EU member states were effectively returned (Fig. 11), making Mali one of the countries with the lowest return rates (see also Collett and Ahad 2017).

Finally, the EU has two missions in MALI: **EUCAP Sahel Mali**, launched in 2015 to support the reform of the security sector and governance, and expected to last until 2025;<sup>188</sup> and **EUTM**

(Training Mission) in Mali, launched in 2013 with the goal of supporting military training, particularly against terrorism, and expected to last until May 2024.<sup>189</sup> Italy was also part of **TAKUBA**, a European task force led by France, which was operational between 2020 and 2022 and had the goal of supporting the Malian army in the fight against terrorism and crime.<sup>190</sup>

*Figure 11 Malian nationals ordered to leave and returned by EU27, 2013-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)*



<sup>186</sup>

[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/factsheet\\_ec\\_format\\_migration\\_partnership\\_framework\\_update\\_2.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/factsheet_ec_format_migration_partnership_framework_update_2.pdf)

<sup>187</sup> [https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries/sahel-lake-chad/mali\\_en](https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries/sahel-lake-chad/mali_en).

<sup>188</sup>

[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eucap-sahel-mali/about-eucap-sahel-mali\\_en?s=331](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eucap-sahel-mali/about-eucap-sahel-mali_en?s=331)

<sup>189</sup> <https://eutmmali.eu/en/mandates/>

<sup>190</sup> <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220701-eu-s-takuba-force-quits-junta-controlled-mali>,  
<https://itra.esteri.it/Search/Allegati/51340>

## Overview of Italy's DEPMI in MALI

	Italy-Mali (2000-2022)		EU-Mali
	Political Cooperation	Development Cooperation	
Return & Readmission	/	Yes	/
Border Control and Fight against irregular migration	Joint Declaration (2021), political dialogue	Yes	/
Fight against human smuggling and trafficking	As above	Yes	EUCAP Sahel Mali mission (2015), EUTM (Training Mission) in Mali (2013)
Fight against Root Causes	/	Yes	Receiver of EU Trust Fund for Africa
Resettlement, Asylum and International Protection	/	Yes	/
Legal Mobility	Quotas (2017)	Yes	/
Visa	/	/	/
Political Dialogue	Joint Declaration (2021), meetings in 2017 and 2023	/	Migration Partnership Framework

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- UNDP (2024), Human Development Insights, <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/country-insights#/ranks>

## DEPMI COUNTRY PROFILE

### Niger



**Matilde Rosina**

#### Migration outlook: Relevance of flows to Italy and main data

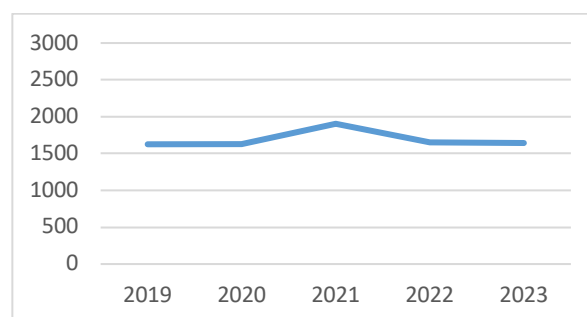
Relevance as a country of origin	Low
Relevance as a country of transit	High
Safe country of origin list <sup>191</sup>	No
Schengen Visa Exemption <sup>192</sup>	No

While Nigerien migration to Italy is limited, the country has emerged in recent years as a key transit country for migrants travelling from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe via the Central Mediterranean Route.

Concerning **legal migration**, migratory flows from Niger to Italy are not highly significant. Between 2019 and 2023, an average of 1,690 Nigerien nationals were registered as living on Italian

territory every year (Fig. 1). ISTAT does not report data on Nigerien entry permits by reason (e.g., for study, work, asylum...), further stressing the low salience of such figures.

*Figure 1 Nigerien citizens registered as living in Italy, 2019-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on ISTAT data)*



**Irregular migration** from Niger to Italy is limited too. Nigerien sea arrivals via the Central Mediterranean route in 2009-2015 averaged only 48 per year (Fig. 2). Landings increased in 2016 and 2017 (when they reached 694 and 432, respectively), but have decreased since then, returning to pre-2015 levels. In 2018-2023, the average number of irregular landings averaged once again 48 per year. In parallel to the above, few Nigerien citizens were found to be irregularly staying in Italy, with their number never surpassing 40 per year (Fig. 3). Covid-19 did not have a significant impact on Nigerien migration to Italy, as

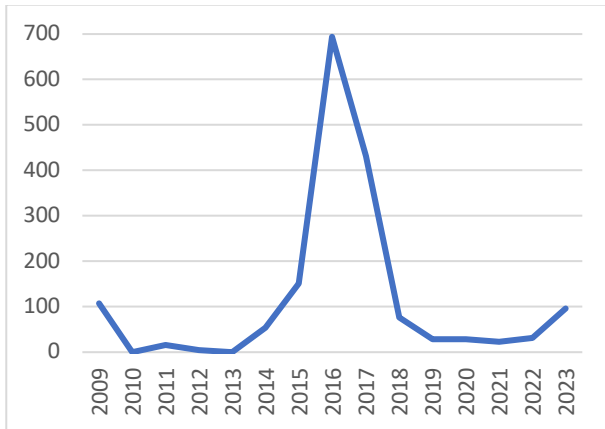
<sup>191</sup> Decreto 4 ottobre 2019, Art 1, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2019/10/07/19A06239/sg>.

<sup>192</sup> Regulation 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018, [https://eur-](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02018R1806-20210101)

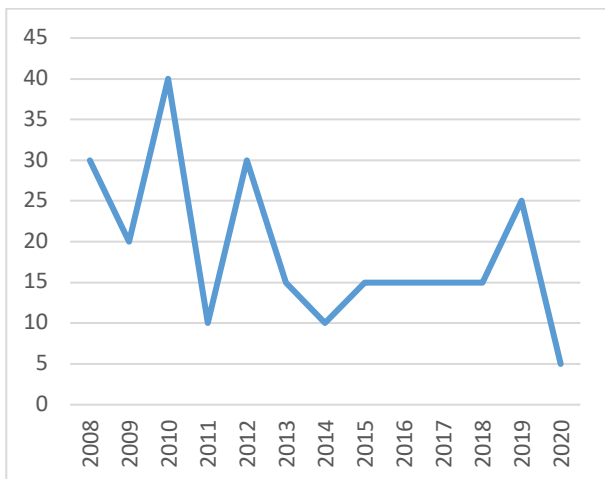
[lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02018R1806-20210101](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02018R1806-20210101).

figures dropped well-before the start of the pandemic (in 2018) (Fig. 4).

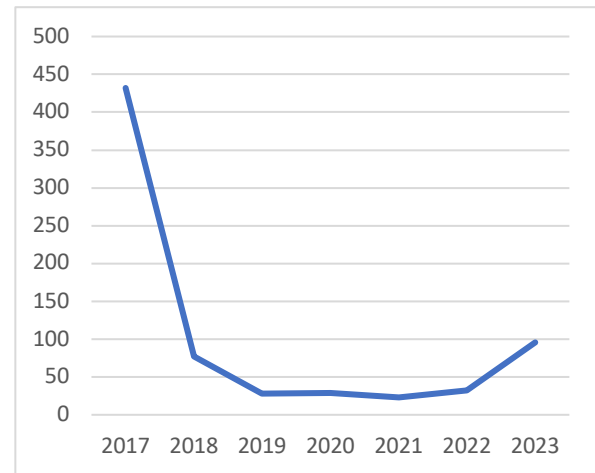
*Figure 2 Nigerien irregular arrivals to Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route, 2009-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on Frontex data)*



*Figure 3 Nigerien irregularly staying in Italy, 2008-2020 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)*



*Figure 4 Nigerien irregular arrivals to Italy via the Central Mediterranean Route – focus on Covid years, 2017-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on Frontex data)*



Nigerien **asylum applications** in Italy have been fluctuating. While mostly below 150 per year in 2008-2023, they saw two spikes in 2011 (with 720 new applications) and 2017 (with 460) (Fig. 5). The former increase is likely related to the political developments in the country of the early 2010s, when the country experienced a military coup and growing Islamist terrorism (see MAECI 2010, 2011). The 2017 increase parallels instead the rise in irregular landings noted above for that year (Fig. 2). Finally, the asylum recognition rate for Nigerien citizens is rather high, with 57% of all first-time asylum applications lodged in 2008-2023 being accepted (Fig. 6).

Figure 5 Nigerien asylum applications in Italy (1st time applicants), 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)

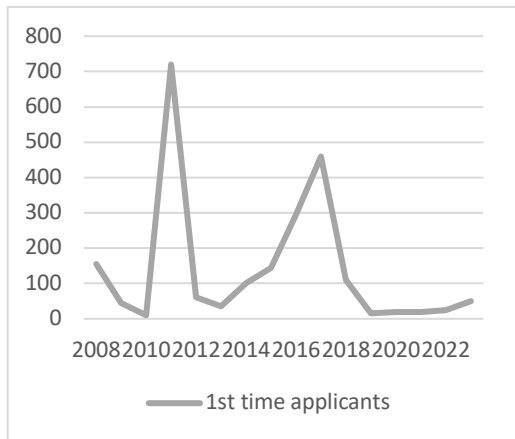
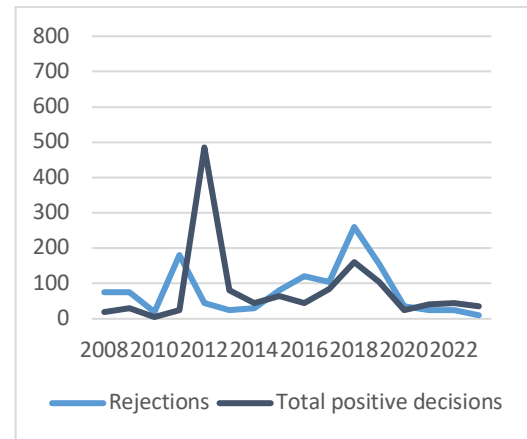


Figure 6 Outcome of Nigerien asylum applications in Italy, 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)



## Italy-Niger cooperation on migration

### *Bilateral political cooperation*

Italy-Niger cooperation on migration has emerged in the 2010s. Since then, the two countries have developed **eight** tools of external migration policy, ranging from agreements to curtail irregular migration (through technical agreements and military missions) to those aimed at strengthening legal migration opportunities (through quotas and humanitarian corridors).

Starting with **border controls and the fight against irregular migration**, in 2010, Italy and Niger signed a Cooperation Agreement on Security Matters, foreseeing closer collaborations on the

fight against migration, information sharing, and training. In the same year, Italy granted reserved **quotas** to Nigerien nationals, in its *Decreto Flussi*.

Cooperation intensified just after the so-called 'migration crisis', when Niger emerged as a key country of transit. In 2016 and 2017, two **technical agreements** were signed. First, a Memorandum of Understanding (2016) to enhance cooperation between police forces on the fight against immigration.<sup>193</sup> Second, a bilateral Technical Cooperation agreement (2017), foreseeing the provision of €50 million to Niger to strengthen border controls.<sup>194</sup>

<sup>193</sup> Full text is not openly available. See however: <https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/pansa-in-nigeria-accordo-per-la-lotta-al-traffico-di-esseri-umani>

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. See: [https://www.agi.it/rubriche/africa/news/2017-03-31/migranti\\_gentiloni\\_50 mln\\_per\\_la\\_cooperazione\\_in\\_niger-1638448/](https://www.agi.it/rubriche/africa/news/2017-03-31/migranti_gentiloni_50 mln_per_la_cooperazione_in_niger-1638448/)

When it comes to **political dialogue**, Italy and Niger signed in 2021 a Joint Declaration (including on the fight against smuggling and trafficking, and to prevent migration), and a Framework Agreement on Development Cooperation (foreseeing, among other things, scholarships for Nigeriens). The two agreements were signed on the very same day.<sup>195</sup>

Niger is among the few countries in which Italy has deployed a migration-related **military mission**.<sup>196</sup> The MISIN Mission<sup>197</sup> was launched in 2018, to address trafficking in human beings and terrorism (see also Ceccorulli and Coticchia 2020).

