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The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Migrations Flows Between Italy and North Africa

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CARIM
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Series on the Impact of the Economic Crisis
on South and East Mediterranean Migration

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- Mediterranean migration database;
- Research and publications;
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Abstract

Understanding the impact of the current economic crisis on migration flows is not a trivial issue due to the interplay of several determinants. So far, there is little statistical evidence on the nature and magnitude of this impact and only hypotheses and scenarios can be advanced. This paper aims to fill this gap by trying to assess the effects of the crisis on migration flows between North African countries and Italy. By using up-to-date empirical data and statistics, we find evidence of a twofold trend during 2008: 1) labour migration flows have slightly decreased; 2) undocumented migration has instead increased. Beyond economic factors, several explanations are provided to describe these dynamics. Finally, policy implications and potential solutions are discussed, by focusing in particular on the role of circular migrations.

Résumé

La compréhension de l'impact de la crise économique actuelle sur les évolutions récentes des flux migratoires n'est pas une question facile à traiter en raison de l'interaction de plusieurs facteurs. Il y a encore très peu de statistiques sur le phénomène et l'on ne peut qu'avancer des hypothèses et des scénarios. Cette étude, se propose de détecter les effets de la crise sur les flux migratoires entre l'Afrique du Nord et l'Italie. A partir de données récentes, l'article dégage deux tendances contrastées au cours de l'année 2008: 1) les migrations de travail ont diminué légèrement ; 2) les migrations illégales ont augmenté. Mis à part les facteurs économiques, plusieurs explications sont fournies pour expliquer ces tendances. En outre, les implications politiques et des solutions possibles sont analysées en se concentrant en particulier sur le rôle des migrations circulaires.

Introduction

The international debate on the effect of the current global economic crisis on migration flows started in the US. Immigration analysts and policymakers wondered on the response of immigrants to the global downturn. Questions such as "will the immigrants leave the US as certain job sectors contract?" and "would-be immigrants decide to not come at all to US?" arose (Papademetriou and Terrazas, 2009 p. 1). Trough and in deep study on US migrations –including immigrant population already in the US and future immigration flows- Papademetriou and Terrazas found no evidence on changing legal migration flows related to economic crisis in the US. The growing number of returns, especially to Mexico, could be explained according to the authors, with the changing economic situation in countries of origin and not in the US. So far, only illegal migration flows showed to be more sensitive to economic crisis because more responsive to US labour market and economic needs.

The effects of economic crisis on migration flows in the European Union have been studied by Papademetriou, Sumption and Somerville (2009). According to their analysis, the impact of global crisis on migration flows will depend on migration category and on the specific characteristics of the host country. There is so far little statistical evidence on the nature and magnitude of this impact and only hypotheses and scenarios have been advanced.

Our aim is to document the phenomenon with up-to-date empirical data and statistics, to analyse current trends and, eventually, to speculate on future ones. It will address in particular to migration flows between Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries and Italy. Italian emigration has been for long time much more famous than foreign migration to Italy. Since the 80's this trend has been reversed: Italy has nowadays together with Spain and Ireland, the highest net migration rate in Europe. During the last 10 years the number of foreigners residents in Italy grew at a very fast pace. The Italian foreign-born population has quadrupled from about 1 million in 1996 to about 4 million in 2009[1].

Immigrants from Europe account for more than an half (52%) of foreigners living in Italy. The first foreign community is the Romanian, followed by the Albanian and the Moroccan. Immigrants from Africa represent 23% of the foreign population resident in Italy, followed by Asian (16%) and American (9%). Nevertheless forecast on future foreign born population predicts a stabilisation process for Eastern European residents in Italy and an explosion for Latin America (Ecuador and Peru), Asia (Philippines, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India), and Africa (Senegal, Nigeria and Egypt) (ISMU, 2008).

Looking at the two major past financial crisis occurred in the second half of the 20th century, i.e. the Asian financial crisis of the late 90's and the 1973 oil crisis, we notice a very different effects on migration. During the Asian financial crisis the number of migrants has fluctuated in few Asian countries and it has surprisingly risen constantly in other countries. This happened despite the fact that a certain number of governments applied a restrictive migration policy during the crisis, including deportation of guest workers. On the contrary, the oil crisis of 1973 had a large impact on migrations. Since that time Gulf countries became a large importer of foreign-born workers; additionally the post-crisis recession ended the era of guest workers immigration to Europe. Anyway, after 1973 in Europe did not start a wave of return migration among non-European migrants (World Bank, 2008).

Building on those previous studies assumptions we are going to analyse the effects of the economic crisis on migration flows in Italy. Trying to assess in particular the impact of the crisis on the corridor North Africa/Italy, we are going to focus on the following questions:

- How the stock of immigrants in Italy changed since the recession began?
- How migration flows to Italy changed since the recession began?

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[1] For an in deep presentation of international migration in Italy see ISMU 2008 and Bonifazi et al. 2009

- In addition to economic reasons, what other factors might explain changes in immigration flows observed from the beginning of the crisis?
- What changes can be observed in the economic and policy context of migration?
- What changes can be observed in migration-related flows of money and goods?

1. The global economic crisis in Italy and in the departure countries

Before starting the analysis of the effect of the global downturn on migration, we should present how the Italian and Northern African economies were affected by the crisis.

Economic recession started in Italy in the early 2008: Italian GDP growth decreased in 2008 by 1% and it is expected to continue its fall in 2009 (tables 1-3). According to OECD "the recession in Italy, is likely to extend through much of 2009, as in many other OECD countries". In the Italian case, global financial crisis hit in fact "an economy already weakened by several years of low productivity growth, deteriorating competitiveness and high public debt, though solid job creation and falling unemployment had been bright spots" (OECD, 2008 p.1). The Italian economy is projected to experience a gradual recovery in 2010 (OECD, 2008 and IMF, 2009).

The financial crisis implied a general climate of uncertainty that decreased household wealth and consumer demand. In addition households and businesses were induced to postpone expenditures, reducing demand for consumer and capital goods. At the same time, households are curtailing production and trade because of widespread disruptions in credit (table 1).

Table 1. Italy, GDP, Domestic Demand and International Trade 2005-2008

Year	*Gross Domestic Product*	*Gross Private Domestic Investment*	*Household Consumption Expenditures*	*Government Consumption and Gross investment Expenditures*	*Domestic Demand*	*Gross Exports of Goods and Services*	*Gross Imports of Goods and Services*
2005	0.7	0.8	1.1	1.9	0.9	1.1	2.1
2006	2.0	2.9	1.2	0.5	2.0	6.2	5.9
2007	1.6	2.0	1.2	1.0	1.3	4.6	3.8
2008	-1.0	-3.0	-0.9	0.6	-1.3	-3.7	-4.5
Quarter				2008			
I	1.3	-1.0	-0.5	0.0	0.2	-0.7	-4.6
II	-2.6	-2.0	-3.0	2.2	-2.7	-3.8	-4.4
III	-2.7	-6.9	0.7	0.4	-0.8	-9.2	-2.7
IV	-7.5	-25.0	-3.2	0.0	-6.0	-26.6	-22.1

Source: Banca d'Italia, L'economia italiana in breve, N. 23 - Marzo 2009

The Italian industrial production fell by 3.1% during 2008: in the forth quarter of 2008 it was recorded the worst negative record since 30 years. The most part of industrial sectors are facing a hard period. The automobile sector, among the sectors most affected by the crisis during 2008 is slowly recovery since February 2009 because of governmental subsides to buy environment friendly new cars. Gross fixed investments are falling down deeply: in particular machinery and equipment investments but also construction investments both residential and non-residential (Banca d'Italia, 2009). According to forecast in the current year, 2008 trends will continue (table 2) and even worse.

Table 2. Italy Demand and output 2006-2010

	2005	*2006*	*2007*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*
	Current prices € billion	Percentage changes, volume (2000 prices)				
Private consumption	842.1	1.1	1.5	-0.5	-0.3	0.8
Government consumption	290.8	0.8	1.2	1.2	0.2	0.1
Gross fixed investment	296.2	2.7	0.8	-1.4	-4.6	2.1
Machinery and equipment	141.9	3.9	-0.5	-1.2	-4.4	2.1
Construction	154.3	1.7	2.0	-1.5	-4.7	2.1
Residential	69.9	5.4	3.0	-1.6	-4.8	2.1
Non-residential	84.4	-1.4	1.2	-1.5	-4.7	2.1
Final domestic demand	1429.2	1.4	1.3	-0.4	-1.1	0.9
Stockbuilding	0.5	0.4	0.0	-0.5	0.0	0.0
Total domestic demand	1429.7	1.8	1.3	-0.8	-1.1	0.9
Exports of goods and services	371.2	6.5	4.5	0.4	-0.6	2.0
Imports of goods and services	372.1	6.1	4.0	-1.3	-0.7	2.5
Net exports	-1.0	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.0	-0.1
GDP at market prices	1428.7	1.9	1.4	-0.4	-1.0	0.8

Source: OECD Economic Outlook 84 database

Table 3. Italy GDP 2005-2008, quarterly series and % growth

Year	*Quarter*	*Concatenated values*	*previous quarter % growth*	*correspondent quarter % growth*
2005	I	308 834	-0.1	0.4
2005	II	310 754	0.6	0.6
2005	III	311 952	0.4	0.7
2005	IV	312 307	0.1	1
2006	I	314 478	0.7	1.8
2006	II	315 971	0.5	1.7
2006	III	316 881	0.3	1.6
2006	IV	320 272	1.1	2.6
2007	I	321 001	0.2	2.1
2007	II	321 288	0.1	1.7
2007	III	321 733	0.1	1.5
2007	IV	320 839	-0.3	0.2
2008	I	322 093	0.4	0.3
2008	II	320 036	-0.6	-0.4
2008	III	318 248	-0.6	-1.1
2008	IV	312 475	-1.8	-2.6

Source: Istat 2009 : http://www.istat.it

At the same time crisis nowadays is affecting also developing countries: a recent study of the Institute of Development Studies (2009) highlighted seven pathways through which the crisis is affecting developing countries.

1. Slow down on exports growth;
2. Drop on portfolio and direct Foreign Investment;
3. Fall in exchange rate because of the sudden withdrawal of foreign capital;
4. Rise on interest rates;
5. Decline in remittances from workers in recession-affected rich countries;
6. Declining aid from rich countries;
7. Lower growth.

Nevertheless, developing countries could not be treated as a homogeneous block, because the impact of the crisis will depend on the country current economic situation and on its capacity to respond to the downturn. According to World Bank acting Chief Economist[2] for the MENA Region the region will be "less impacted by the global recession than most other developing regions, notably Eastern Europe & Central Asia, and East Asia & Pacific". So far the financial systems of the region have not been affected but the real economy recession could be significant. GDP growth rates have started to decline since the last quarter of 2008 and they are expected to continue to fall during 2009 with the exception of Qatar and Yemen. The crisis is impacting directly on workers and households. In Egypt an increase of the unemployment rate was recorded during the last quarter of 2008 together with a growth decrease. A lot of migrant workers left the Emirates because of the crisis of the construction sector in Dubai.

If we consider only MENA sending migration countries to Italy, World Bank analyst stresses that Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt felt already the crisis at the end of 2008 as the crisis spread across Europe. Export and tourism growth is expected to decrease during 2009 in those countries. As a direct consequence there will be a significant loss of jobs in such kind of sectors. Algeria, Iraq, Iran, Libya, and Syria are countries that largely depend on oil export. Economic growth is expected to decline in such countries during 2009. Lebanon and Jordan are non-oil exporting countries and they strongly depend on remittances, foreign direct investment (FDI) and tourism. Reduced remittances and FDI, possible returns of migrants and fewer tourists could imply a bad effect on employment and a need of social policies.