The two countries do not have a **return** agreement. Italy returns 9% of Nigeriens who are issued an order to leave. This is lower than the average 17% for all nationalities (based on 2008-2022 data, see Fig. 7).

Finally, when it comes to **legal migration** instruments, as above-mentioned, Italy agreed to reserve quotas for Nigerien citizens in its *Decreto Flussi* in 2010. Moreover, humanitarian corridors were established in 2015, to enable Nigerien refugees to be resettled to Italy.

Figure 7 Nigerien nationals ordered to leave and returned by Italy, 2008-2020 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)



### Bilateral development cooperation

We can split Italian development cooperation with Niger into two phases. The **early 2000s** represent the first phase. In those years, Italian development cooperation funds targeted **rural and urban poverty, natural resource management, and desertification** (MAECI 2001: 218). Indeed, in the first years of the new millennium the country was the second to last in the human development index, with only about 14% of its population being able to read and write, over 60% living below the threshold of absolute poverty (\$1/day), and life expectancy averaging 45 years (MAECI 2004: 158, 2005: 112, 2006: 126). In 2001, development cooperation represented 95% of overall

<sup>195</sup> See: <https://www.lesahel.org/cooperation-niger-italie-une-declaration-conjointe-adoptee-et-un-accord-cadre-de-cooperation-au-developpement-signe/> and <https://atrio.esteri.it/Search/Allegati/51342>.

<sup>196</sup> Out of the countries analysed in DEPMI I and II, the only two countries were Albania and Niger. See Fontana, Rosina and Sahizer (2022).

<sup>197</sup> See: <https://www.difesa.it/operazionimilitari/op-intern-corso/niger-missione-bilaterale-supporto/index.html>

investments into Niger (MAECI 2001: 218, 2002: 117). In the 2000s, only **one migration-related project** was launched in Niger,<sup>198</sup> with most projects focused, instead, on supporting agriculture and food security, and fighting desertification.

The **2010s** saw a shift in Italian development funds, in what we can consider the second phase of Italy's development assistance to Niger. This took place as Niger emerged as a crucial **transit country** for migrants *en route* to Europe via the Central Mediterranean route. The relevance of Niger as a transit country was first explicitly noted in development cooperation reports in 2013, when the Parliament referred to the over 3,000 people transiting through Agadez every week (MAECI 2013: 132). In 2010-2013, Niger figured among Italy's top priority countries in West Africa (MAECI 2010: 222, 2011: 202), and in 2018, it was among the top-5 African beneficiaries of Italian development funds (MAECI 2018: 23).

Thus, the 2010s saw a significant **redirection of development cooperation funds towards migration**. Migration-related projects passed from representing 1% of all funds allocated to Niger in 2000-2010, to **60%** in 2011-2023 (Fig. 8). Within

migration-related projects, **two thirds** of the funds have been allocated to **preventing irregular migration** (Fig. 9). Notable projects were launched to support the Nigerien security forces in the fight against organised crime, smuggling and trafficking (for €50 million), aid migrant protection and re-integration (for €15 million), and address the root causes of migration (for €2 million).<sup>199</sup>

<sup>198</sup> 'Progetto di assistenza e accoglienza ai migranti nella regione di Agadez', a €500,000 project aimed at supporting migrants transiting through Niger after having been expelled or refused entry by countries in the Maghreb (MAECI 2010: 225). The project included medical assistance, information campaigns on the risks of irregular migration, and a microcredit fund.

<sup>199</sup> Respectively, the projects are: 2017 'AJUSEN - Support for justice and security in Niger to fight organised', 2017 'EUTFA and IOM initiative for migrant protection and re-integration of returnees along central Mediterranean migration routes', and 2018 'Job creation by durable solutions of the environment in the transit and departing areas for migrants in Niger'.

Fig. 8 Allocation of Italian development cooperation funds in Niger (Source: Author's elaboration based on MAECI 2000-2019 and AICS 2024)

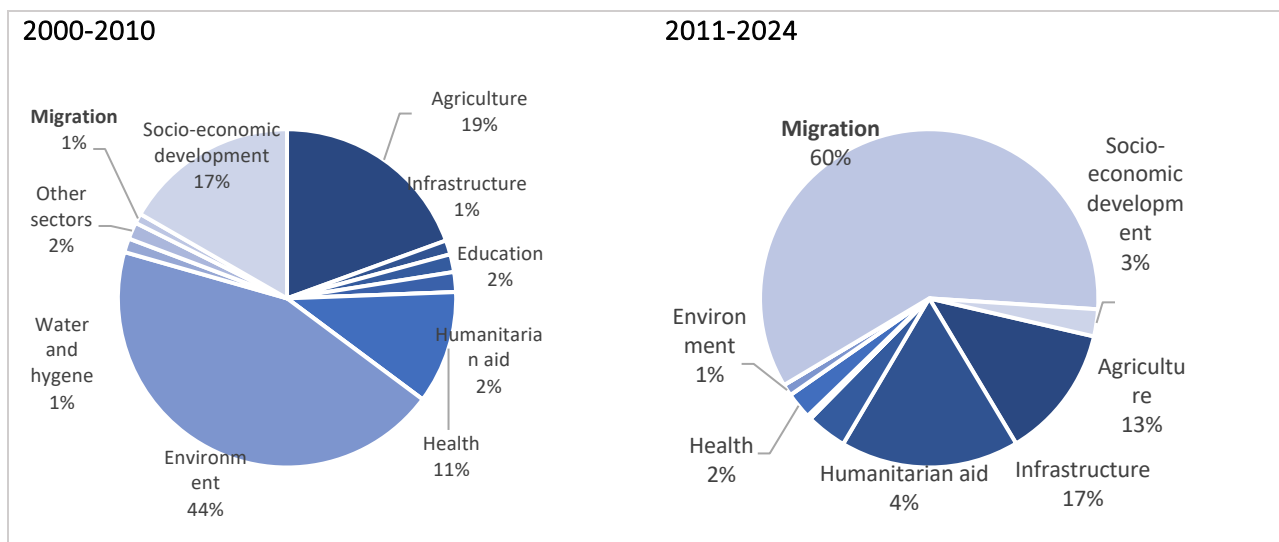
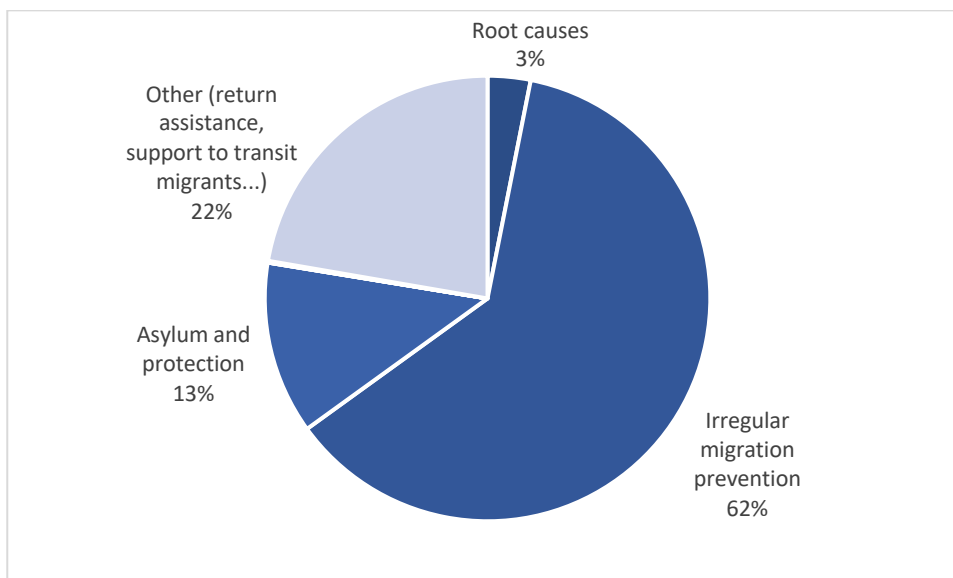


Fig. 9 Allocation of migration-related funds in Niger, 2000-2023 (Source: Author's elaboration based on MAECI 2000-2019 and AICS 2024)



## EU-Niger cooperation as an additional framework for Italy's DEPMI

Just like Italy, the EU does not have a return agreement with Niger, nor a visa facilitation mechanism. Looking at data, returns to Niger from the EU are extremely low: Out of the people ordered to leave, only 6% were effectively returned to a third country in 2013-2022, against the average 18% for all nationalities (Fig. 10). This is in line with Italian statistics discussed above.

Figure 10 Nigerien nationals ordered to leave and returned by EU27, 2013-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)



Beyond the issue of returns, a **working arrangement** was signed by Frontex with Niger in 2015, and with EUCAP Sahel Niger in 2022.<sup>200</sup>

<sup>200</sup> See: <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/frontex-signs-working-arrangement-with-eucap-sahel-niger-R8bj2Z>

<sup>201</sup> See: <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eucap-sahel-niger/eucap-sahel-niger-european-union-capacity-building-civilian-mission-und-en?s=364>

Moreover, the EU has a **civilian mission** in Niger: EUCAP Sahel Niger, launched in 2015 and aimed at supporting Niger's internal security.<sup>201</sup> Preventing irregular migration plays a key role in the mission,<sup>202</sup> and such goals align to the objectives of Italy's MISIN mission (Fontana and Rosina 2024). The **EU-Niger High Level Dialogue on Migration** was also launched in 2015, addressing migration management and prevention, smuggling and trafficking, addressing the root causes of migration, and returns.<sup>203</sup> Finally, Niger is a receiver of the EU Trust Fund for Africa. Considering all European **development cooperation** funding, the country was granted over €1 billion, in 2014-2020 (EEAS 2019).

<sup>202</sup> See:

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/05/13/eucap-sahel-niger/>

<sup>203</sup> See: <https://www.statewatch.org/media/2766/eu-council-com-draft-action-plan-niger-migration-11950-21.pdf>

## Overview of Italy's DEP MI in Niger

	Italy-Niger (2000-2022)		EU-Niger
	Political Cooperation	Development Cooperation	
Return & Readmission	/	Yes	/
Border Control and Fight against irregular migration	Cooperation agreement on security matters (2010)  MoU to strengthen police cooperation on irregular migration and other irregular matters (2016)	Yes	Frontex-Niger Working Arrangement (2015)  Frontex-EUCAP Sahel Working Arrangement Niger (2022)
Fight against human smuggling and trafficking	Bilateral Technical Cooperation Agreement (2017)  MISIN Mission (2018)	Yes	EUCAP Sahel Niger mission (2015)
Fight against Root Causes	Framework Agreement on Development Cooperation (2021)	Yes	Receiver of EU Trust Fund for Africa
Resettlement, Asylum and International Protection	Humanitarian corridors (2015)	Yes	Regional Development Protection Program (2016)
Legal Mobility	Quotas (2010)	Yes	/
Visa	/	/	/
Political Dialogue	Joint Declaration (2021)	/	EU-Niger High Level Dialogue on Migration (2015)

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## DEPMI COUNTRY PROFILE

### North Macedonia



**Matilde Rosina**

#### Migration outlook: Relevance of flows to Italy and main data

Relevance as a country of origin	Low
Relevance as a country of transit	Low
Safe country of origin list <sup>204</sup>	Yes
Schengen Visa Exemption <sup>205</sup>	Yes

North Macedonian migration to Italy is limited, particularly when it comes to irregular flows.