2. Migration stocks and flows

Data from Population Registers[3] statistics show that the stock of immigrants has been constantly increasing in Italy during the last decade (Figure 1). Net migration has been rising quite fast since the beginning of the 2000's. In 2007 was recorded the greatest net migration increase since ever (table 4). This phenomenon is mainly due to new entries of Romanian and Bulgarian citizens in Italy. As citizens of the new member countries of the European Union since the 1st of January 2007, Romanian and Bulgarian are now exempted from visa and residence permits procedures to entry and to work in Italy. During 2007, more than one half of the new entries on population Registers has been from Romanian citizens. Thus, Romania became the first immigrant community in Italy since the same year (table 5).

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[2] Interview to Auguste Kouame, Acting Chief Economist for the MENA region by Claire Ferris on Sunday, 03 May 2009: http://www.arabianbusiness.com/553995-crisis-control

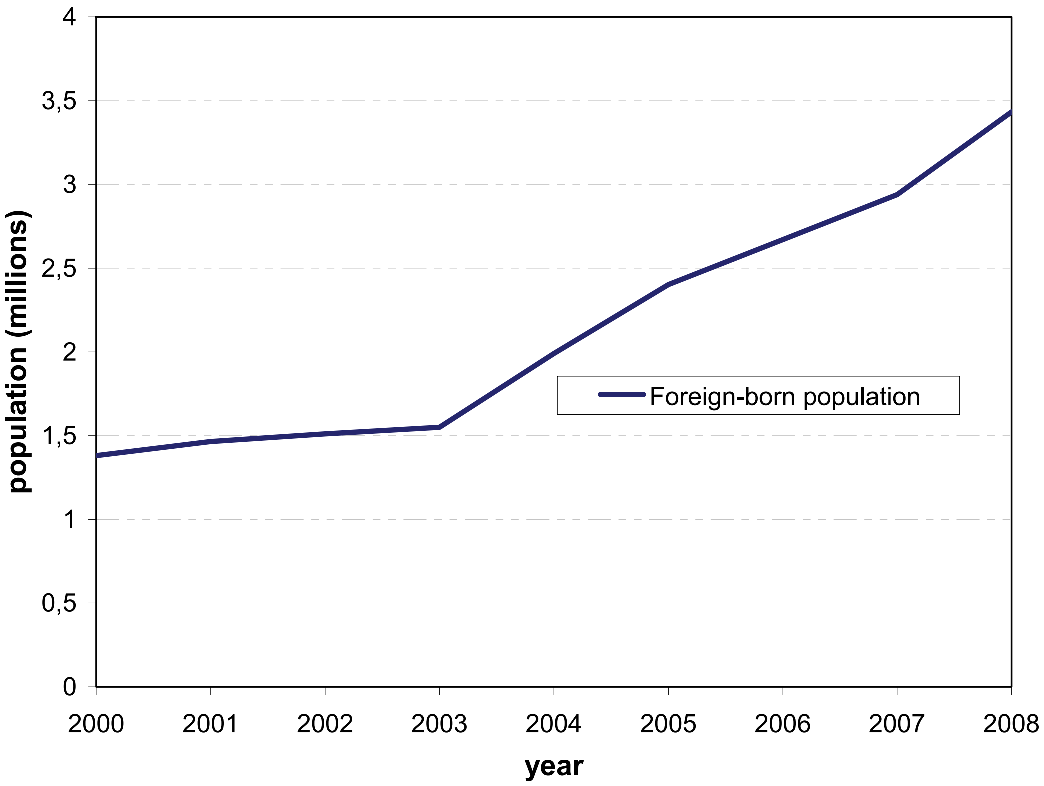
[3] In Italy there are 3 main statistical sources of migration stocks and flows: the municipal population registers("Anagrafe"), the general population census and the records of the currently valid permits of residence (issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs).

Putting aside migration flows from new EU members states (Romania, Bulgaria and Poland), net migration to Italy can be considered stable since 2004 or even decreasing at a slow pace during 2007 and 2008 (Caritas/Migrantes 2008).

Currently, Central Eastern European (Romania and Albania) and Northern African (Morocco) are the most numerous communities of immigrants in Italy (table 5 and 6), followed by the Far Eastern Asia (China and Philippine). During 2007 the most important role in increasing immigrants stocks was played by flows of Eastern European citizens. The pace of the increase of migrations flows from Africa and Asia has decreased in the same period.

Those trends are confirmed by net migration flows estimations for 2008: according to Population Registers quarterly data available till September 2008, we estimated a net migration increase of 468 834 immigrants for the whole 2008 that means 5.3% less than 2007. During 2008 in fact, the number of inscriptions to Population Registers of citizens from new member states should have slowed down. According to ISTAT and ISMU foreign-born population forecasts, in the future migrations from the Eastern European corridor (together with China) to Italy are going to become stable (in 2030). Immigration flows from South America (Ecuador and Peru), Asia (Philippine, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India) and Africa (in particular Senegal, Nigeria and Egypt) are most likely to be steadily increasing in the same period.

Figure 1. Italy, Stock of foreign-born population 1st of January 2000-2008



Source: Istat 2009: http://demo.istat.it/

Table 4. Italy, Net migration and % growth 2002-2008

Year	*Net migration*	*% growth*
2002	151 932	
2003	411 970	171.2
2004	380 737	-7.6
2005	266 829	-29.9
2006	237 614	-10.9
2007	494 885	108.3
2008	468 834**	-5.3**

Source: Istat 2009: http://demo.istat.it/

** Estimated by the author

Population Registers data on migration flows to Italy are not yet available for the whole 2008. Thus, using current available data from monthly estimates (updated till September 2008) we made an estimation of net migration of 2008. Tables 7 and 8 present ISTAT estimates and our own estimates on net migration during 2008. Both estimates show a slow decline (6 % and 5.3%) on net migration rate during the last year.

Data on migration flows from Population Register and Permit based statistics are not recent enough to make any judgement about the trends of flows since the beginning of the economic downturn. In fact, in the first case they cover partially the year 2008, in the second they cover only the period till the 1st of January 2008. However, an estimation of flows can be derived from statistics of visa[4] issued by Italian consular authorities abroad during 2008 and comparing those data with previous years.

Table 5. Italy, Stock of foreign population by nationality 2002-2007

		2002	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*
1	Romania	95 039	177 812	248 849	297 570	342 200	625 278
2	Albania	216 582	270 383	316 659	348 813	375 947	401 949
3	Morocco	215 430	253 362	294 945	319 537	343 228	365 908
4	China	69 620	86 738	111 712	127 822	144 885	156 519
5	Ukraine	12 730	57 971	93 441	107 118	120 070	132 718
6	Philippine	64 947	72 372	82 625	89 668	101 337	105 675
7	Tunisia	59 528	68 630	78 230	83 564	88 932	93 601
8	Poland	29 972	40 314	50 794	60 823	72 457	90 218
9	Macedonia	34 019	51 208	58 460	63 245	74 162	78 090
10	India	35 518	44 791	54 288	61 847	69 504	77 432
11	Ecuador	15 280	33 506	53 220	61 953	68 880	73 235
12	Peru	34 207	43 009	53 378	59 269	66 506	70 755
13	Egypt	33 701	40 583	52 865	58 879	65 667	69 572

[4] Data on visa are kindly furnished by the DG for Italians Abroad and Migration Policies of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

		2002	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*
14	Moldova	6 974	24 645	37 971	47 632	55 803	68 591
15	Serbia and Montenegro	54 465	51 708	58 174	64 070	64 411	68 542
16	Senegal	37 204	46 478	53 941	57 101	59 857	62 620
17	Sri Lanka	34 177	39 231	45 572	50 528	56 745	61 064
18	Bangladesh	20 607	27 356	35 785	41 631	49 575	55 242
19	Pakistan	22 257	27 798	35 509	41 797	46 085	49 344
20	Nigeria	20 963	26 383	31 647	34 310	37 733	40 641
89	Libya	1 299	1 466	1 532	1 523	1 551	1 517
	Total	1549373	1990159	2402157	2670514	2938922	3432651

Source: Istat 2009: http://demo.istat.it/

Table 6. Italy, Stock of foreign-born population on 1st of January 2003-2008 and % growth by area of origin

Area	*2003*	*2008*	*(% growth) 2003-2004*	*(% growth) 2005*	*(% growth) 2006*	*(% growth) 2007*
Europe	**659 700**	**1 785 870**	**70.1**	**139.7**	**132.5**	**390.6**
EU 27	269 500	934 435	74.7	68.0	67.3	327.9
EU 15	124 900	157 667	10.5	4.8	6.0	8.8
New member countries	144 600	776 768	130.2	63.1	61.3	319.1
Central Eastern Europe	378 100	838 904	69.0	71.6	65.3	62.1
Africa	**464 600**	**797 997**	**38.1**	**53.2**	**54.9**	**48.2**
Northern Africa	323 200	555 376	38,4	37.6	37.6	32.8
Asia	**278 700**	**551 985**	**45.3**	**49.8**	**57.6**	**39.8**
Eastern Asia	147 700	281 552	42.8	24.0	29.9	16.8
America	**143 600**	**293 550**	**60.2**	**25.6**	**23.3**	**14.6**
Northern America	15 500	17 449	6.3	0.3	0.5	0.1
Central and Southern America	128 000	276 101	66.8	25.4	22.8	14.4
Oceania	**2 300**	**2 527**	**7.2**	**0.0**	**0.1**	**0.0**
Stateless persons	500	722	37.3	0.0	0.0	0.6
Total	**1 549 400**	**3 432 651**	**55.0**	**268.4**	**268.4**	**493.7**

Source: Istat 2009: http://demo.istat.it/

Table 7. Italy, Net migration Rate (‰) by area 2005-2008

Area	2005	2006	2007	2008**
Northern	6.2	5.3	9.8	9.4
North West	6.0	5.1	9.4	8.4
North East	6.6	5.8	10.4	10.8
Central	5.9	5.0	11.3	10.8
Southern	1.4	1.1	4.7	3.7
South	1.5	1.2	5.0	3.7
Islands	1.0	0.8	4.1	3.6
Italy	4.4	3.7	8.3	7.7

Source: Istat 2009: http://demo.istat.it/

** Estimated

Table 8. Italy, Net migration 2007-2008: quarterly series and % growth

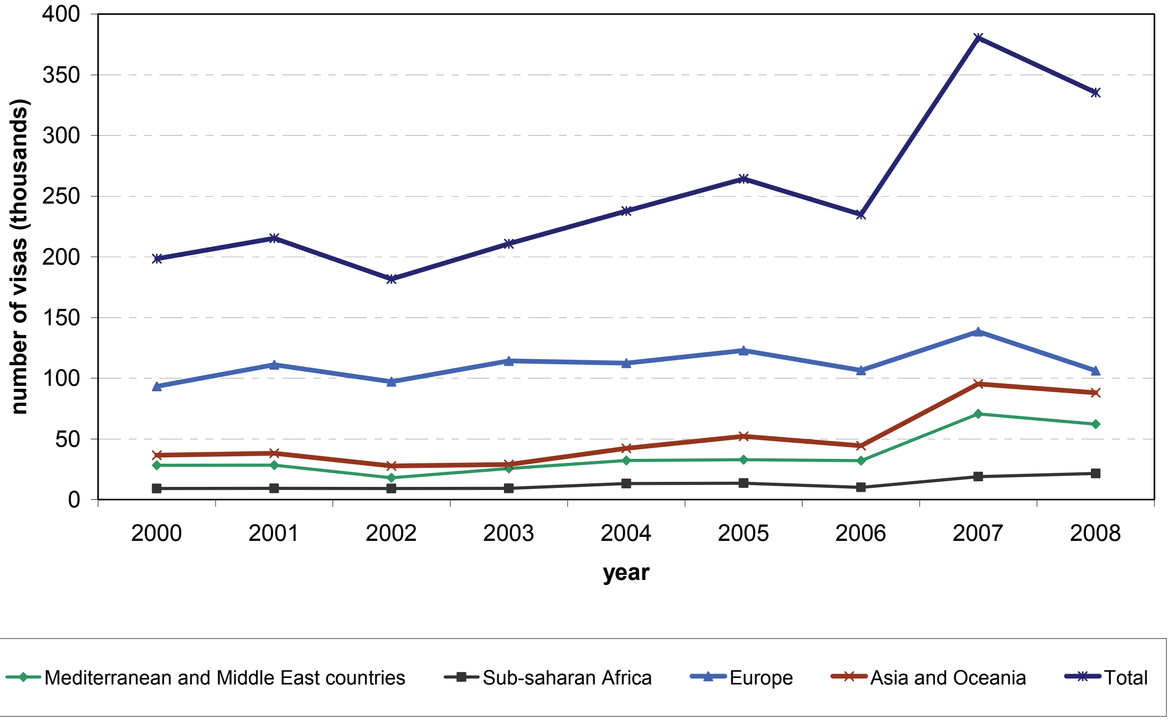
Period	2007	2008	Growth	% Growth
January-March	137 900	122 662	-15 238	-11.05
April-June	116 701	114 696	-2 005	-1.72
July-September	107 254	105 449	-1 805	-1.68
October-December	133 030	126 027**	-7 003**	-5.26**
January-December	494 885	468 834**	-26 051**	-5.26**