Starting with **regular migration**, this is mainly for family reunification purposes (Fig. 1). Between 2007 and 2022, Italy granted an average of 2,074 permits annually to North Macedonians for this reason. The trend peaked in 2010, with 3,836 permits issued, and has slightly declined since then. Similarly, work permits averaged 2,421 per

year from 2007 to 2011 but have then sharply decreased, dropping to only 67 in 2020. Study permits have remained limited, averaging 65 per year in 2007-2022. Overall, over 51,000 people were regularly resident in Italy in 2023.

Figure 1 North Macedonian regular entries in Italy by reason, 2007-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on ISTAT data)

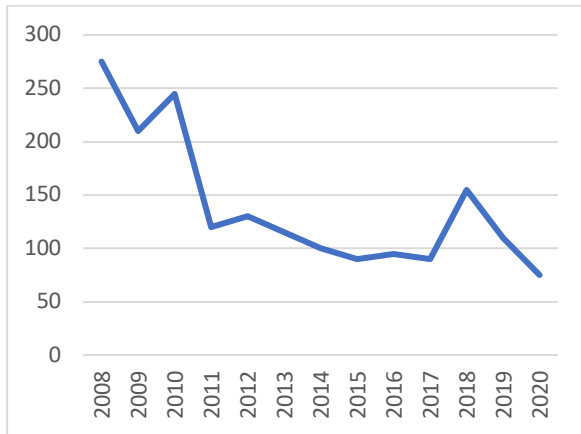


**Irregular migration** from North Macedonia to Italy is low. Between 2008 and 2023, an average of 138 North Macedonians were apprehended for irregularly staying in Italy each year (Fig. 2). During this period, Frontex has not recorded any sea landings of North Macedonians via the Central Mediterranean route, indicating the very constrained nature of such migratory flows.

<sup>204</sup> Decreto 4 ottobre 2019, Art 1, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2019/10/07/19A06239/sg>.

<sup>205</sup> Regulation 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02018R1806-20210101>.

Figure 2 North Macedonians irregularly staying in Italy, 2008-2020 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)



In parallel, yearly **asylum** applications from North Macedonians have mostly been low over the last decade, albeit with a few peaks in 2010, 2018, and 2022 (Fig. 3). Even at their highest, these peaks never exceeded 100 applications per year. About a third of asylum applications lodged between 2008 and 2022 were accepted (28%) (Fig. 4). Overall, entries for international protection were numerically lower than those for family reunification and work purposes (Fig. 5).

Figure 3 North Macedonian asylum applications in Italy (1st time applicants), 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)

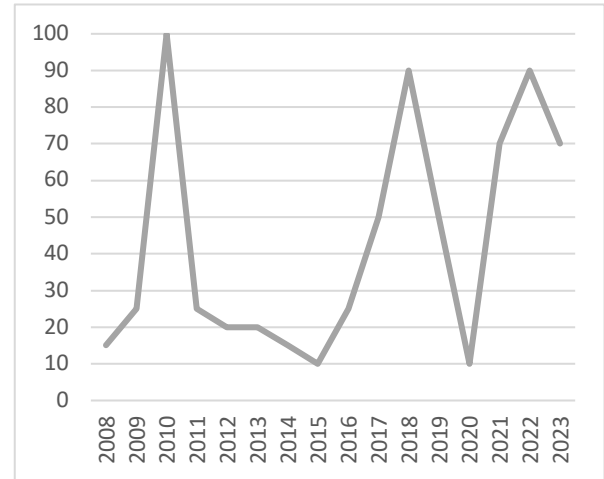


Figure 4 Outcome of North Macedonian asylum applications in Italy, 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)

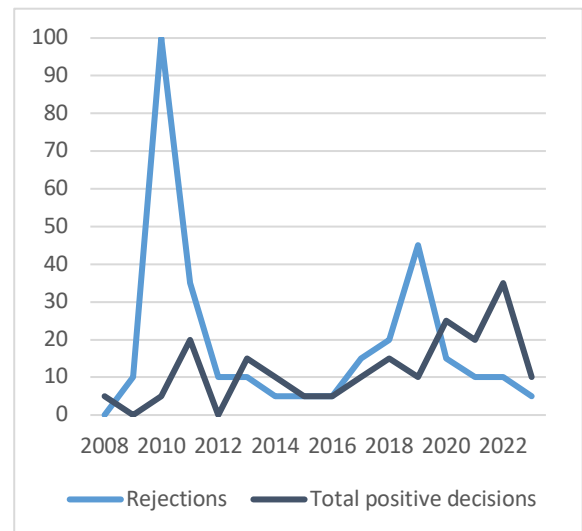
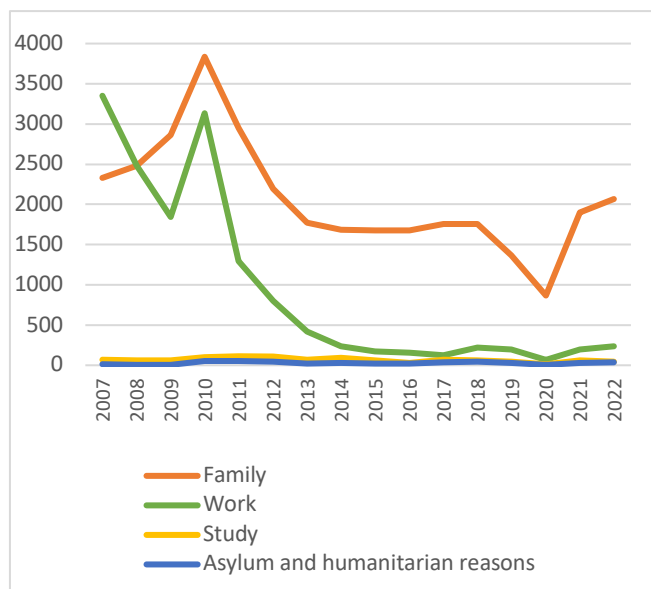


Figure 5 North Macedonian entries in Italy by reason, 2007-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on ISTAT data)



## Italy-North Macedonia cooperation on migration

### *Bilateral political cooperation*

Italy and North Macedonia cooperate on migration through various instruments.

To begin with, the two countries signed a **readmission agreement** in 1997.<sup>206</sup> They subsequently ratified a Protocol in 2015, aiming to outline and enhance the implementation of the EU-North Macedonia readmission agreement of 2007. Despite such agreements, the rate of effective returns to Skopje is not impressive, with

Italy returning only 1 in 5 North Macedonians in 2008-2022 (20%) (Fig. 6).

Additionally, Italy grants reserved **quotas** to North Macedonian nationals (see, for example, Decreto Flussi 2005, 2010, 2016, 2023).

Concerning technical and operational cooperation, Italy and North Macedonia signed a **police cooperation** agreement in 2014, aimed at enhancing the exchange of information and best practices in fields including migrant trafficking, smuggling, and document falsification.<sup>207</sup>

As for **political dialogue**, it is mainly focused on North Macedonia's EU accession process, although some meetings have also discussed migration. For example, in 2017, Foreign Affairs Minister Alfano met with his counterpart Poposki, identifying migration management as a key area for collaboration improvement.<sup>208</sup> Italy and North Macedonia are also involved in *multilateral* discussions on migration, such as the Ministerial meeting between Italy, Albania, Bulgaria and Macedonia in 2023, which discussed migration matters among other topics,<sup>209</sup> and the Defence Cooperation Initiative (DECI), which in 2023 led to

<sup>206</sup> <https://atrio.esteri.it/Search/Allegati/44869>

<sup>207</sup> <https://atrio.esteri.it/Search/Allegati/50663>

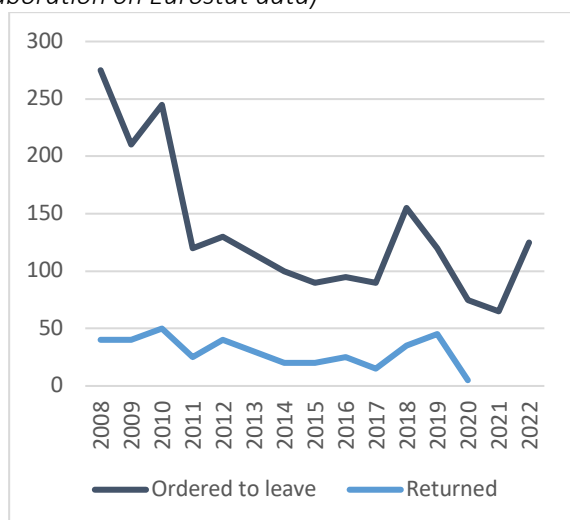
<sup>208</sup> [https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2017/02/monaco-alfano-al-vice-premier-macedone/](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2017/02/monaco-alfano-al-vice-premier-macedone/)

<sup>209</sup>

[https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2023/07/chairs-conclusions-ministerial-meeting-between-italy-albania-bulgaria-north-macedonia-brindisi-27-july-2023/](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2023/07/chairs-conclusions-ministerial-meeting-between-italy-albania-bulgaria-north-macedonia-brindisi-27-july-2023/)

the signature of a joint statement on issues including migration and trafficking.<sup>210</sup>

*Figure 6 North Macedonians ordered to leave and returned by Italy, 2008-2022 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat data)*



### **Bilateral development cooperation**

Italy's development cooperation in North Macedonia started in 1999, and in the early 2000s, Rome was among the leading international donors to the country (MAECI 2006: 41, 2005: 38). Initially, Italian cooperation funds focused on stabilising the country after the domestic conflict of 2001 and supporting the influx of refugees from Kosovo, which brought over 300,000 ethnic-Albanian refugees into North Macedonia. Cooperation projects also focused on health, infrastructure, and the private sector (MAECI 2003: 242, 2006: 41,

2008: 61). In the 2010s, Italy shifted its cooperation efforts towards enhancing governance, fighting organised crime, and integrating minorities, including the ROMA people (MAECI 2011: 121).

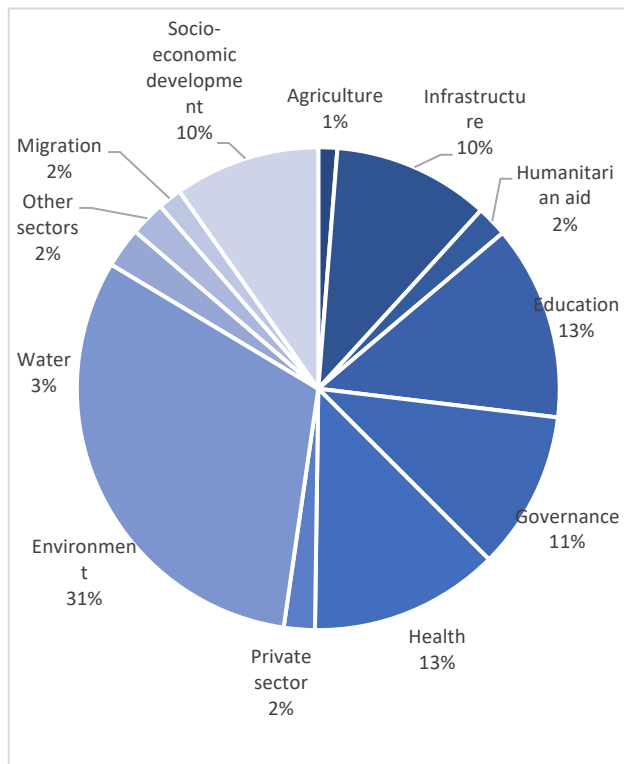
Between 2001 and 2019, the majority of Italy's cooperation funds in North Macedonia were allocated to the **environment** (31%), **health and education** (13% each), and **governance** (11%) sectors (Fig. 7). Only two **migration-related projects** were initiated during this period (on top of scholarships), representing **2%** of all funds. These projects involved support for the voluntary return of irregular migrants<sup>211</sup> and assistance to North Macedonia during the 2015 'migration crisis'.<sup>212</sup>

<sup>210</sup> <https://defence.hu/news/defence-cooperation-initiative-expands-with-north-macedonia.html>

<sup>211</sup> 'Voluntary return assistance for irregular migrants stranded and destitute', €50,096, 2009.

<sup>212</sup> 'Assistenza ai migranti nell'ex Repubblica Jugoslava di Macedonia', €450,000, 2015.

Figure 7 Italian development cooperation in North Macedonia, 2001-2019 (Source: Author's elaboration on MAECI 2001-2019)



## EU-North Macedonia cooperation as an additional framework for Italy's DEPMI

North Macedonia is a candidate country for EU membership, and it entered NATO in 2020.<sup>213</sup> When it comes to migration, North Macedonia has a border management cooperation agreement

with **Frontex** (signed in 2022)<sup>214</sup> and an Operational and Strategic Cooperation Agreement with **Europol**.<sup>215</sup> The EU also signed a **Readmission agreement** with the country in 2007,<sup>216</sup> which is reflected in a high **return rate**: Between 2016 and 2020, 109% of those ordered to leave were effectively returned by EU member states (Fig. 8).

Figure 8 North Macedonians ordered to leave and returned by EU27, 2013-2023 (Source: author's elaboration on Eurostat 2024)



<sup>213</sup> <https://ambskopje.esteri.it/it/italia-e-macedonia-del-nord/>

<sup>214</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/02/24/border-management-eu-concludes-agreement-with-north-macedonia-on-frontex-cooperation/>

<sup>215</sup>

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files>

[/documents/agreement on operational and strategic co-operation between the former Yugoslav republic of macedonia and the european police office.pdf](#)

<sup>216</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22007A1219\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22007A1219(01))

## Overview of Italy's DEP MI in North Macedonia

	Italy-North Macedonia (2000-2020)		EU- North Macedonia
	Political Cooperation	Development Cooperation	
Return & Readmission	1997 Return Agreement, 2015 Protocol	Project to support voluntary return	2007 Agreement
Border Control and Fight against irregular migration	/	Project to support migration management	2022 Border management cooperation agreement with Frontex; Operational and Strategic Cooperation Agreement with Europol.
Fight against human smuggling and trafficking	2014 Police Cooperation Agreement	/	/
Fight against Root Causes	/	/	/
Resettlement, Asylum and International Protection	/	/	/
Legal Mobility	Quotas	Scholarships	/
Visa	/	/	/
Political Dialogue	Bilateral meeting in 2017	/	/

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## DEPMI COUNTRY PROFILE

### Senegal



#### Iole Fontana

#### Migration Outlook: Relevance of flows to Italy and main data

Relevance as a country of origin	High between 2014-2017	Low between 2018-2022
Relevance as a country of transit	Low	
Safe country of origin list <sup>217</sup>	yes	
Schengen Visa Exemption	NO	

Historically considered mainly as a country of destination in the West African region, Senegal has emerged in recent decades as an important country of origin for migrants.<sup>218</sup> International migration from Senegal is characterized by two trends: south-south migration to other African countries (mainly Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Mali, Congo, and Gabon) and south-north migration to Europe (mainly Italy, France, and Spain) (IOM

2018). In 2023, Senegalese citizens became the third largest nationality among the top 10 nationalities of arrivals to Europe, with over 23,430 arrivals.<sup>219</sup> While the Atlantic Route to Spain and the Canary Islands has been active for boat migration since 2006 (IOM 2023), in recent years, migrants of Senegalese nationality have also increasingly taken the central Mediterranean route to Italy.<sup>220</sup>

In terms of **regular migration**, 112,598 individuals were regularly present on the Italian territory in 2023, representing the 12<sup>th</sup> biggest community of foreign residents.<sup>221</sup> Regarding annual regular entries between 2007 and 2022, job and family reunification permits were the most common (see Fig.1). Interestingly, after a peak in 2010, regular entries for job and seasonal work recorded a decreasing trend, with very low numbers between 2015 and 2020. This is partly related to a general closure of immigration entry channels for employment in Italy, also due to the general reduction of annual entry quotas established by governmental Flows Decree (the so-called Decreto Flussi) from 2011 onward (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali 2012).

<sup>217</sup> According to the list of safe countries of origin as indicated by the Italian Decree Decreto 4 ottobre 2019, Art 1, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2019/10/07/19A06239/sg>

<sup>218</sup> <https://www.iom.int/news/senegal-shifts-country-destination-one-transit-and-professional-emigration-iom-migration-profile-finds>

<sup>219</sup> <https://dtm.iom.int/europe/arrivals>

<sup>220</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205>;

<sup>221</sup> According to INSTAT data on foreign residents.

Fig. 1 Senegal - Regular Yearly Entries to Italy by reason of entry (2007-2022).

Source: Author's elaboration from ISTAT

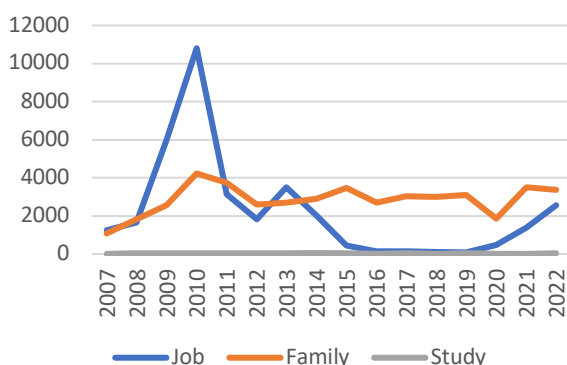
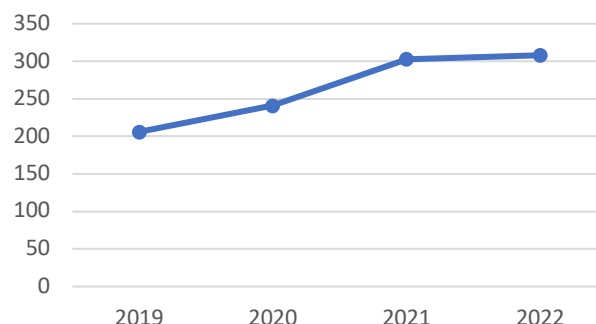
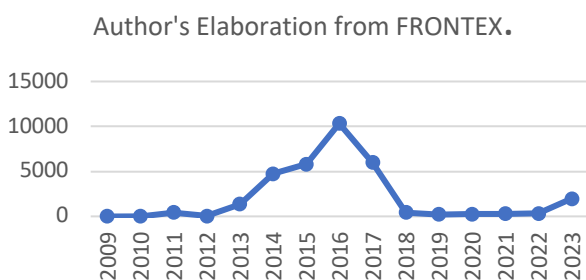


Fig. 3 irregular border crossings from Senegal across the Central Mediterranean Route before and after COVID-19. Source: Elaboration from FRONTEX



The presence of **irregular migrants** has increased in recent years. Between 2014-2017, almost 27,000 Senegalese migrants disembarked in Italy, with more than 10,000 arriving in 2016 alone, making them the sixth largest nationality among irregular arrivals via the central Mediterranean route. New rising trends were recorded in 2023 (Fig. 2). In this regard, **the COVID-19 pandemic** did not have a significant impact on migration flows from the country, which were already quite low but continued to increase slightly (Fig.3).

Fig. 2 FRONTEX Detected border crossings of people from Senegal across the Central Mediterranean Route to Italy. Source: Author's Elaboration from FRONTEX.

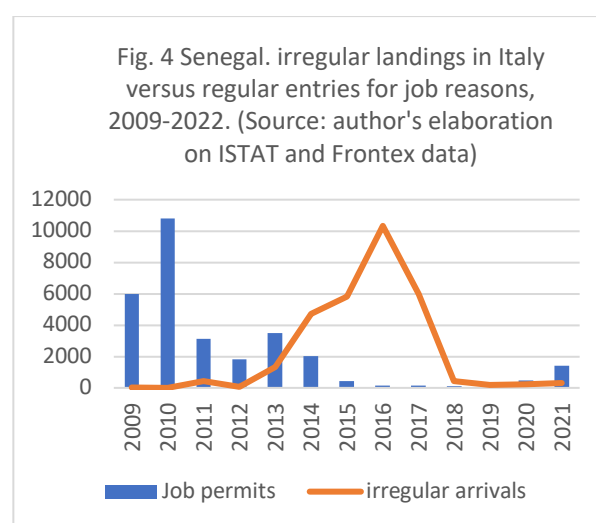


In terms of **root causes**, irregular migration from Senegal is a widespread phenomenon affecting the entire country rather than being confined to specific regions. Many Senegalese view migration as a necessary step to improve their living conditions, particularly when faced with economic hardships (Degli Uberti et al. 2023). For many, migrating to urban centers like Dakar appears to be the only viable option to escape economic constraints and meet their primary needs, with the capital city being an intermediate step before planning international migration to Europe (Fontana 2024). Economic factors, particularly the lack of employment opportunities and economic prospects for the youth, are among the key drivers of this migration trend. Recent data indicates that more than 50% of the Senegalese population is composed of young people under 19 years old (ANSD 2023a), and youth unemployment has increasingly become a major issue, resembling a 'social bomb' poised to trigger even more

migration in the future (Fontana 2024). However, the decision to migrate is influenced by more complex dynamics beyond mere economic survival. Family obligations, social pressures including the desire to escape hierarchical family structures (Degli Uberti et al. 2023; Alassane and Abdoulaye 2022), and the myth of Europe along with the need to escape daily precariousness (Faye et al. 2019), are also key drivers.

Interestingly, climatic factors play a significant role in amplifying existing migration drivers or acting in synergy with them (Fontana 2024). Climate anomalies are increasingly impacting vulnerable groups such as fishermen and farmers, leading to reduced economic opportunities and livelihoods. Senegal is particularly susceptible to irregular and unstable rainfall patterns, which have become more frequent in recent years (Faye et al. 2021; Faty et al. 2017; Funk et al. 2012). These patterns significantly affect agricultural productivity, which is largely rain-dependent (ANSD 2023b). Since the agricultural sector employs 60% of the active population, these climatic anomalies exacerbate economic drivers of migration. Recent studies show that rainfall deficits significantly reduce crop production and influence mobility within the country and towards Europe (Cissé and Seck 2023; Diallo 2023). Similarly, the scarcity of fish is emerging as a significant root cause of out-migration from many regions of the country (Fontana 2024).

Finally, while irregular migration from the country is rooted in a combination of factors, the lack of legal channels for mobility and the difficulty in securing a visa to travel or work in Europe further exacerbate the motives for migration (Fontana 2024; Degli Uberti 2023). Interestingly, looking at the data for Italy, a comparison between regular entries of Senegalese migrants for seasonal and non-seasonal employment, on the one hand, and irregular sea arrivals, on the other, reveals a notable inverse relationship: as opportunities for lawful entry diminish, the rate of irregular entries surges (Fig.4).