Source: Istat 2009: http://demo.istat.it/

** Estimated

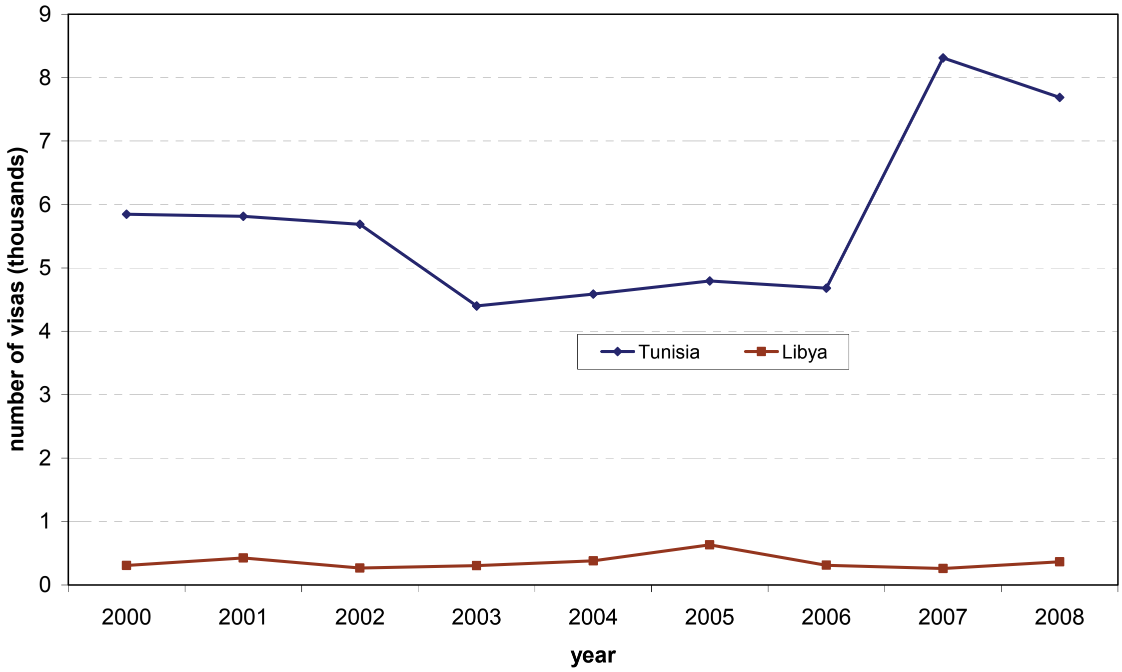
Figure 2 shows the trend on the number of issued visa by geographic area during the period 2000-2008. Only visa issued in order to obtain a permit of Residence in Italy were considered; visa issued for tourism, business, transit, were not taken into account. According to visa statistics, immigration flows to Italy seem to be slowing down since 2008. In particular, immigration flows from Europe, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries and from Asia decreased during 2008 respect to the previous year. Flows from Sub-Saharan Africa are on the contrary increasing. Those data reflect the general trend of stabilization or slow decrease of migration flows to Italy since 2004 that we have already stressed. Figure 3 presents trends on visa issuing in Libya and Tunisia. In Tunisia after a period of stability or even decrease since 2004, there was a high increase on visa issued on 2007, which has been followed by a slow down on 2008. In Libya, the number of visa issued during the observed period has been quite low and stable in comparison to other Northern Africa countries.

Figure 2. Italy, Number of issued visa by macro area, 2000-2008



Source: Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 2009

Figure 3. Visa issued by Italian consular authorities in Tunisia and Libya 2000-2008



Source: Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 2009

The trend reflects in large part tighter quota policies by the Italian government and it could be better explained considering the fact that even if migration decisions are strongly related to economic opportunities, the economic one is not the only condition that can affect immigration. If it is true that migrations is labour related, however, other factors such as visa policies on the host countries should be considered. Quota system and other administrative requirement to get a visa may also represent a key factor on flows (Papademetriou, Sumption and Somerville, 2009).

In the next paragraph we are going to present statistics of migration stocks and flows to Italy by category (work, family and so on) in order to check which category is responsible for the reverse trend of 2008.

3. Changing in the migration flows by category

Apart the factors that may affect inflows on the host countries we should also consider the effect of the global economic downturn in the departure countries. If the labour market perspectives in migrants' homelands are not good, immigrants will be less likely to return home (World Bank, 2008). The cost to return home for immigrants should also be considered. If immigrants feel that once they will come back to their homeland they will not be allowed to return back again, the decision to get home will not be that easy. Furthermore, immigrants can have strong social and family ties in destination countries, which prevent them to leave. Thus, their integration in the host country could play a vital role in their future decisions. If they are eligible for social benefits and they have strong social and family ties in the host country they could be motivated to stay, if not so they may decide to go home.

Therefore, the overall impact of the global economic downturn on migration inflows and outflows depends on the migration category and on the specific characteristics of the host country. In this paragraph we are going to study the type of migration and the characteristics of migrants in Italy in order to assess how the crisis will affect them.

Residence Permit's statistics give information on the stock of migration by category. This kind of data is available till the 1st of January 2008. Those statistics have the inconvenient to not consider part of the children aged less than 15, because they could be registered in the Residence Permit of their parents. Another problem related to those data is that since 2007 Residence Permit is no more mandatory for new member states of EU. Tables 9 show how in Italy migration and in particular male migration is largely employed based. Family reunifications are most likely among migrant women. In table 10 we can observe how the entry on the EU of Eastern European countries, drastically slowed down the number of Residence Permit of European citizens. This table shows the weakness of this data source in measuring migration flows for EU citizens. But it still stays useful for non-EU citizens' statistics.

Table 9. Italy, Stock of foreign-born population on 1st of January 2000-2008 by type of residence (Permit based statistics)

Year	*Total*			*Male*			*Female*		
	Total	*% Work*	*% Family*	*Total*	*% Work*	*% Family*	*Total*	*% Work*	*% Family*
2001	1 379 749	60.7	26.5	745 836	78.2	10.4	633 913	40.1	45.5
2002	1 448 392	58.1	29.1	764 930	76.5	11.9	683 462	37.4	48.4
2003	1 503 286	55.2	31.8	777 076	74.4	13.4	726 210	34.6	51.5
2004	2 227 567	66.4	24.5	1 151 487	81.1	10.5	1 076 080	50.7	39.5
2005	2 245 548	62.9	27.8	1 141 731	78.8	12.3	1 103 817	46.5	43.8
2006	2 286 024	62.1	29.8	1 144 884	78.9	13.6	1 141 140	45.2	46.1
2007	2 414 972	60.6	31.6	1 198 452	77.8	14.6	1 216 520	43.6	48.4
2008	2 063 127	60.1	33.0	1 064 673	77.0	15.7	998 454	42.0	51.3

Source: Ministero dell'Interno – Dipartimento della Pubblica Sicurezza.

Table 10. Italy, Stock of foreign-born population on 1st of January 2001-2008 by area of origin (Permit based statistics)

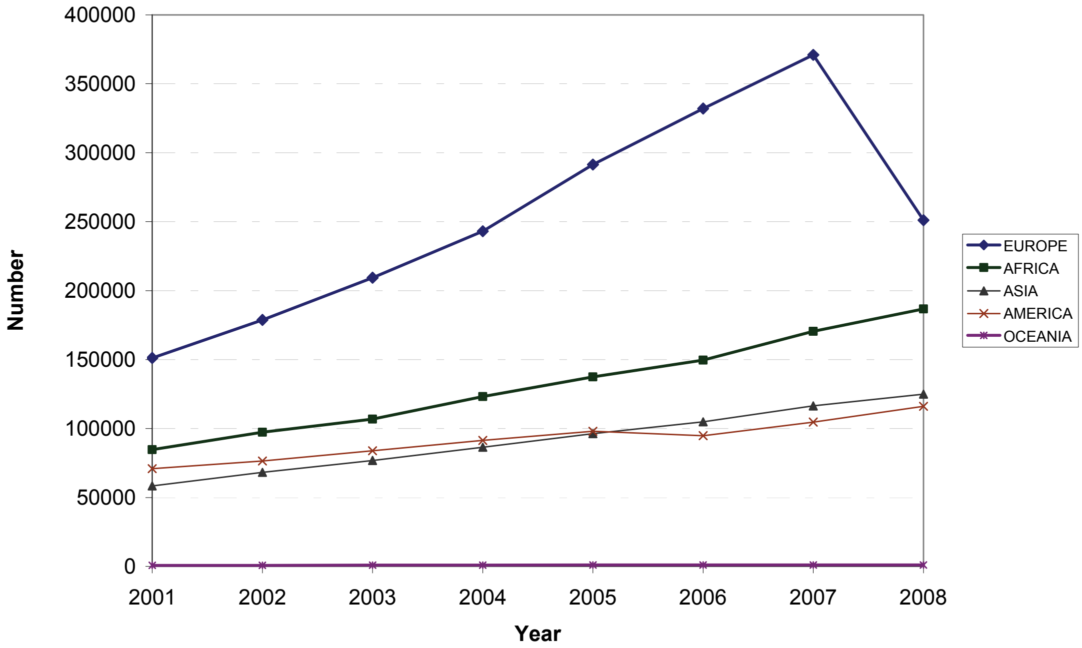
	2001	*2002*	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*	*2008*
Europe	560 588	596 244	639 566	1 061 955	1 082 951	1 115 399	1 174 173	715 019
Africa	388 327	401 050	401 442	529 163	524 810	535 930	570 799	607 141
Asia	265 040	278 003	281 131	380 490	385 172	395 608	419 964	474 272
America	162 790	169 972	177 852	252 685	249 285	236 451	247 640	264 293
Oceania	2 430	2 547	2 680	2 657	2 729	2 370	2 101	2 103
Stateless persons	574	576	615	617	601	266	295	299
Total number of permits	1 379 749	1 448 392	1 503 286	2 227 567	2 245 548	2 286 024	2 414 972	2 063 127

Source: Ministero dell'Interno – Dipartimento della Pubblica Sicurezza.

In order to better assess the trend of migration flows by categories we will use Resident Permits and Visa statistics. The latter are available till 2008. Family migration is the first category we are going to study. This kind of migration is less likely to be affected by the economic cycle because it is less related to economic factors. Family migrants are thus permanent by definition and not incline to return home because of the crisis.

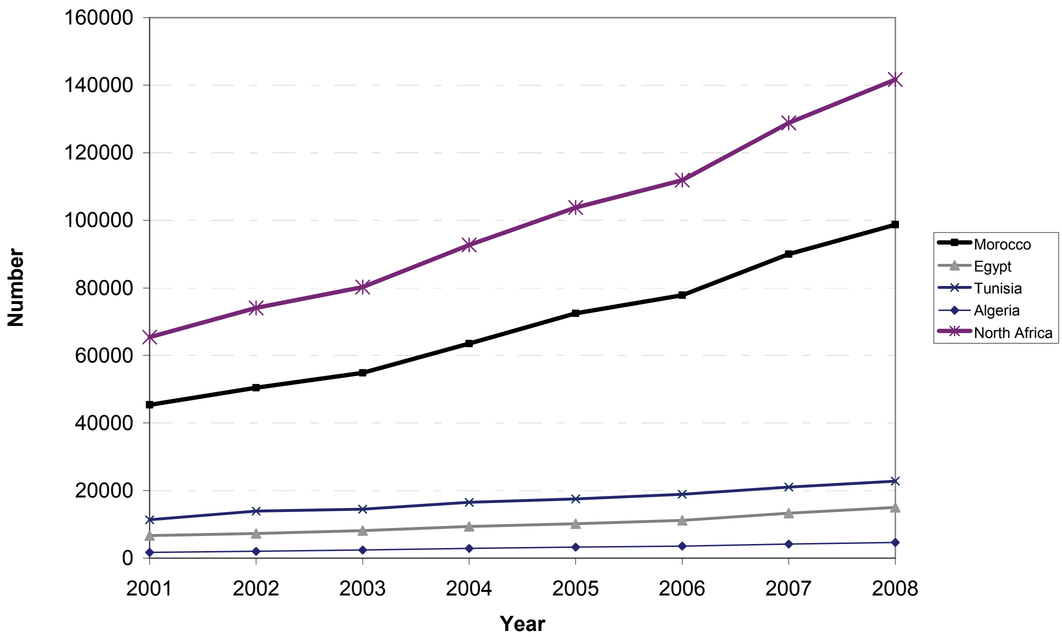
Figures 4-6 show the trend of Family migrations stocks and flows by area of origin in the period 2000-2008. Stock of resident in Italy for family reasons has been constantly increasing since 2000 for all the areas of origin, apart for Europe during 2007. The reverse trend of European citizens can easily be explained through the entry in the EU of Bulgaria and Romania the 1st January 2007, which we have above mentioned. Family resident from Northern African countries (figure 5) are increasing over the time, especially Moroccan that represents the first Northern African community in Italy. Tunisian and Egyptian presence for family reasons is slowing rising. Looking at the flows statistics, deducted by the number of issued visa (figure 6), an increasing trend of that kind of flows can be easily identified since 2000 for the all the area of origin. Starting from 2003 this trend has been quite strong for flows from Europe, Asia and Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries. For the time being, statistics do not show any kind of effect of the economic crisis on family migration. Anyway, recent literature suggests a phenomenon of return of migrants to their home country: there is an increasing number of family members of migrants that lost their job because of the economic downturn that are forced to leave Italy. The main reason is that they cannot afford anymore the price of renting a house for all the family. So family members e.g. women and children decide to return back to the homeland till the crisis is gone (Guarlenti and Marinescu, 2009). Those returns may be not included in official statistics because family members Residence Permit are generally issued for a 5 years period.

Figure 4. Italy, Stock of foreign-born resident population on 1st of January 2000-2008 owing a family Permit by area of origin



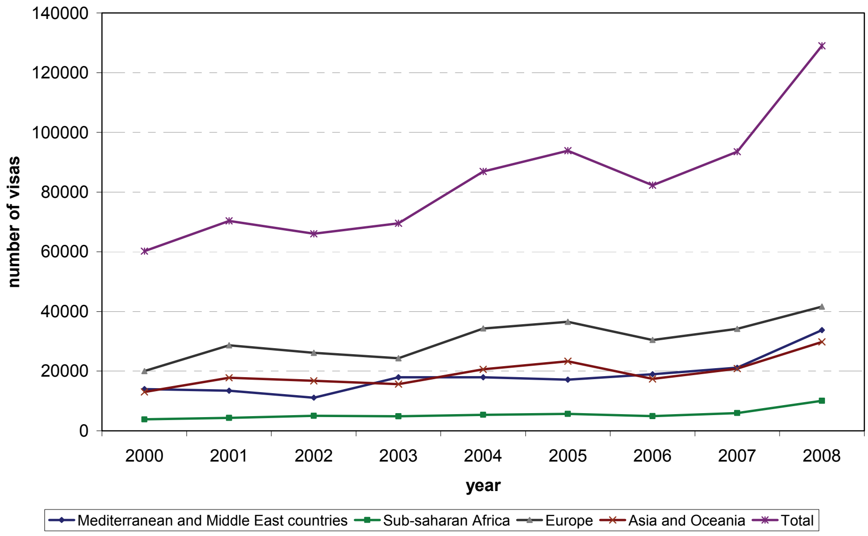
Source: Author's estimations on data Ministero dell'Interno and ISTAT

Figure 5. Italy, Stock of foreign-born resident population on 1st of January 2000-2008 owing a family Permit –North African origin



Source: Author's calculations on data Ministero dell'Interno and ISTAT

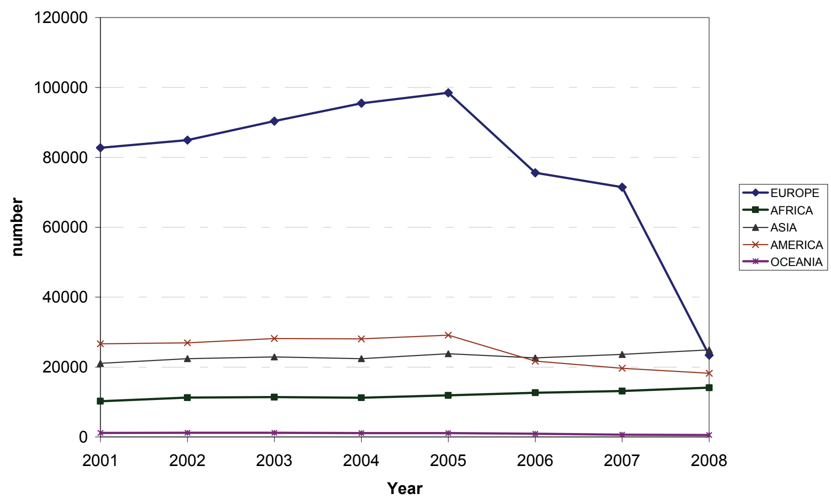
Figure 6. Italy, Number of Family visa issued by macro area, 2000-2008 (31st of December)



Source: Author's estimations on data Ministero degli Affari Esteri

Student migration flows are sensitive to the economic conditions in the home countries and to the exchange rates; thus economic conditions in both receiving and sending countries are important for such migration category (Papademetriou and Sumption, 2009). Considering together student, elective residence and religion migrations, figures 7-9 show the trend of stock and flows for those categories during the period 2000-2008 according to area of origin. We can stress a slight increase in this kind of migration flows during the observed period. The only exception are European flows for the above mentioned reasons. Northern African resident stock is increasing for that category. The amount of residents is anyway quite small compared to other kind of migrations of citizens of that area. We can stress in particular a growth of Moroccans and Tunisians since 2005. Egyptians are not likely to go to Italy to study or for religion issues. Flows are not affected by the crisis (fig. 9): in 2008 they follow the same trend of previous years.

Figure 7. Italy, Stock of foreign-born resident population on 1st of January 2000-2008 owing a Student, Elective Residence or Religion Permit by area of origin



Source: Author's calculations on data Ministero dell'Interno and ISTAT

Figure 8. Italy, Stock of foreign-born resident population on 1st of January 2000-2008 owing a Student, Elective Residence or Religion Permit –North African origin

Source: Author's calculations on data Ministero dell'Interno and ISTAT

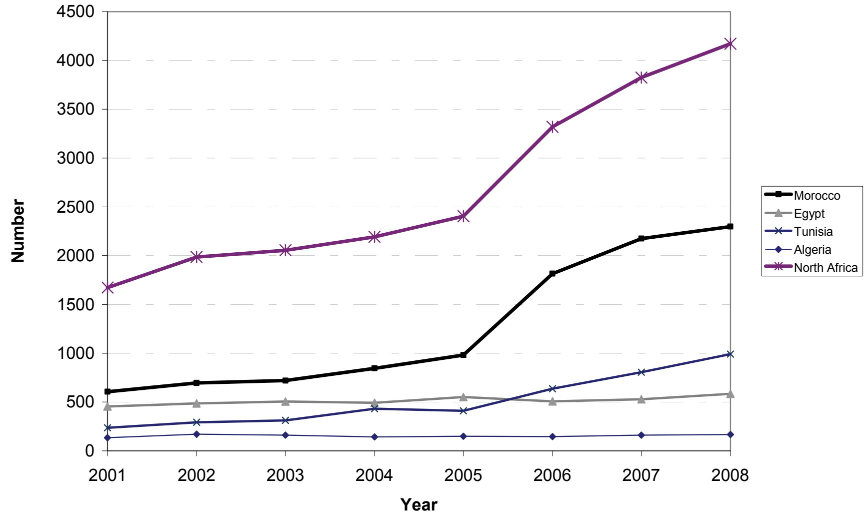
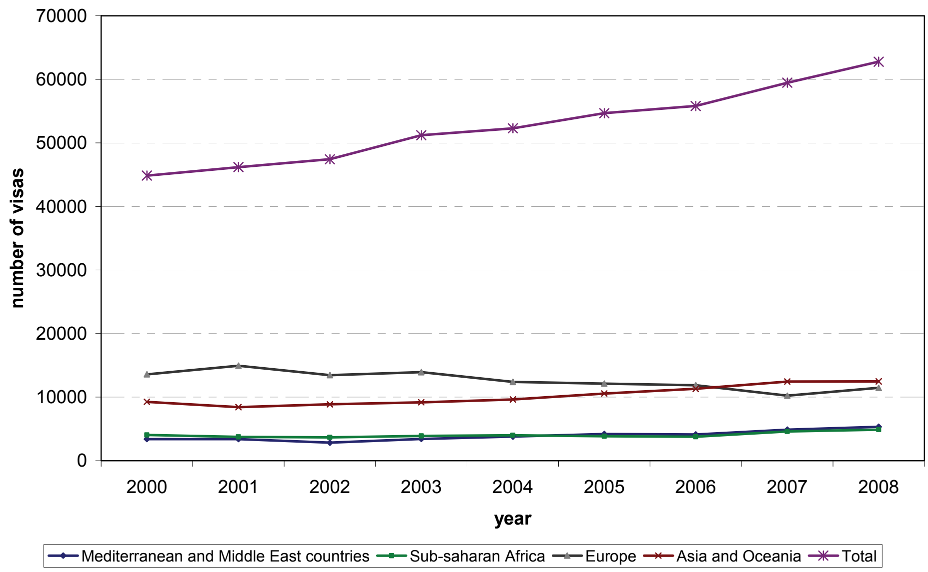


Figure 9. Italy, Number of Student, Elective Residence, Religion visa issued by macro area, 2000-2008 (31st of December)

Source: Author's calculations on data Ministero degli Affari Esteri



Humanitarian migration flows are supposed to be less related to economic, thus we could expect that their trend will not change because of the actual crisis. In Italy, the number of asylum seekers has been raising during the last 10 years. As a consequence, the stock of residents over that category has also increased (figure 10). The large majority of refugees are coming from Sub- Saharan African countries, Asia or Europe. Northern African citizens are not really likely to own the status of refugee (figure 11); there is anyway a growing trend of permits delivered for that reason mainly to Moroccan citizens.