Senegal is also considered a **transit country**, mostly along the Western Mediterranean route. According to the IOM, many departures to the Canary Islands are prepared from Senegal, which has increasingly become an important location of embarkation for Guinean and Gambian migrants as well. While it plays a significant transit role for the

Western Mediterranean route, its role for Italy or the Central Mediterranean route is less clear and appears to be less relevant (IOM 2023).

In terms of **asylum**, in line with irregular arrivals, applications from Senegalese asylum seekers to Italy significantly increased between 2014 and 2017, with a yearly average of almost 8,000 asylum applications between 2016 and 2017 (Fig. 5). Residence permits for asylum request, asylum or humanitarian reasons for citizens from Senegal followed the same trend (Fig.6), representing the most significant residence permit if compared to other types (work, family reunification or study reasons) between 2014 and 2017 (Fig.7).

Fig. 5 Senegal. Asylum applications to Italy (2008-2023). Source: Author's elaboration from EUROSTAT

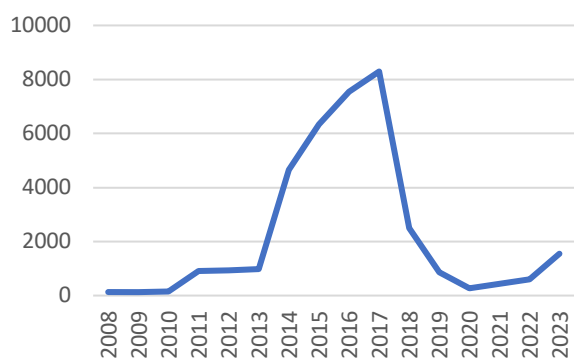


Fig. 6 Senegal- Permits for Asylum, Asylum request, humanitarian reasons (2007-2022). Source: Author's own elaboration from ISTAT

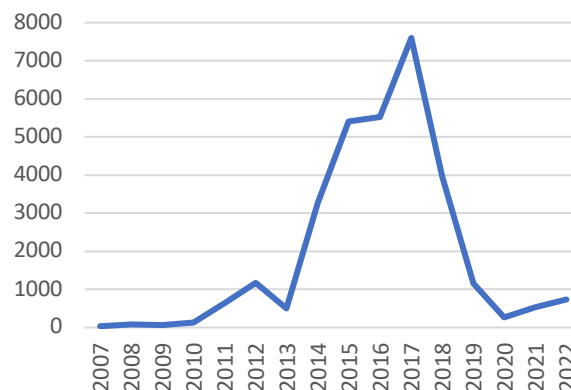
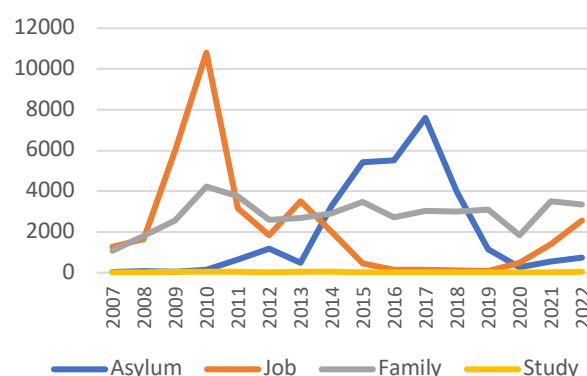
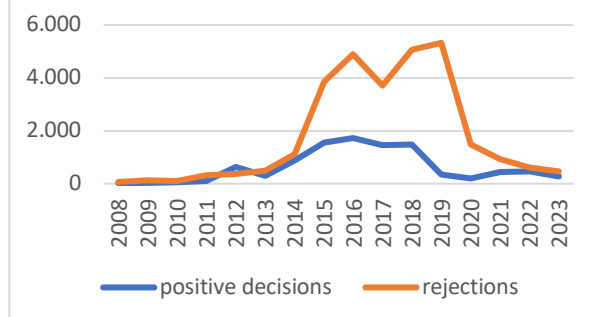


Fig. 7 Senegal- Asylum residence permits compared to other kind of permits (2007-2022). Source: Author's elaboration from ISTAT



In terms of **asylum decisions**, rejection is the most common outcome for asylum applications of Senegalese asylum-seekers to Italy between 2008-2023 (Fig.8). Moreover, with the Decree of 17 March 2023, Senegal is now considered a safe country i.e., a place where there is apparently no persecution, torture, or degrading treatment, and whose asylum applications can therefore be rejected as being manifestly unfounded.

Fig. 8. Senegal. Outcome of asylum applications to Italy. Source: author's elaboration from EUROSTAT



## Italy-Senegal cooperation on migration

### *Bilateral political cooperation*

Political and economic relations between Italy and Senegal are defined by the over 53 agreements, concluded since the 1970s in a variety of sectors.<sup>222</sup>

In terms of **political dialogue**, cooperation on migration was framed within the context of the **Memorandum of Understanding**<sup>223</sup> between Italy and Senegal, signed in **2007**, with the goal of establishing a framework for political dialogue and intensifying bilateral relations across various sectors, including EU-Africa dialogue, economics and trade, development cooperation, and judicial and police cooperation. In this context, Section 8 of

the Memorandum is dedicated to "Bilateral Cooperation on Migration," with the objective of developing dialogue and collaboration to combat irregular migration, human trafficking, and smuggling, while fostering "orderly and agreed" migratory processes. The Memorandum also reaffirms the commitment to initiate negotiations on migration cooperation agreements aimed at preventing irregular migration, promoting the integration of migrants, and strengthening national capacities for managing migratory flows, while providing the basis for high-level meetings.<sup>224</sup>

Political dialogue was boosted in **January 2024**, when, within the framework of the Italy-Africa Summit, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Hon. Antonio Tajani, and the Minister of Economy, Planning, and Cooperation of Senegal, H.E. Doudou Ka, signed in Rome the '**Senegal-Italy Partnership Program 2024-2026**'.<sup>225</sup> Among the other things, the goal of the partnership is to support Senegal's efforts towards sustainable development and **addressing the root causes of irregular migration**, particularly by creating opportunities for education, socio-professional integration, and economic prospects, improving the governance of

<sup>222</sup> For the full list, check 'Archivio Trattati Internazionali Online', Ministero degli Esteri.

<sup>223</sup> <https://atrio.esteri.it/Search/Allegati/49126>

<sup>224</sup> Such as the one in 2015 between former Italian Foreign Minister Gentiloni and his Senegalese counterpart, to strengthen bilateral cooperation on migration. [https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2015/02/gentiloni-incontro-con-il-ministro/](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2015/02/gentiloni-incontro-con-il-ministro/)

<sup>225</sup>

[https://ambdakar.esteri.it/it/news/dall\\_ambasciata/2024/02/il-governo-italiano-ed-il-governo-senegalese-hanno-firmato-il-programma-di-partenariato-senegal-italia-2024-2026-per-un-importo-complessivo-di-105-milioni-di-euro/#:~:text=Cerca%20nel%20sito-,Il%20Governo%20Italiano%20ed%20il%20Governo%20Senegalese%20hanno%20firmato%20il,di%20105%20milioni%20di%20euro](https://ambdakar.esteri.it/it/news/dall_ambasciata/2024/02/il-governo-italiano-ed-il-governo-senegalese-hanno-firmato-il-programma-di-partenariato-senegal-italia-2024-2026-per-un-importo-complessivo-di-105-milioni-di-euro/#:~:text=Cerca%20nel%20sito-,Il%20Governo%20Italiano%20ed%20il%20Governo%20Senegalese%20hanno%20firmato%20il,di%20105%20milioni%20di%20euro)

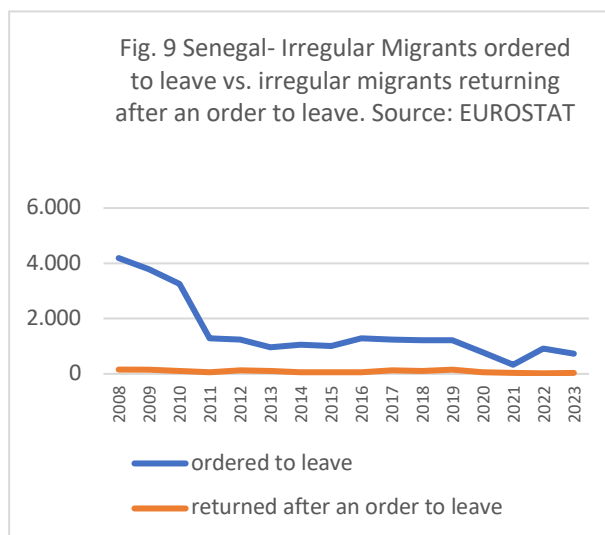
the phenomenon, and ensuring effective and sustainable return, readmission, and reintegration of migrants. Specifically, the Program intends to help bridge the skills gap among young people and the most vulnerable groups, and to support job opportunities that promote stability, inclusive economic growth, social cohesion, and sustainable development.<sup>226</sup>

Beyond political dialogue, migration cooperation was primarily framed within the context of development cooperation, with agreements aimed at supporting the implementation of key projects in this area. Notably, in 2007, an agreement was reached to facilitate the execution of the project ‘Fight against Human Trafficking and Exploitation of Minors’<sup>227</sup>, designed to protect vulnerable populations. Similarly, in 2008, a protocol<sup>228</sup> was signed to promote the valorisation of the Senegalese diaspora in Italy, addressing root causes and enhancing integration efforts. Similarly, in the context of the recently signed Italy-Senegal Partnership, a financial commitment of 105 million euros will support projects aimed at addressing the most vulnerable segments of the population.

**In the fight against irregular migration and in the realm of border control, a Memorandum for Strengthening Police Cooperation** was signed in 2010.<sup>229</sup> This followed similar pilot projects launched with other countries such as The Gambia

(2010), Nigeria (2009), and Niger (2010). The agreement aimed to provide resources and technologies to bolster the Senegalese police forces, including efforts to combat irregular migration. Key components of the memorandum included training courses, the provision of vehicles equipped for border patrol, and devices for identifying fraudulent documents.

In terms of cooperation on **return and readmission**, the Memorandum of Understanding of 2007 affirmed the willingness to develop practical cooperation on readmission. However, no formal readmission agreement was ever signed, with cooperation on readmission being managed only in the framework of police cooperation, with many challenges in terms of effective returns (Fig. 9). Cooperation on return is expected to be relaunched more effectively in the context of the recently signed Italy-Senegal Partnership.



<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> <https://atrio.esteri.it/Search/Allegati/49049>

<sup>228</sup> <https://atrio.esteri.it/Search/Allegati/49179>

<sup>229</sup> <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/9/91303.pdf>

Finally, in terms of **legal mobility**, in 2007, exactly when the first Memorandum of Understanding to establish cooperation on migration was signed, Senegal was offered preferential treatment for the first time in terms of **annual entry quotas** for non-seasonal employment in Italy, being included among the countries listed in the so-called 'Decreto Flusso'.

### ***Bilateral Development Cooperation***

Italy has been implementing development projects in the country since the early 2000s. In 2010, a new partnership cooperation agreement was signed, and in the same year, Senegal was included among the priority countries of Italian development cooperation, also due to its significance as a country of origin for migratory flows (AICS, 2011). This priority status was reconfirmed in the following years (AICS 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019), identifying Senegal as a country of "priority importance for migratory routes" (document Triennale di programmazione 2019-2021). In 2016, the country received over €23 million through Italian cooperation (Fig. 10). Overall, between 2001 and 2022, migration (30%) and agriculture and food security (25%) represented the two most significant sectors of development projects implemented by Italian cooperation.