Figure 12 presents the trend of the applications for asylum, the number of applications examined and the number of refugee status granted. The number of asylum applications in 2008 has doubled compared to 2007 passing from about 14 000 to about 31 000. Nevertheless only a small part of the applicants received the refugee status (about 1 400 in 2007 and 1 700 in 2008). The increasing number of refugee applications presented during 2008, reflects the record number of undocumented migrants landed in Southern Italian regions last year and the changes on the Asylum legislation that Italy adopted at the beginning of 2008[5]. According to the new legislation introduced 7 054 asylum seekers were allowed to get the residence permit of subsidiary protection in 2008 (National Committee for the Right of Asylum, 2009).

Figure 10. Italy, Stock of foreign-born resident population on 1st of January 2000-2008 owing a Refugee, Humanitarian or other kind of Permit by area of origin

Source: Author's calculations on data Ministero dell'Interno and ISTAT

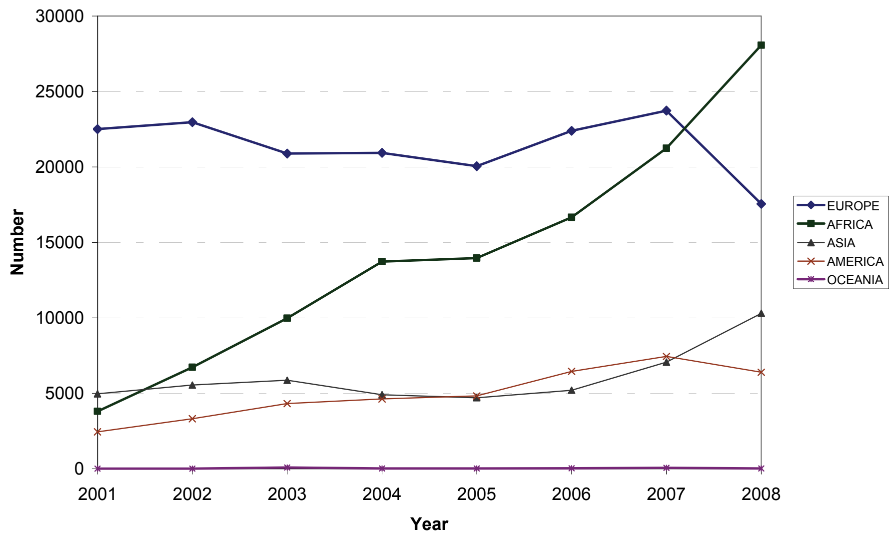
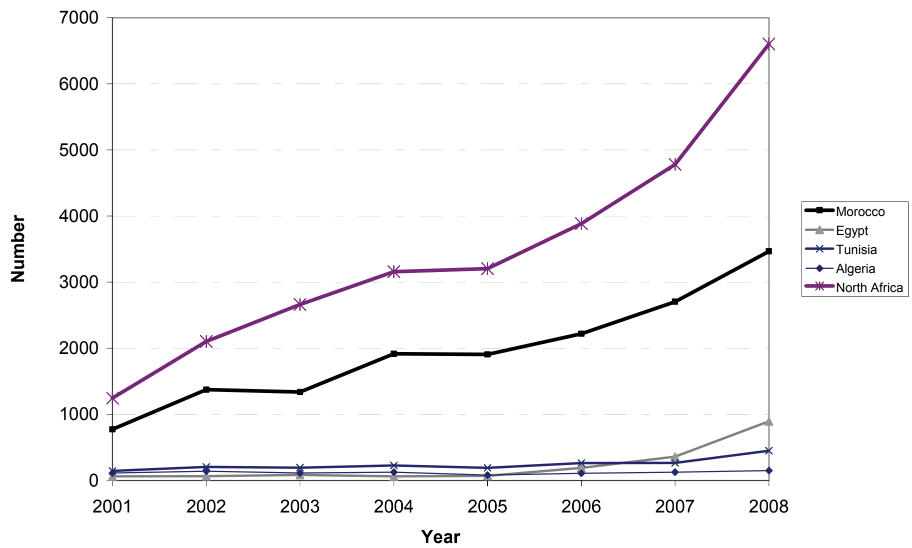


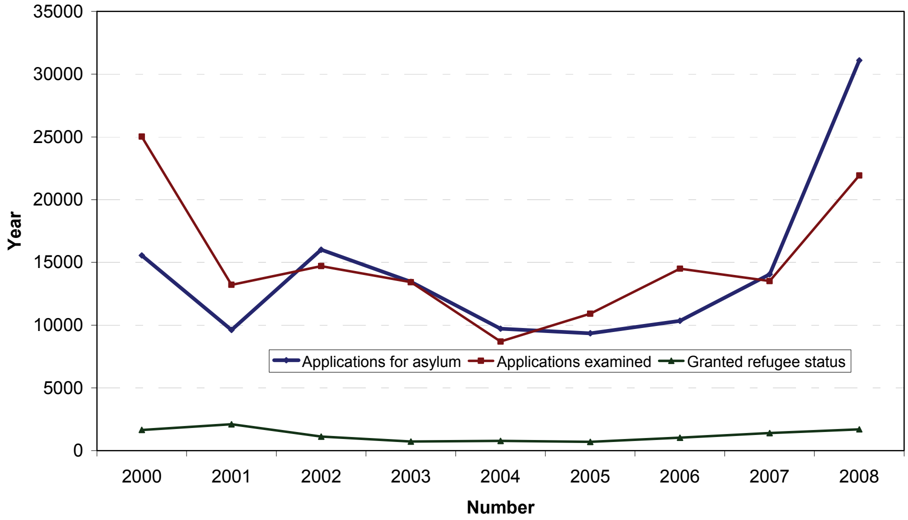
Figure 11. Italy, Stock of foreign-born resident population on 1st of January 2000-2008 owing a Refugee, Humanitarian or other kind of Permit –North African origin

Source: Author's calculations on data Ministero dell'Interno and ISTAT



[5] see § 5 for further details on the new legislation.

Figure 12. Italy, Asylum seekers applications statistics, 2000-2008 (31st of December)



Source: National Committee for the Right of Asylum

Labour Migration flows are more likely to be affected by the global downturn than the other previous mentioned categories. A distinction should be made between labour migrants already residents in Italy (stocks of labour migration) and migrants willing to enter Italy to work there. An analysis of labour market condition in Italy and the status of foreigners in the Italian labour market will be presented in the next paragraph.

Here we limit our analysis to labour migration inflows and stocks. Figures 13-15 show a stagnation since 2004 of labour related migrations according to Permit Residence Statistics for all areas of origin, with the exception of Europe that shows a decline during 2007, because the new membership on the EU of Romania and Bulgaria. Previous increase in 2003-2004 was mostly due to the regularisation preview from the law no. 189/2002. As far as stocks of labour migration are concerned, figure 13 shows an increase on those stocks over the time for all the area of provenience between 2000 and 2007. In 2007, the number of Residence Permit decreased for the European citizens for the well known reasons.

Number of work visa issued is established according to Italian migration law (D. 25 July 1998, no. 286) and (Law no. 189/2002). According to that law, labour immigration is subject to annual numerical limits (quotas) applied to employer requests for foreign workers. A “Flow decree” is emanated every year by the Italian government; it establishes the number of immigrants which will be allowed to enter the country for working reasons. Potential workers are hired by potential employers that should submit an application to enter in the established quota number. Potential workers should be not already resident in Italy, so employers should theoretically hire them without any previous meeting. Obviously it is hard for employers to hire someone that they never met. Such legislation does not take into account the reality of the Italian labour market. The Italian way to adapt to the legislation has been quite pragmatic: normally potential workers are already in the labour market owing a tourist visa or not visa at all so they have not a legal authorisation to stay in Italy and to work. If they meet an employer willing to regularize their situation through the Flow decree, they come back to the homeland. Once the decree is issued they return to Italy after their employer applied for hiring them (Fasani, 2008). Otherwise they stay illegally. Quotas are reserved for non EU citizens who need a visa to enter Italy.

In the last few years quotas have been raised in order to meet an increased forecasted demand of employers (table 11). In 2005 in fact, quotas was set to 79 500 for non EU citizens. In the following years 2006 and 2007 the quotas were set to 170 000, i.e. twice the 2005 figure. In 2006, an integrative quota of 350 000 units has been added to the initial one, in order to satisfy 520 000 applications filled by employers. Because of administrative delays (the decree to add quotas was issued at the beginning of December 2006), a large part of those applications were treated during 2007. However, a large part of demands were not considered because from the 1st of January 2007 Romanian and Bulgarian were exempted by the procedure. So at the end the total number of applications approved was about 253 000. In 2007, the number of applications filled raised to more than 700 000. Administrative delays to treat applications has characterised also Flow Decrees of 20076. In fact, the deadline for employers to apply for the 2007 quotas was the 31st of May 2008. As a consequence at the end of 2008 a new Flow Decree7 has been issued in order to satisfy a part of the large part of application presented for the previous Decree. In the 2008 Decree the quotas was reduced of 20 000 units, the total amount of applications should not reach more than 150 000.

Table 11. Quotas of foreign born workers allowed by the "Flow Decrees" - Years 1998-2008

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Quota	58000	58000	63000	83000	79500	79500	79500	99500	550000	170000	150000

Source: Barbaglio 2007 cited by Fasani 2008 (1998-2007 data) and Ministero dell'Interno (2008 data)

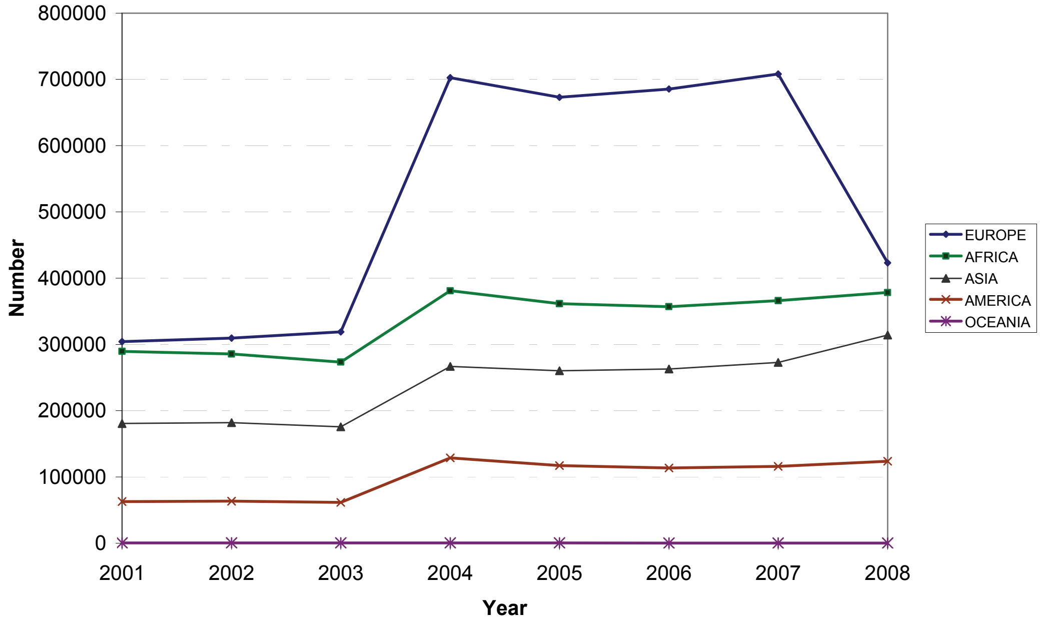
We should now look at the consequences of the mentioned legislation on Italian labour migration flows. The immediate consequence of the larger quota previewed from the Flow Decree of 2006 is an increase on the visa issued during 2007; that means an increase on labour migration inflows the same years. On the contrary the restrictive politics on quota of 2007 has meant a decrease on inflows on 2008. It should also be stressed that because of administrative delays a part of the applications presented by the 31st of May 2008 (i.e. for 2007 quotas) are still treated at present. The same trend should be expected for 2009, for the time being the Italian government does not intend to re-open the number of applications (for further details on quota policy see infra §4).

The legislation on quotas states that one part of the quota is assigned to those countries that reached bilateral cooperation agreements with Italy in the field of migration. Among those countries there are four Northern African countries: Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. The quotas that will be assigned to those countries according to the Flow Decree of 2008 are 1 000 to Algerian, 8 000 to Egyptians, 4 500 to Moroccans and 4 000 to Tunisians. That quota repartition should be affecting flows from those countries at present. We should notice that those quotas are largely under the effective demand from those countries. If we consider the Flows Decree of 2007, we find that the number of visa to be issued for the early mentioned North African countries are the same that for 2008. Nevertheless statistics on the number of applications for the Flows Decree of 2007 show that there was almost 120 thousand applications from Moroccans, more than 25 thousand from Egyptians and about 21 thousand from Tunisians. Those figures give an idea of a high migratory pressure from those countries and also of a possible large number of irregulars among Northern Africans already in Italy. Figure 14 presents the stock of residents from this region for work reasons. The huge number of irregular workers is quite evident for Moroccans and to a lesser extent for Egyptians, because their stock has suddenly increased after the 2002 regularisation.

[6] Decree of the Prime Minister, 30th of October 2007.

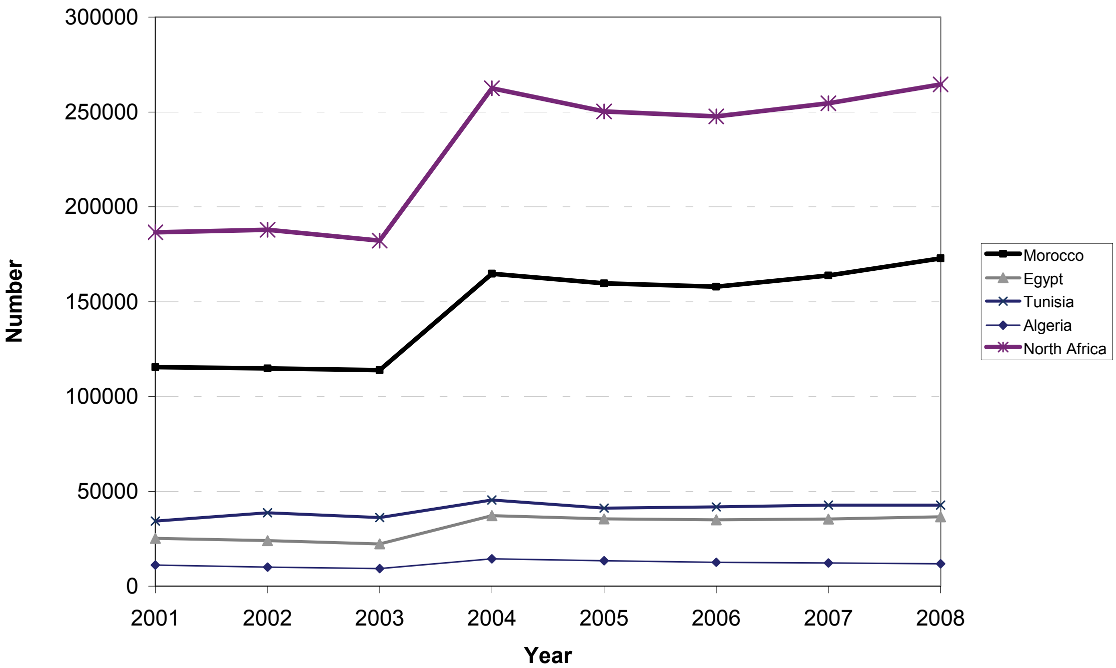
[7] Decree of the Prime Minister, 3rd of December 2008.

Figure 13. Italy, Stock of foreign-born resident population on 1st of January 2000-2008 owing a work Permit



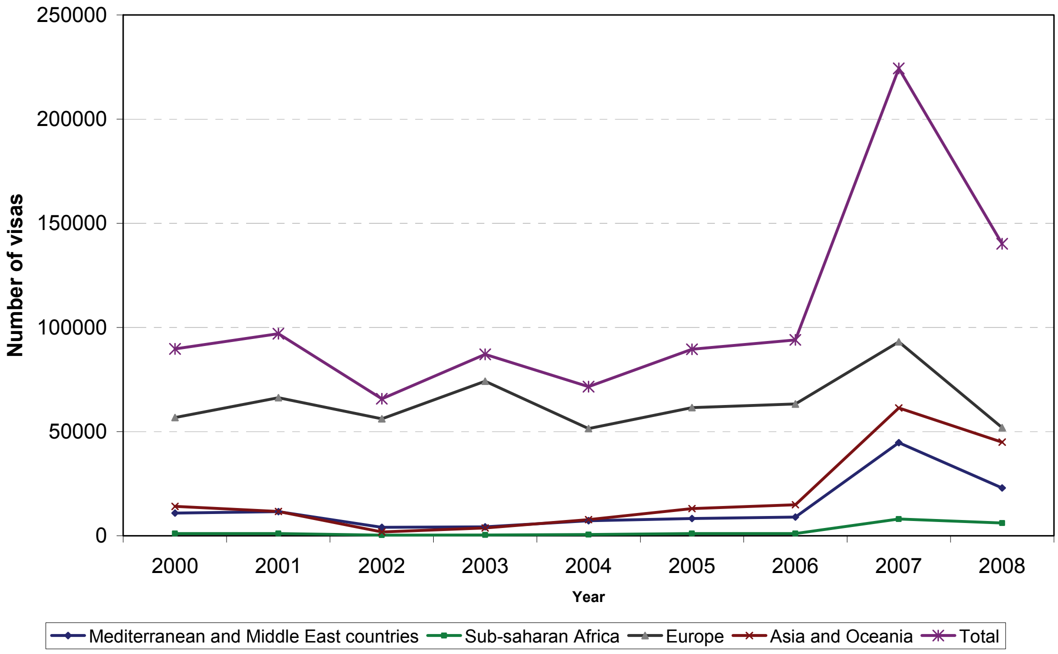
Source: Author's calculations on data Ministero dell'Interno and ISTAT

Figure 14. Italy, Stock of foreign-born resident population on 1st of January 2000-2008 owing a work Permit –North African origin



Source: Author's calculations on data Ministero dell'Interno and ISTAT

Figure 15. Italy, Number of work visa issued by macro area, 2000-2008 (31st of December)



Source: Author's calculations on data Ministero degli Affari Esteri

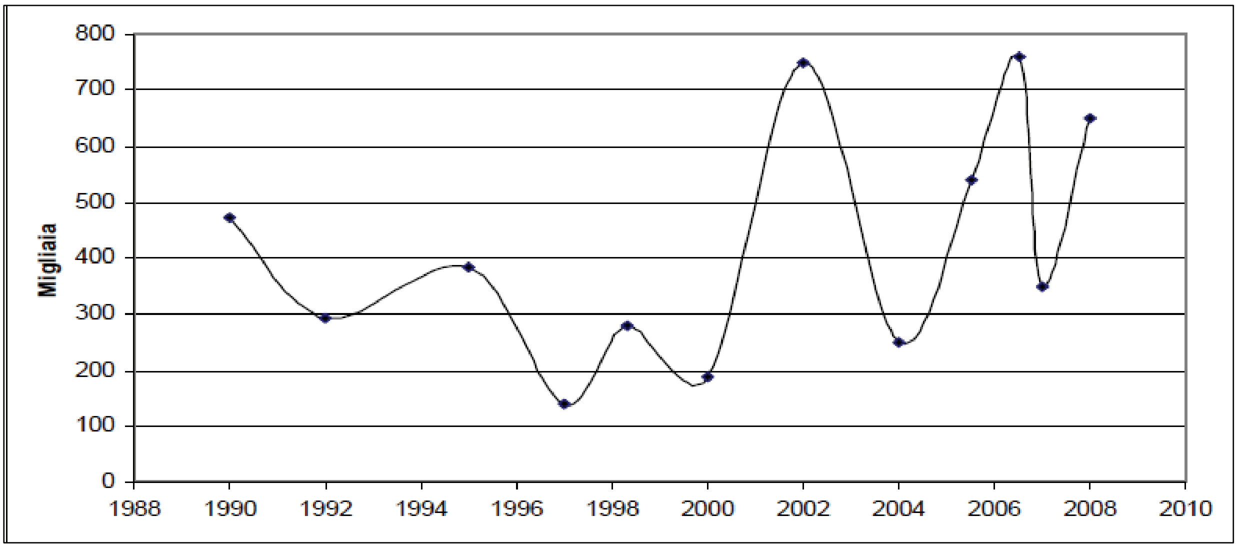
The assessment of labour migration to Italy seems to be largely related to irregular migration, so we may not pass to consider this category. Underground economy plays a persistent and significant role in Italy. Estimates of 2001, showed that about 25% of the total migrants employed in Italy were undocumented migrants (Fasani, 2009).

Indeed, irregular immigration in Italy has a "relative dimension when compared with flows and stock of regular migrants" (Fasani, 2009 p.12). Italian governments have approved five amnesties (1986, 1990, 1995, 1998 and 2002) which totally legalized about 1.5 millions of irregular migrants. Figure 16 shows how the legalizations affected illegal migrants stocks in Italy. Another channel that largely influences this stock is the quota system. In fact it has been showed how there is a nominal rather than substantial difference between an amnesty and a "Flow decree" (Fasani, 2009). As we above mentioned, irregular migrants often obtain the legal status through this system: the last regularization wave was the one of 2006 flows decree[8] that lead to a decrease of irregular migrants stock at the beginning of 2007 of almost one half, passing from about 650 thousands at the beginning of 2006 to about 350 thousands in 2007. We can stress that the 2006 Flow decree was like a de facto amnesty. One year later, the 1st of January of 2008, the stock of irregular migrants doubled again. According to ISMU estimates it was of about 650 thousands (table 12). The increase in the total amount of irregular migrants is not surprisingly bearing in mind Italian foreign-born resident population forecast. According to those estimates migration flows to Italy including irregular migrations, are supposed to rise in the next 20 years (ISMU, 2008).

No estimates are still available for the total stock of irregular migrants at the 1st of January 2009. Till now we dispose only of irregular presence estimates for the Region of Lombardy (ISMU, 2009): according to that source there has been an increase of the irregular presence in the region especially related to Northern African flows (in particular Moroccans and Egyptians). In the only region of Lombardy the number of undocumented migrants has risen of about 18 thousands units during 2008. The irregularity rate is anyway stable (about 14%) on the region.

[8] Decree of the Prime Minister, 15th of February 2006 and Decree of the Prime Minister, 25th of October 2006

Figure 16. Estimated undocumented migrants stocks in Italy (thousands). Years: 1990-2008



Source: ISMU, 2008.

Table 12. ISMU estimates of documented and undocumented migrants living in Italy (thousands). Years 2005-2008

Type of migrants	*1.1.2005*	*1.1.2006*	*1.1.2007*	*1.1.2008*
Documented	2 740	3 012	3 633	3 677
Undocumented	541	650	349	651
Total presence	3 358	3 662	3 982	4 328

Source: ISMU, 2008.