Fig. 10. Italian Development Cooperation to Senegal (€ Mil.), 2016-2019. Source: elaboration from AICS Reports (2016-2019).

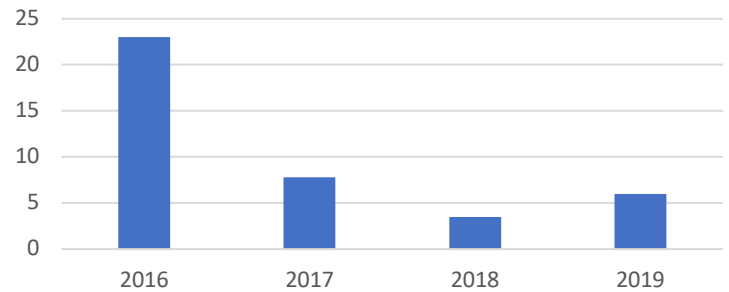
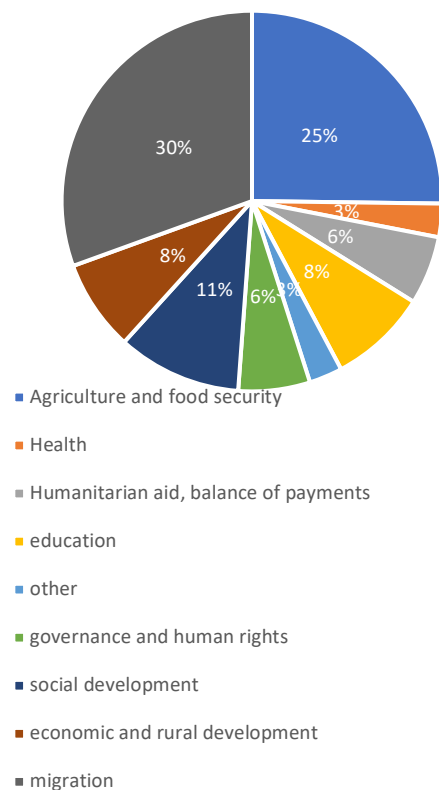
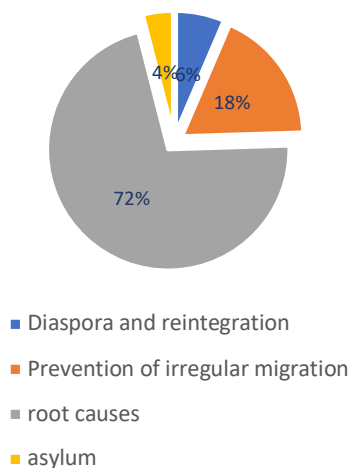


Fig. 11 Main sectors of Italian Development Cooperation in Senegal. Source: Author's Elaboration from the Italian Development Cooperation Reports (2001-2022)



Of the funds addressing migration, the greatest percentage is dedicated to projects that address the root causes of migration and aim to improve employment opportunities for vulnerable categories in different areas of the country (Fig. 12). Many of these projects are co-funded by Italian regions in close cooperation with the Senegalese diaspora and local communities in both Italy and Senegal. Only a small portion is dedicated to scholarships and mobility opportunities for study purposes (Not shown in the graph as it represents an extremely negligible percentage).

Fig. 12 Cooperation projects on migration (2003-2019). Source: Author's elaboration on Italian Dev. Cooperation Reports (2001-2022).



### ***EU-Senegal cooperation as an additional framework for DEPMI***

The EU-Senegal relations are defined within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement, under which a dialogue on migration issues was initiated as early as 2006. Political dialogue on migration was then relaunched in 2016, following the Partnership compact launched by the visit of Commissioner Avramopoulos in Dakar in July 2016.<sup>230</sup> The established political dialogue with Senegal on migration advanced significantly during high-level meetings in April and June 2017. These discussions focused on strengthening cooperation in four main areas: tackling the root causes of migration, enhancing border management and civil registration systems, increasing returns from African countries (including Libya), and facilitating the return of migrants, particularly those who recently arrived via the Central Mediterranean route.<sup>231</sup>

The EU initiated discussions on readmission with Senegal in 2015, but despite Senegal's initial political willingness, efforts to formalize cooperation at the EU level were unsuccessful.<sup>232</sup>

A FRONTEX Risk Analysis Cell was opened in Dakar in 2019, in cooperation with Senegalese authorities within the framework of the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community (AFIC), to improve border

<sup>230</sup> <https://www.statewatch.org/media/3092/eu-council-migration-external-cooperation-5351-22.pdf>

<sup>231</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/4th\\_p](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/4th_p)

[progress\\_report\\_partnership\\_framework\\_with\\_third\\_countries\\_under\\_european\\_agenda\\_on\\_migration.pdf](progress_report_partnership_framework_with_third_countries_under_european_agenda_on_migration.pdf)

<sup>232</sup> <https://www.statewatch.org/media/2287/eu-com-readmission-annex-1-senegal.pdf>

management.<sup>233</sup> In 2022, negotiations were launched to conclude a so-called status agreement that would allow Frontex to operate in Senegal in support of the government in its fight against people smuggling and irregular migration.<sup>234</sup> Finally, Senegal is also a priority country in the context of the EU Trust Fund for Africa, with 10 ongoing national projects to address the root causes of migration and prevent irregular movements.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/frontex-opens-risk-analysis-cell-in-senegal-6nkN3B>

<sup>234</sup> [https://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Land-and-sea-border-](https://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Land-and-sea-border-externalization-a-view-from-Senegal-and-Mauritania.pdf)

[externalization-a-view-from-Senegal-and-Mauritania.pdf](https://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Land-and-sea-border-externalization-a-view-from-Senegal-and-Mauritania.pdf)

<sup>235</sup>

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## Overview of Italy's DEPMI in Senegal

	Italy-Senegal (2000-2020)		EU- Senegal
	Political Cooperation	Development Cooperation	
Return & Readmission	managed only in the framework of police cooperation. Cooperation on return is expected to be relaunched more effectively in the context of the recently signed Italy-Senegal Partnership.		No formal agreement
Border Control and Fight against irregular migration	Memorandum for Strengthening Police Cooperation (2010)	Yes	Frontex risk analysis cell (2019); negotiations ongoing for a Frontex Status agreement (since 2022)
Fight against human smuggling and trafficking		Yes	/
Fight against Root Causes	Senegal-Italy Partnership Program (2024)	Yes	/
Resettlement, Asylum and International Protection		Yes	/
Legal Mobility	Quotas (2007)	Yes, including a Protocol for the valorisation of Senegalese diaspora	/
Visa	/	/	/
Political Dialogue	Memorandum of Understanding (2007)  Senegal-Italy Partnership Program (2024)	/	High level dialogue on migration

## DEPMI COUNTRY PROFILE

### Sri Lanka



Sahizer Samuk

#### Migration Outlook: Relevance of flows to Italy and main data

Relevance as a country of origin	High till 2010
	Low after 2010
Relevance as a country of transit	No
Safe country of origin list <sup>236</sup>	Yes
Schengen Visa Exemption	No

Sri Lanka is one of the countries that have a long historical migration tie with Italy. It is a source of legal migration more than illegal migration. Legal migration consists mostly of labour migration and the family reunification for Sri Lankans living in Italy.

**Regular entries** (see Fig. 1 below) from Sri Lanka declined significantly after 2009. As seen in Fig. 1 the Sri Lankan emigration in general is in decline after 2010 due to the fact that Sri Lanka had an end

to civil conflict in 2009. Furthermore, in 2010 Sri Lanka was already categorised as a middle-income emerging market by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Italian Development Cooperation Report 2009).

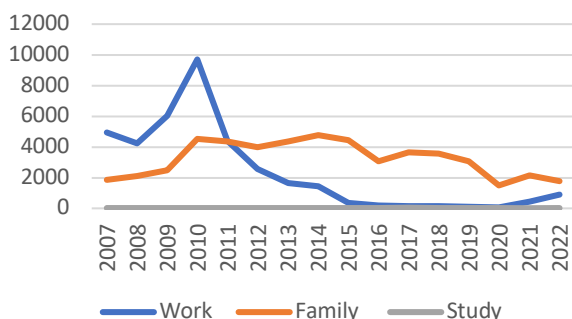
Fig 1. also demonstrates that the student migration has always been very low from 2008 till 2022. Till 2010, the work permits were at an increase, sharply declining after 2010. This decline in work permits from 2009 continues up to 2015 and in 2015, it is less than one fourth of the previous year (2014). However, the family permits continue to be stabilised around 3000-4000 per year as they are based on family reunification. The numbers of work permit start to catch up in 2022, only to one tenth of what it was in 2008.

Looking at the last year of regular entries, it is seen that in 2022, there were 3059 regular entries of Sri Lankans, slightly higher than the previous year 2021, where the regular entries were 2767. A report by the Ministry of Labour declared that the legally residing Sri Lankans are 104,688 as on 1 January 2020<sup>237</sup>. The legally residing Sri Lankans in Italy as of 2022, is 110,514 (Author's own calculation from ISTAT 2022).

<sup>236</sup> Safe country list is determined according to the Decreto 7 Maggio 2024.

<sup>237</sup> <https://integrazionemigranti.gov.it/en-gb/Dettaglio-approfondimento/id/7/National-Report-on-the-main-foreign-communities-in-Italy>

Fig 1. Regular yearly entries to Italy by reason of entry (2007-2022). Source: Author's own elaboration from ISTAT



In terms of root causes, Sri Lanka had a civil war between Tamil separatists and the Sinhalese Government since 1983. Sri Lanka had gone through terror and repression by the right-wing government between 1987 and 1991 (De Alwis 1998). Additionally, “it was in the context of the complications generated by the market and structural reforms and the escalating ethnic and political violence that transnational migration became a popular alternative for young Sri Lankan fishermen” (Brown 2011, 44). Combined with other structural reasons such as economic and social difficulties, the Sri Lankans decided to migrate and the first emigration to Italy started in the 1970s. In the beginning, it was in the form of both legal and illegal migration as they had to pay 3000 USD each to be taken to Italy (Collyer and Pathirage 2001; Henayaka-Lohbihler Lambusta 2004). The legal migration was primarily female

migration organised by Catholic missionaries in the 1970s (Nare 2010). Sri Lankan migration into Italy has its particularities: both men and women work in the domestic service sector (Nare 2010, 68). The immigration into Italy continued “in the form of family reunification with Dini Decree (Jayawerdena 2020), sponsorship, so called “nominative calls” (formal requests made by an employer ensuring a job to a foreigner) (Jayawerdena 2020), smuggling and also Schengen visas to the third country” (Nare 2010, 68).

Although it was a temporary destination most of the Sri Lankans settled in Italy permanently for two reasons (Jayawerdena 2020, 110): The first is more economic prosperity than Sri Lanka; the second is 1995 Schengen visa that would give them the possibility to move after having an Italian passport. It should be also noted that Agreement on Bilateral Cooperation on Labour Migration between the Government of the Italian Republic and the Government of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka in 2011 has increased the short-term labour migration as it was “determined to improve seasonal work mechanisms”<sup>238</sup>.