Table 13. Undocumented migrants residing in Italy, by entry channel (%). 2000-2006

Type of entry	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*
Overstayers	59	61	51	75	67	60	64
Migrants that illegally crossed the border	24	27	34	15	29	26	23
Migrants that shore landed	17	12	15	10	4	14	13
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Ministero dell'Interno 2007 (Italian Home Office)

Statistics of undocumented migrants by nationality show that migrants from Morocco, followed by China, Bangladesh and Ukraine have the highest rate of irregular presence (ISMU, 2008; Ministero dell'Interno 2007). Returns to the homelands to irregular migrants because of the economic crisis are not likely to be massive. In fact irregular migrants may fear to not be able to come back again to Italy once the recession will end. Job perspectives in the country of origin are probably not good. So that they will decide to stay unless the economic downturn will be protracted for several years (Papademetriou, Sumption and Somerville, 2009).

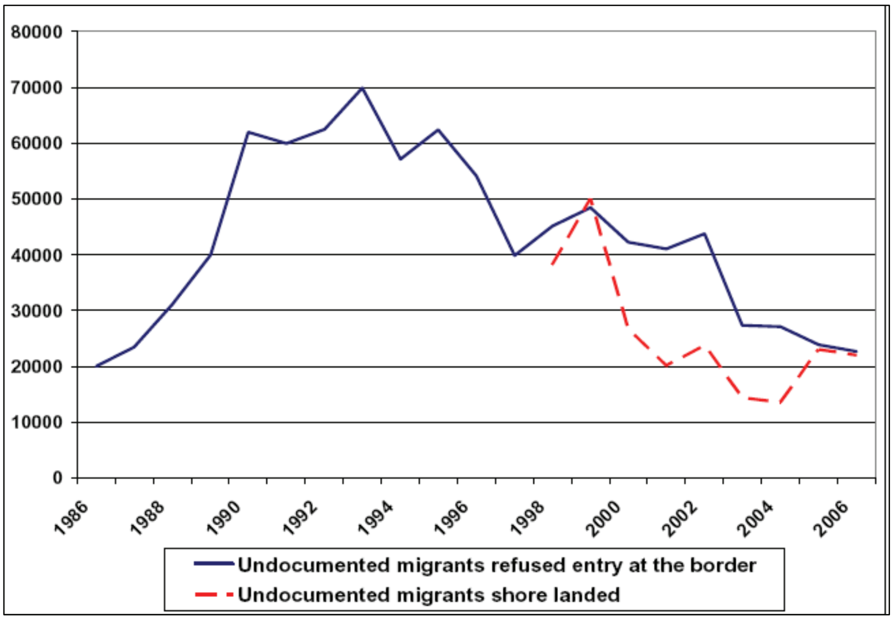
Reliable statistics of irregular migrants' flows to Italy are not yet available. Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs estimates show that the undocumented migrants phenomenon can be decomposed in three categories: the overstayers, migrants that illegally crossed the border and migrants' that shore landed on Italian coasts (Table 13). More than 60% of the irregular migrants presence in Italy is due to the overstayers: i.e. migrants that regularly arrived to Italy with a visa (mostly with a touristic visa) and then failed to leave the country after the visa expired. It is very difficult to know the number of overstayers. Other ways to enter illegally Italy are to cross irregularly the border and to shore land in the coasts.

The Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs provides statistics about the number of undocumented immigrants who was refused to entry at the border and that shore landed in Italy. Those statistics represent only a proxy of the total flows of irregulars' entry because they represent only the part of undocumented migrants who failed their attempt to illegally enter Italy (Fasani, 2008). Estimates of both flows are reported on Figure 17 (Fasani, 2008). According to Fasani both flows are largely affected by conflicts and crisis on the countries of origin of immigrants. Statistics of landed migrants by nationality are not available but statistics by Italian region of landing or arrival shows how during the 90's landing were much more common in Puglia (Southern East Italy) than nowadays. Undocumented migrants were leaving Albania, former Yugoslavia and Kosovo. Nowadays, irregular flows landing in Sicily are the most frequent: a large part of undocumented migrants is coming from North Africa and Middle East. Libya and Tunisia are the two main transit countries of those flows. According to statistics presented on Figure 17 there is anyway a large decrease on the entry in Italy through both irregular channels since 2000.

The main reasons of this slowing on irregular entrances are a higher effectiveness of border controls together with agreements made by Italian government with the origin and transit countries and by the opening of the borders within the Schengen area. Flows of shore landed undocumented migrants were estimated to be of about 20 000 migrants in 2006. In 2007, the figures were almost unchanged, nevertheless in 2008, the figures show a large increase of shore landed on the Italian coasts[9]; they were about 37 000 for the whole year 2008 according to Frontex and at the island of Lampedusa arrivals of illegal migrants more than doubled between 2007 and 2008. Those figures are anyway not directly related to the global economic downturn. Restrictive policies adopted by Spain during 2007 made Italy a more attractive way to enter Europe. The economic and political situation on the homelands of undocumented migrants was an important pull factor for those migrants. In fact looking at the statistics by nationality of undocumented migrants Nigerians, Somalis and Eritreans are the first three citizenships in order of statistical consistency landed on Italian coasts during 2008 (CIR, 2008).

[9] The shore landed were about 30 000 during the first ten months of 2008 (source http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com) and about 27 427 between 1st of January and 16th of October 2008 according to Italian Council of Refugees.

Figure 17. Undocumented immigrants shore landed and refused entry at the border (1986-2006)



Source: Fasani 2009

4. The economic context of migration

Immigrants could be more vulnerable than other workers during recession for two different reasons: because of their human capital characteristics (e.g. language and education) and because the economic sectors in which they work can be more or early affected by the crisis (Papademetriou and Terrazas, 2009). In this paragraph we are going to study how the economic crisis affected the immigrants and the native born on the labour market. Table 14 shows Italian labour market major indicators for foreigners and total population. Activity and employment rates are higher for foreigners than for the total population. Those figures are only in part explained by differences in the age structure of the two populations, on the other hand they are due to a higher propensity to work of foreigners that is typical in a recent immigration country such as Italy (ISMU, 2008). According to CNEL[10] (CNEL; 2008) other factors can explain such a peculiarity. First of all, foreign-born population has a higher propensity than the native Italians to accept any kind of job, i.e. unskilled jobs. There is a double explanation for that behaviour: the first one is related to the economic situation of migrants that puts them in the need of a regular salary and the second is related to the Italian migration law (L. no. 189/2002). According to that law, labour migrants could not stay unemployed for more than 6 months. Otherwise they loose the possibility to renew their permit of Residence so that either they return back to their homeland; either they stay in Italy irregularly. Activity and employment rates has somewhat decreased for total and foreign population during 2007 and 2008, in particular in the last two quarter of 2008. This trend is mainly due to the crisis in the industrial sector (Banca d'Italia, 2009).

Unemployment rate is slightly higher for foreigners than Italians. The time series show also a weak increase of unemployment rate since the third quarter of 2007, for foreigners and total population both. Unemployment rate figures were decreasing since about 10 years in Italy. The economic downturn is affecting negatively labour force participation for both Italians and foreigners especially in the industrial sector.

[10] Italian National Council of Labour and Economic Affairs (Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro).

Table 14. Italy Labour market indicators: Foreign population and total population: Activity, Employment and Unemployment Rate- 2005-2008, quarterly series

		Foreigners			*Total population*		
Year	*Quarter*	Activity Rate	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate	Activity Rate	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate
2005	I	73.5	65.6	10.8	62.3	57.1	8.2
2005	II	72.7	65.4	10.1	62.4	57.7	7.5
2005	III	71.6	65.6	8.3	61.8	57.4	7.1
2005	IV	73.9	65.4	11.5	62.9	57.8	8.0
2006	I	74	67.1	9.3	62.7	57.9	7.6
2006	II	74	67.6	8.8	63.0	58.9	6.5
2006	III	72.9	67.2	7.9	62.3	58.4	6.1
2006	IV	73.8	67.4	8.7	62.9	58.5	6.9
2007	I	72.1	65.1	9.7	61.9	57.9	6.4
2007	II	72.4	67.0	7.6	62.5	58.9	5.7
2007	III	73.5	68.7	6.5	62.7	59.1	5.6
2007	IV	74.7	67.6	9.5	63.0	58.7	6.6
2008	I	72.6	65.7	9.5	62.8	58.3	7.1
2008	II	72.3	65.9	8.8	63.5	59.2	6.7
2008	III	73.9	68.7	6.9	62.8	59.0	6.1
2008	IV	74.2	67.7	8.8	63.0	58.5	7.1

Source: Istat, Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro (Labour Market Sample Survey): http://www.istat.it

Statistics by gender (table 15-16) show how both foreign and Italian women have lower participation rates than men to labour force. Foreign women activity and employment rates are increasing over the time. Italian women correspondent rates are stable. Foreign women's unemployment rate is more than twice higher than men's and sensibly strongest than the same rate for the overall female population. The main reason for that strong unemployment rate for foreign women is linked to the fact that they often enter Italy through a family reunification process and only later they start to search for a job. So they have difficulties to access the labour market for the first time.

Table 15. Italy Labour market indicators: Foreign population and total population-Male: Activity, Employment and Unemployment Rate- 2005-2008, quarterly series

		Foreigners			*Total population*		
Year	*Quarter*	Activity Rate	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate	Activity Rate	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate
2005	I	88.7	83.2	6.2	74.3	69.2	6.8
2005	II	88.7	82.9	6.6	74.6	70.0	6.1
2005	III	86.4	81.0	6.2	74.0	69.9	5.5
2005	IV	86.4	79.3	8.2	74.6	69.8	6.2
2006	I	89.6	84.4	5.8	74.6	69.9	6.1
2006	II	89.1	84.2	5.7	75.1	71.1	5.2
2006	III	88.1	83.6	5.1	74.4	70.7	4.8
2006	IV	89.1	84.5	5.2	74.5	70.3	5.6
2007	I	87.2	81.8	6.2	73.8	69.9	5.3
2007	II	87.6	83.6	4.6	74.5	71.1	4.6
2007	III	88	84.2	4.3	74.7	71.3	4.4
2007	IV	88.8	83.3	6.2	74.6	70.6	5.3
2008	I	86.5	81.0	6.4	74.0	69.7	5.7
2008	II	85.6	80.4	6.0	74.9	70.8	5.4
2008	III	88.4	84.0	4.9	74.4	70.7	4.9
2008	IV	87.9	81.9	6.8	74.4	69.8	6.0

Source: Istat, Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro (Labour Market Sample Survey): http://www.istat.it

Table 16. Italy Labour market indicators: Foreign population and total population-Female: Activity, Employment and Unemployment Rate- 2005-2008, quarterly series

		Foreigners			*Total population*		
Year	*Quarter*	Activity Rate	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate	Activity Rate	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate
2005	I	57.8	47.3	18.0	50.4	45.1	10.4
2005	II	56	47.1	15.8	50.3	45.4	9.6
2005	III	56.9	50.3	11.6	49.6	44.8	9.5
2005	IV	61.2	51.2	16.3	51.2	45.7	10.7
2006	I	58.4	49.9	14.5	50.9	45.8	9.9
2006	II	59.7	51.8	13.1	51.0	46.7	8.5
2006	III	58.1	51.1	12.0	50.1	46.1	8.0
2006	IV	58.2	50.0	14.0	51.2	46.7	8.8
2007	I	57.1	48.5	15.0	50.0	46.0	8.0
2007	II	57.9	51.0	12.0	50.6	46.8	7.4
2007	III	59.1	53.3	9.9	50.7	46.9	7.4
2007	IV	60.6	52.0	14.1	51.4	46.9	8.6
2008	I	58.7	50.5	14.0	51.6	46.9	9.0
2008	II	59.7	52.1	12.7	52.1	47.5	8.7
2008	III	60	54.1	9.7	51.3	47.2	7.9
2008	IV	61	53.9	11.5	51.6	47.2	8.6

Source: Istat, Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro (Labour Market Sample Survey): http://www.istat.it

As far as the economic sector of activity is concerned (table 17), the greatest part of foreigners usually work in the service industry: almost 1 031 000 migrants, over one half of which women. The service industry is followed by the manufacturing industry, the construction industry, and agriculture. In the last two industries, almost all foreign-born employed are men. Although the economic crisis of 2008, the stock of foreigners labour force is increasing over the time but a lower pace than in the past. Looking at the forecasted demand of foreign labour force made through Excelsior system, in 2008 it is lower than in the previous years. This could be explained only in part by the economic downturn. Also at the nation level, the number of recruitments in 2008 is estimated to be decreasing compared to past trends. This effect is in part due to cyclical factors, and in part to structural reasons that express a growing demand of high skilled workers.