The second decline in emigration numbers started in 2014, contributing also to the decline of remittances (Weeraratne 2016). Total emigration from Sri Lanka to all destination countries fell almost by 270000, with the female emigration

<sup>238</sup> [Agreement on bilateral cooperation on labour migration between the government of the Italian](#)

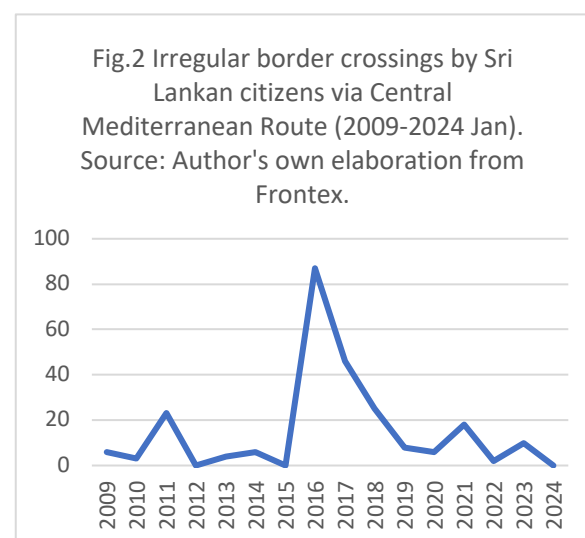
[republic and the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka](#)

falling by 34% and the skilled migrant workers' numbers increasing by 31% (ibid.). The reason for this decline can be due to the reforms and democratic transition(s) in the country. After the presidential elections in 2015, there were positive developments such as the fact that UNHCR adopted a resolution under which Sri Lanka promised to undertake many human rights reforms<sup>239</sup>. However, at the same time, certain human rights indicators did not improve due to the repressive measures of the government. In addition to this information, it is suggested that the decline in the emigration numbers from Sri Lanka in general was a result of the low oil prices and political problems in the Middle East<sup>240</sup>. Hence, the demand for Sri Lankan migrant workers was reduced. Sri Lanka was not sending migrant workers only to Italy but to the Middle East to a great extent.

**As a transit country,** Sri Lanka does not play a major role for immigration routes to Italy. Most of the migrants in Sri Lanka come from Asian countries, especially India and Malaysia; the second largest group is from Europe<sup>241</sup>. The refugees in Sri Lanka migrate from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iran, Yemen, Palestine and Nigeria and others<sup>242</sup> and their numbers are quite low (less than 100 in many of these cases). There are also internally displaced Sri Lankans due to

environmental disasters<sup>243</sup>. However, Sri Lanka does not seem to be a transit country for Italy in a significant way.

**Irregular migration** (see Fig. 2) shows that there was a slight increase in 2010 and a much more significant increase in irregular border crossings in 2015, even if numbers remain low. The peak is in 2016 with 87 irregular border crossings (see Fig. 2). However, the numbers start to lower from 2016 to 2019. A slight increase is observed in 2020. Remarkably, as the legal migration (due to work permits) starts to decrease in 2015, irregular migration starts to surge in 2016 (Fig.3).



<sup>239</sup> <https://www.asyluminsight.com/sri-lanka>

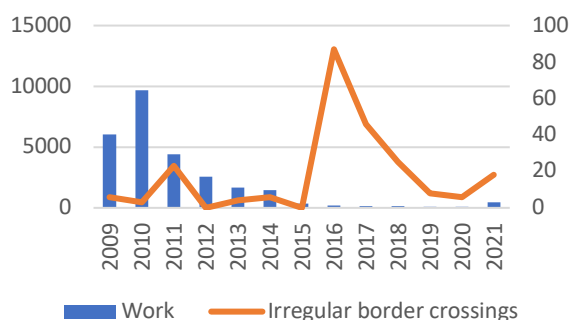
<sup>240</sup> <https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-migrant-worker-outflow-fell-in-2015-central-bank-4505/>

<sup>241</sup> <https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/sri-lanka/>

<sup>242</sup> <https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/sri-lanka/>

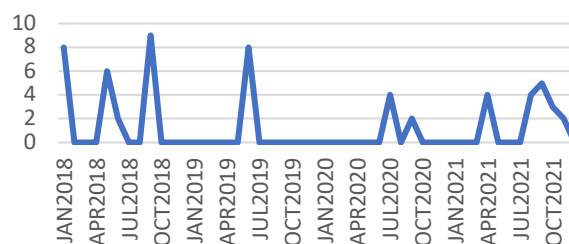
<sup>243</sup> <https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/sri-lanka/>

Fig. 3 Comparison of Regular Entries for Work by Sri Lankan citizens with Irregular Border Crossings (2009-2022). Source: Author's own elaboration from Istat and Frontex



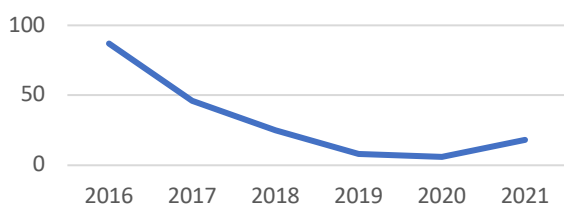
the summer months of 2021, there is a slight rise from zero to less than six, which is quite negligible.

Fig. 5 Irregular border crossings from Sri Lanka across the Central Mediterranean Route before and after Covid-19 (2018-2021). Source: Author's own elaboration from Frontex



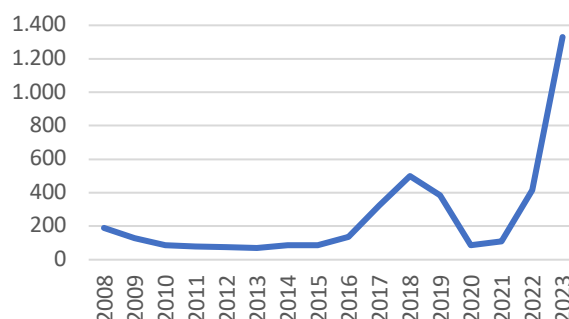
During the **Covid-19 period**, the data shows that (see Fig. 4) the irregular border crossings were quite low in 2019 and 2020 with a slightly rising number up to 20, in 2021. And yet, it has never been as high as the numbers in 2016.

Fig. 4 Irregular border crossings from Sri Lanka across the Central Mediterranean Route before and after Covid-19 (2016-2021). Source: Author's own elaboration from Frontex



**Asylum applications** (see Fig. 6) by Sri Lankans remain quite low between 2008 and 2016. They start to slightly increase in 2016, reaching almost 500 asylum applicants in 2018. Afterwards, it decreases till 2020, reaching a low point of 85 applications. After 2021, after Covid-19, the asylum applications peak almost up to 1330 people in 2023 (see Fig. 6).

Fig. 6 Asylum applications by Sri Lankan citizens (2008-2023). Source: Author's own elaboration from Eurostat

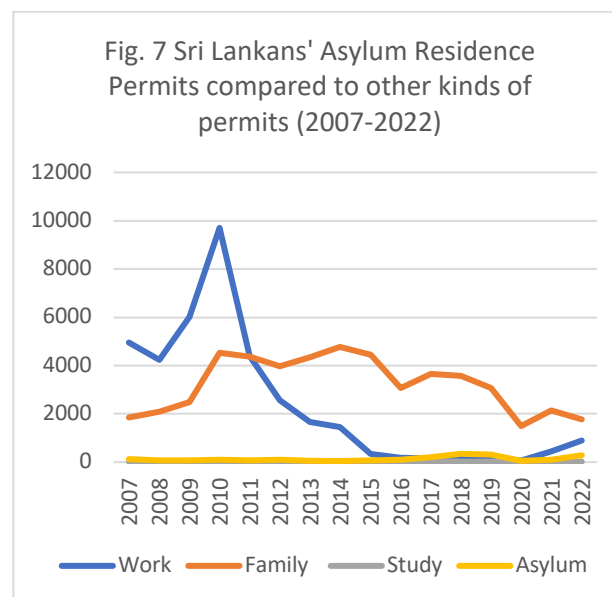


Complementing this information, Fig. 5 demonstrates the period of Covid-19 monthly: at the height of the pandemic, in 2020 the numbers are zero and in the last phases of the Covid-19, in

Despite the fact that in January 2015 the opposition won, the human rights violations continued in different forms: for instance, the government continued to detain people under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and the police continued to have uncontrolled powers causing torture and ill-treatment of people under detention and in prison<sup>244</sup>. This can be one of the main reasons for the rise in 2015 and 2016 in the number of asylum applications. The rise in 2021 and the peak in 2023 can be explained with similar circumstances including repression of the religious minorities (such as non-Buddhist communities like Muslims) and the political and economic crisis due to the Covid-19 period. In 2021, “the UNHCR issued a directive strongly criticizing the Sri Lankan presidency for its lack of respect for the rights of minorities, and for not having fulfilled the commitment to prosecute the perpetrators of the crimes committed by the military during the civil war (1983-2009). The European Parliament, likewise, put strong pressure on the Colombo government, suggesting that the country could lose its commercial privileges currently granted by the EU.”<sup>245</sup>

When Sri Lankans’ asylum residence permits are compared to the work, family and study permits, the asylum permits follow a similar trend to the student permits according to Fig. 7 (see below)

from 2007 to 2020. It can be inferred that the asylum applications to Italy have never been partially high apart from the period in between 2017 and 2019 together with the period between 2020 and 2022. The highest numbers of asylum permits were 345 in 2018, 299 in 2019, and 272 in 2022 (see Fig. 7).

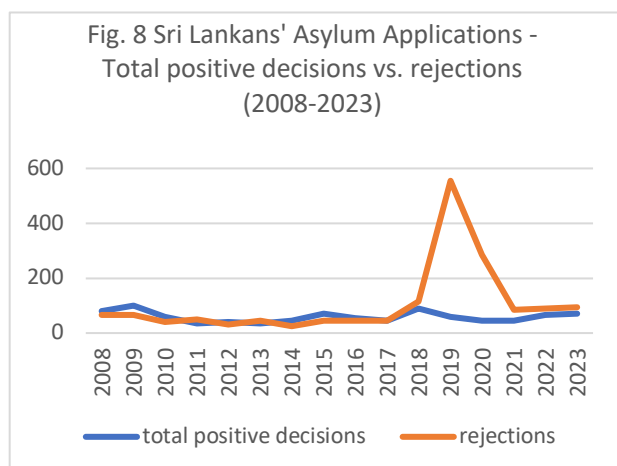


**Concerning the asylum decisions** (total positive decisions vs. rejections) (see Fig. 8 above), it can be seen that the decisions on both sides are quite balanced (half rejected, half accepted) till 2018. However, from 2018 to 2021 (the period including the pandemic) there is a peak in rejections in asylum applications of Sri Lankans (see Fig. 8). This rejection is not only concerning the Sri Lankan asylum applicants but in general, all the asylum applicants as Italy rejected a record number of

<sup>244</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/sri-lanka>

<sup>245</sup> <https://www.asiamaior.org/the-journal/15-asia-maior-vol-xxxii-2021/sri-lanka-in-2021-from-pandemic-emergency-to-political-and-economic-crisis.html>

asylum seekers in 2019<sup>246</sup>, following the implementation of the first Security Decree.



## Italy-Sri Lanka cooperation on migration

### *Bilateral political cooperation*

There are 16 agreements signed between Sri Lanka and Italy, with cooperation ongoing since 1873.<sup>247</sup> These agreements include social, economic, political and jurisdictional cooperation regarding a wide variety of themes<sup>248</sup>. In addition to these, the economic ties<sup>249</sup> between Italy and Sri Lanka have been strengthened since 1998 when Sri Lanka-Italy

Business Council was established in order “to promote investment, trade and joint venture between Sri Lanka and Italy”<sup>250</sup>.

In this context, cooperation on migration has been intense. In terms of **return and readmission**, the two countries signed in **2001** an ‘Exchange of notes concerning the readmission of migrants in irregular position (**Scambio di Note in Materia di Riammissione di Immigrati con Posizione Irregolare**)’. This five years renewable Readmission Agreement aimed to return both irregular Sri Lankan nationals and other irregular migrants, who transited via Sri Lanka<sup>251</sup>. Despite the agreement, there has always been a significant gap between those who are ordered to leave due to their irregular position, and those who are effectively returned to Sri Lanka (Fig.9)

In terms of legal mobility, the two countries concluded in 2011 an **Agreement on Bilateral Cooperation on Labour Migration**<sup>252</sup> which included, among the other things, developing

<sup>246</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/14/italy-rejects-record-number-of-asylum-applications>

<sup>247</sup> The agreements date back to the end of 1800s. This means that there is a close cultural, economic and political cooperation between these two countries <https://srilankaembassyrome.org/sri-lanka-profile/italy-sri-lanka-bilateral-relation/>

<sup>248</sup> For the details, please check ‘Archivio Trattati Internazionali Online’, Ministero degli Esteri.

<sup>249</sup> The trade relations between these two countries are demonstrated in terms of the volume of the trade. In

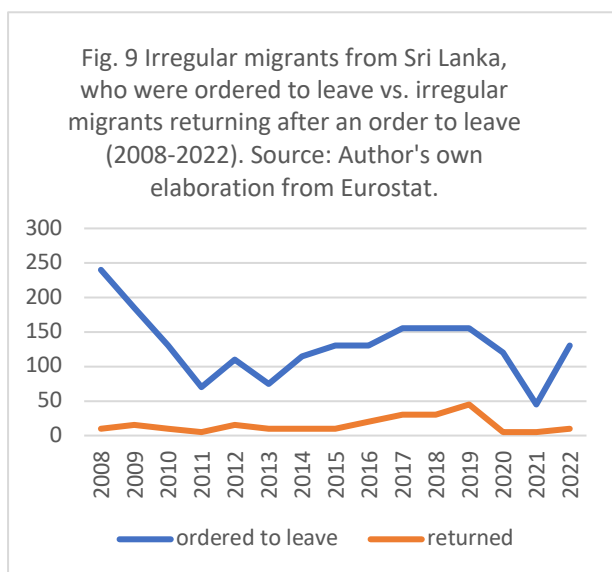
2018 Italy has been the 5th largest single buyer of Sri Lanka’s exports, whereas Italy has been the 21st largest supplier for Sri Lanka with a share of 1.1% in the year 2017 <https://srilankaembassyrome.org/trade-investment/italy-sri-lanka-trade-relations/>

<sup>250</sup> <https://ambcolombo.esteri.it/en/italia-e-sri-lanka/diplomazia-economica/>

<sup>251</sup> DEMIG (2015) DEMIG POLICY, version 1.3, Online Edition. Oxford: International Migration Institute, University of Oxford. [www.migrationdeterminants.eu](http://www.migrationdeterminants.eu)

<sup>252</sup> [https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/accordi-bilaterali/Documents/SL\\_accordoFirmatoIT.pdf](https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/accordi-bilaterali/Documents/SL_accordoFirmatoIT.pdf)

friendly relations and cooperation between these nations, acting in line with the international conventions supporting the fundamental rights of migrant workers, promoting and managing migration flows, improving seasonal work mechanisms and inserting Sri Lankan nationals into the Italian labour market in the case of shortage of local manpower.



Labour migrants from Sri Lanka (both men and women) have always been an important source of labour for Italy, in the seasonal work and domestic sector. Accordingly, in 2023, Minister of Labour and Foreign Employment Manusha Nanayakkara and the Italian Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Damiano Francovich, held **bilateral talks with the aim to reinforce labour migration** cooperation including training centres (for predeparture training) for Sri

Lankan individuals before they leave for work in Italy<sup>253</sup>. Moreover, in **2021**, the **Agreement for Collaboration on Cultural, Instructional, Scientific and Technological Cooperation**<sup>254</sup> provided a new framework for scientific collaboration in terms of scholarships and exchanges.

Sri Lanka has also been included as a priority country of Italian Flow Decrees since 2002. **Recent Flow Decree (2023-2025) continues this trend**, with quotas for seasonal employment in the agricultural and tourism sector equal to 82550 persons in 2023, 89050 persons for 2024, and 93550 persons for 2025 allowed in total from Algeria, Bangladesh, Ivory Coast, Philippines, India, Morocco, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Ukraine<sup>255</sup>. The same quota for non-seasonal jobs is 37000, 45000 and 53000 in 2023, 2024, 2025 respectively<sup>256</sup> for the same countries (who also have a cooperation on migration management with Italy).

**In terms of political dialogue**, a **Memorandum of Understanding** is currently being negotiated between Italy and Sri Lanka, which would involve holding high-level meetings every two years at

<sup>253</sup> <https://english.theleader.lk/news/6380-sri-lanka-and-italy-aim-to-strengthen-labour-migration-cooperation>

<sup>254</sup> <https://atrio.esteri.it/Search/Allegati/49004>

<sup>255</sup> <https://toffoletto.dela.it/en/flow-decree-2023-2025-prime-ministerial-decree-published/>

<sup>256</sup> <https://toffoletto.dela.it/en/flow-decree-2023-2025-prime-ministerial-decree-published/>

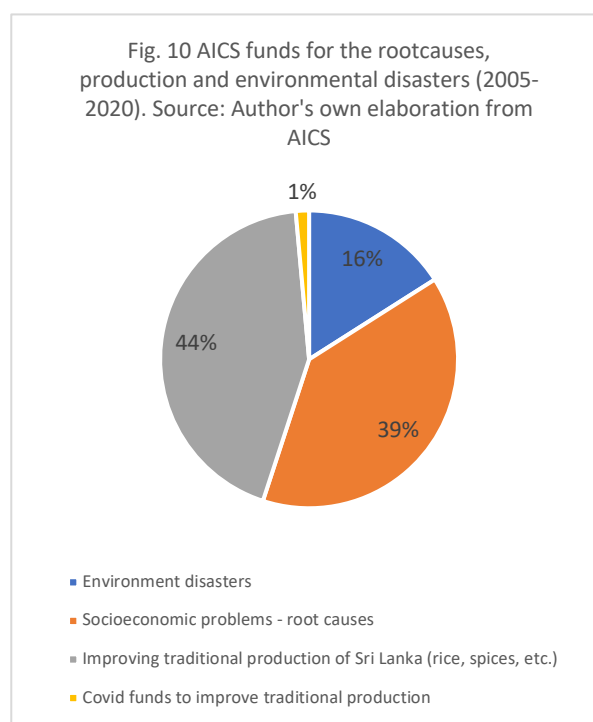
least, in order to discuss the issues of mutual interest to both<sup>257</sup>.

In addition to these collaboration(s), in 2003, the inaugural meeting of the Colombo Process (CP) took place in Colombo, involving 11 participating states (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam) and eight Observer States (including Bahrain, Italy, Kuwait, Malaysia, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates)<sup>258</sup>. The Colombo Process was launched in order to learn from lessons on labour migration management, consult on issues faced by migrants in both sending and receiving countries, find resolutions to problems migrant workers face, increase development benefits from bilateral cooperation on labour migration and reinforce dialogue with countries of destination (in this case, observer countries seen above); and monitor the implementation of recommendations<sup>259</sup>. Finally, IOM has been a facilitator in these meetings.

### Bilateral Development Cooperation

Italian development cooperation has long been active in the country, with around 17 million euros provided in 2005, and a yearly average of around 2 million euros provided in the subsequent years until 2016.<sup>260</sup> In 2016, Italy contributed to 16

development projects in Sri Lanka with a total of 2103468 Euros<sup>261</sup>, of which 43% was spent on infrastructure, 51% on humanitarian aid and 5% on production sectors<sup>262</sup>. A calculation of funds directed to Sri Lanka from AICS between 2005 and 2020, finds that most of the funds are either for **supporting local production or fighting socioeconomic problems of the country, meaning root causes for migration** (see Fig. 10 below). The third most important development cooperation was provided on fighting environment disasters (Fig. 10).



Source: <http://openaid.esteri.it/en/code-lists/recipients/640/> accessed on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 2024.

<sup>257</sup> <https://ambcolombo.esteri.it/en/italia-e-sri-lanka/>

<sup>258</sup> [https://mfasia.org/mfa\\_programs/advocacy/colombo-process/](https://mfasia.org/mfa_programs/advocacy/colombo-process/)

<sup>259</sup> [https://mfasia.org/mfa\\_programs/advocacy/colombo-process/](https://mfasia.org/mfa_programs/advocacy/colombo-process/)

<sup>260</sup> <http://openaid.esteri.it/en/code-lists/recipients/640/?year=2016>

<sup>261</sup> <http://openaid.esteri.it/en/code-lists/recipients/640/?year=2016>

<sup>262</sup> <http://openaid.esteri.it/en/code-lists/recipients/640/?year=2016>

Looking at the Italian development cooperation reports (2001-2019) and as shown in fig.10, almost 40% of funds were tailored to socio-economic problems, including addressing the root causes which were a priority until 2015. Other funds were related to post-Tsunami aid, humanitarian aid, education and health, demining and infrastructure (e.g. rebuilding houses, hospitals, schools).

### **EU-Sri Lanka cooperation as an additional framework for Italy's DEPMI**

As a part of **multilateral cooperation on migration**, the EU has multilevel collaboration(s) with Sri Lanka. First and foremost, the EU signed a **readmission agreement with Sri Lanka** in March 2005. In line with this agreement, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is responsible for "Technical Assistance to the Government of Sri Lanka for the Implementation of the Readmission Agreement with the EU" (2018-2020)<sup>263</sup>. The aim of the Readmission Agreement is to fight illegal migration more effectively<sup>264</sup>. Furthermore, in order to combat irregular migration and to prevent the exploitation of migrant workers, in 2023, Sri Lanka entered into partnerships with countries such as Myanmar, Bangladesh and Switzerland<sup>265</sup>.

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## Overview of DEPMI in Sri Lanka

	Italy-Sri Lanka (2000-2023)		EU-Sri Lanka broader cooperation framework
	Political Cooperation	Development Cooperation	
Return & Readmission	2001 Readmission Agreement		2005 Readmission Agreement
Border Control and Fight against irregular migration			
Fight against human smuggling and trafficking			
Fight against Root Causes		Directorate general for Development Cooperation, Fao, Italian Red Cross, Unicef, WFP are all collaborators in the areas to address root causes (social and economic crisis, rebuilding of houses, schools and hospitals, helping agriculture and fishing, helping minors and women after the war, establishing peace and stability).	<p>Until 2013, EU development cooperation in Sri Lanka focused mainly on <b>supporting post-war reconstruction and poverty reduction</b> in the North and East through sustainable integrated district development.</p> <p>In the 2014-2020 period, the main priorities of EU development cooperation in Sri Lanka were to support <b>integrated rural development, democratic governance, and reconciliation.</b>" (EEAS webpage)</p>
Resettlement, Asylum and International Protection			
Legal Mobility	<p>Colombo Process (2003)</p> <p>The Agreement on Bilateral Cooperation on Labour Migration (2011)</p> <p>Bilateral talks to reinforce labour migration (2023)</p>		

	Recent Flow Decree of Italy (2023-2025)		
Visa			
Political Dialogue	Memorandum of Understanding (ongoing process)		