Compared to the overall labour force, the foreigners have a rather different sectoral distribution. That could be explained by the fact that migration responds to specific (i.e. unmet) needs of the local labour market (CNEL; 2008). Migrants are more concentrated in the secondary sector compared to native population and less concentrated in the services sector than Italians. In the secondary sector, foreign-born population is particularly employed in the construction sector (more than twice than Italians). In the tertiary they are concentrated in the domestic and health care services (more than three times than Italians). The professional profile of migrants is quite low compared to that of natives. About 70% of migrants are unskilled workers, craftsmen or workers; 20% work as a trader or in the tertiary and only 10% has a skilled employment (table 19). The differences with the overall population are quite huge.

Table 17. Italy, Stock of foreigners' labour force (in thousand) by economic sector, quarterly series, 2006-2008

Year	*Quarter*	*Agriculture*	*%*	*Industry*	*%*	*Construction*	*%*	*Tertiary*	*%*	***Total***
2006	I	53	4	296	24	219	18	679	54	1 246
2006	II	47	3	303	22	240	17	786	57	1 375
2006	III	54	4	347	25	227	16	762	55	1 390
2006	IV	56	4	332	24	244	18	750	54	1 382
2007	I	52	4	312	23	237	18	730	55	1 331
2007	II	46	3	331	22	273	18	854	57	1 505
2007	III	60	4	384	24	252	16	894	56	1 590
2007	IV	50	3	371	23	265	17	899	57	1 584
2008	I	48	3	350	23	254	17	867	57	1 519
2008	II	41	2	385	22	289	17	1 031	59	1 746
2008	III	71	4	434	23	300	16	1 070	57	1 875
2008	IV	75	4	456	24	301	16	1 031	55	1 863

Source: Istat, Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro (Labour Market Sample Survey): http://www.istat.it

Table 18. Italy, Stocks of labour force (in thousand and %) by economic sector, quarterly series, 2006-2008

Year	*Quarter*	*Agriculture*	*%*	*Industry*	*%*	*Constructions*	*%*	*Tertiary*	*%*	***Total***
2006	I	910	4	4.957	22	1.919	8	14.960	66	22.747
2006	II	979	4	5.016	22	1.897	8	15.294	66	23.187
2006	III	1.018	4	5.090	22	1.852	8	15.040	65	23.001
2006	IV	1.019	4	5.042	22	1.932	8	15.025	65	23.018
2007	I	895	4	4.989	22	1.917	8	15.045	66	22.846
2007	II	915	4	5.092	22	1.978	8	15.313	66	23.298
2007	III	947	4	5.099	22	1.954	8	15.417	66	23.417
2007	IV	938	4	5.012	21	1.972	8	15.404	66	23.326
2008	I	875	4	4.919	21	1.915	8	15.462	67	23.170
2008	II	859	4	5.028	21	1.971	8	15.724	67	23.581
2008	III	918	4	5.046	21	1.988	8	15.566	66	23.518
2008	IV	929	4	4.948	21	2.004	9	15.468	66	23.349

Source: Istat, Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro (Labour Market Sample Survey): http://www.istat.it

Table 19. Italy, Stocks of total and foreign labour force (in thousand and %) by profession, 4th quarter 2008

	A.V.	*%*	*A.V.*	*%*
Managers and entrepreneurs	1 071	4.59	30	1.62
Intellectual Profession	2 446	10.47	39	2.07
Technical Professions	4 860	20.81	84	4.52
Employees	2 551	10.92	33	1.79
Sellers and personal services	3 712	15.90	272	14.57
Craftsmen, skilled workers, farmers	4 354	18.65	572	30.72
Plant conductors	1 904	8.15	206	11.06
Unskilled workers	2 201	9.43	627	33.63
Army	251	1.07	0	0.00
Total	23 349		1 863	

Source: Istat, Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro (Labour Market Sample Survey): http://www.istat.it

Table 20. Recruitments of foreigners by economic sectors and as a % of the total amount of recruitments, 2001-2008

	Number of Recruitments of foreigners by sector			*Foreign recruitments as a % of the Total by sector*		
	Secondary and Tertiary	Agriculture	Total	Secondary and Tertiary	Agriculture	Total
2001	149 500	2 400	151 900	20.9	30.4	21
2002	163 800	2 600	166 400	23.9	35.4	24
2003	223 900	4 900	228 800	33.3	47.9	33.5
2004	195 000	5 600	200 600	28.9	42.7	29
2005	182 900	3 900	186 800	28.2	33.1	28.2
2006	162 300	4 800	167 100	23.3	31.6	23.3
2007	227 600	8 200	235 800	27.1	46.6	27.2
2008	167 800	4 100	171 900	20.3	28.3	20.4

Source: Unioncamere-Ministero del Lavoro, Sistema Informativo Excelsior, 2008

During this period of global economic crisis, the condition of migrant workers is particularly difficult for at least two main reasons: first they are predominantly employed in small businesses and they have flexible working relationships, they are therefore more vulnerable to crisis and, like the Italians, they are not protected against the loss of work with adequate social security income support; the crisis is affecting also family employees in the health care sector because of the progressive income impoverishment in particular of retired people (their employers); b) the condition of migrant workers is exacerbated by a precarious legal presence, maintained for a maximum of only six months in cases of unemployment: the consequences are to return to the homeland or to stay with an irregular legal status (CNEL, 2008).

5. The policy context of migration

The Italian migration policy is regulated by two laws: the "Turco-Napolitano Law" no. 40/1998 (later confirmed by the Single Act no. 286 25/7/1998) approved by a left-wing government and the "Bossi-Fini Law" (no.189/2002) that partially modified the "Turco-Napolitano Law" under a right-wing government. During 2008 two different government coalitions made two different kind of migration policy. In fact, the left-wing government coalition, the so called Prodi 2 government, had a vote of no confidence a PM Prodi was forced to resign; he kept its power till the month of May 2008. After the elections of April 2008, a right-wing government headed by P.M. Silvio Berlusconi took the power. Under the Prodi 2 government an organic legislation on Asylum was finally adopted by Italy (the Decree no. 251 19th November 2007 and Decree no. 25 28th January 2008). Till that moment Italy was the only EU country without such kind of legislation. The new law has certainly favoured a certain number of new arrivals to Italy, as we notice before[11]. The decree no. 159 of the 3rd of October 2008 of the right-wing coalition introduces some restriction on the new Asylum legislation adopted by the Prodi 2 government.

The left-wing government introduced also a new legislation regulating the entry and the residence in Italy of researchers coming from countries outside EU (decree no. 17, 9th of January 2008). Both the interventions of the Prodi 2 government followed EU directives. The other measures taken from the left-wing about migration policy were: 1) measures to regulate the juridical situation of EU citizens residing in Italy, in particular their affiliation to the Italian Public Health Insurance and their expulsion

[11] See § 3.

due to public security and order issues; 2) measures to simplify the online application for family reunification, for entries through the quota system and to obtain the Residence Permit (ISMU, 2009).

Since May 2008 the new right-wing government adopted several new migration policy measures. Migration related issued were at the hearth of the right-wing electoral campaign: in particular the issue of public security related to undocumented migrants' crimes was a very hot theme during the campaign. One of the major promises of the right-wing coalition before the elections was the substantial reduction in migration flows composed of undocumented migrants. Not surprising then, one of the first measure adopted by the new Berlusconi government was a decree on public security[12] that previews among other measures bitter instruments to prevent and repress irregular migration. The public debate was also concentrated on the Roma people: the Berlusconi government allowed the monitoring and the census by the regional authorities of their houses[13] by Law.

Several analysis of Italian migration policies show that they are affected by a mix of factors including: "the demand for labour on the part of businesses and Italian families; demographic changes and the crisis of the welfare system; the public's perception of this migration; the role of the mass media in shaping this perception; political and ideological considerations; and the role of non-profit organizations working in the field of immigration" (Bonifazi et al. 2009 p.62).

It is clear that the mass media and the public's perception of migration played a central role in shaping the measures taken by the right-wing government on public security related migration issues. The economic crisis is in part related to those measures because, in such a period migrants could be stigmatised by the public opinion. Anyway the media campaign against crimes committed by undocumented migrants and nomads started well before the beginning of the economic crisis and it was used by the policy makers in order to exacerbate the existing policies.

Certainly "even among those political parties most opposed to the immigrant population, objections become less heated if it is a question of those who are already here and have a job" (Bonifazi et al 2009 p.62).

Three Laws adopted by the Berlusconi government during 2008 seem not to be online with that statement. The Law of the 6th of August 2008, no. 133 (that included measures on economic development and public finance) introduces in fact some indirect and direct restrictions on the social rights of foreigners. To get access to social benefits for over 65, the Law states that the person should be resident in Italy since more than 10 years. Even if this measure is the same for Italian and for foreigners, it is clear that it harms more foreigners (EU and non EU) because it is more likely that they lived for a shorter period than an Italian in Italy. Another article of the Law provides for social housing for poor households, young couples with low revenues, old people with low revenues, students, and migrants with low revenues but at the condition that they are resident in Italy since at least 10 years. The article is in part new because for the first time it provides social housing for migrants, but at the same time restrictive because of the fact that migrants should be regularly resident in Italy since not less than 10 years.

Another Decree adopted by the right-wing government[14] introduced a series of limits to family reunification: in particular the minimum revenues that a migrant already resident in Italy and willing to apply for his/her family members reunification has to own has been risen. Other articles of the decree are about spouse minimal legal age, migrants' parents reunification procedures, reunification of children aged more than 18 and other issues.

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[12] Law no. 125, 25th of July 2008 –recently approved by the Parliament

[13] The so called "Campi nomadi".

[14] Decree 3rd of October 2008, no. 160

In addition the "Flows Decree" of 2008[15] has fixed to 150 000 the number of workers to be admitted in the Italian labour market. In the Decree the particular economic conjuncture is specifically mentioned. According to the government that conjuncture justifies the entry of workers only in two specific sectors: housework and care work.

Those measures are clearly related to the economic downturn affecting Italy at present and they may be part of a cyclical immigration policy strategy. But it has been showed that this is a weak policy because it does not take into account the fact that the control over flows by the government is limited and that the policy decisions may have a lagged impact on the economy or worse be effective only when the recession is over. In fact the quota system is largely used by Italian government as a regularisation policy. In order to limit migration flows or better to increment returns, Italian government may on the contrary enlarge the quota. That will mean a regularisation of most of the undocumented and a chance for them to leave temporarily Italy and to come back after the end of the crisis. In fact undocumented migrants will be less likely to leave if they are not sure that they could come back later (Papademetriou et al. 2009).

6. Migration-related flows of money and goods

In 2008, immigrants' remittances total amount sent from Italy was 6.3 billion Euros, and they exceeded by 4.5% those of the previous year, in which they had totalled 6 billion Euros (which represent almost 17% of the overall amount of remittances in 27-member EU). In the list of the European countries from which the highest remittance volumes are transferred, Italy was in 2006 at the third place after Spain, which with 6.8 billion Euros totalled 26.2% overall remittances, and United Kingdom, which with 5.9 billion Euros totalled 22.7% overall remittances. On the whole, the amount of remittances in EU member countries totalled 26 billion Euros which, if we consider also informal money transfer channels, reached a total amount of 40 billions.

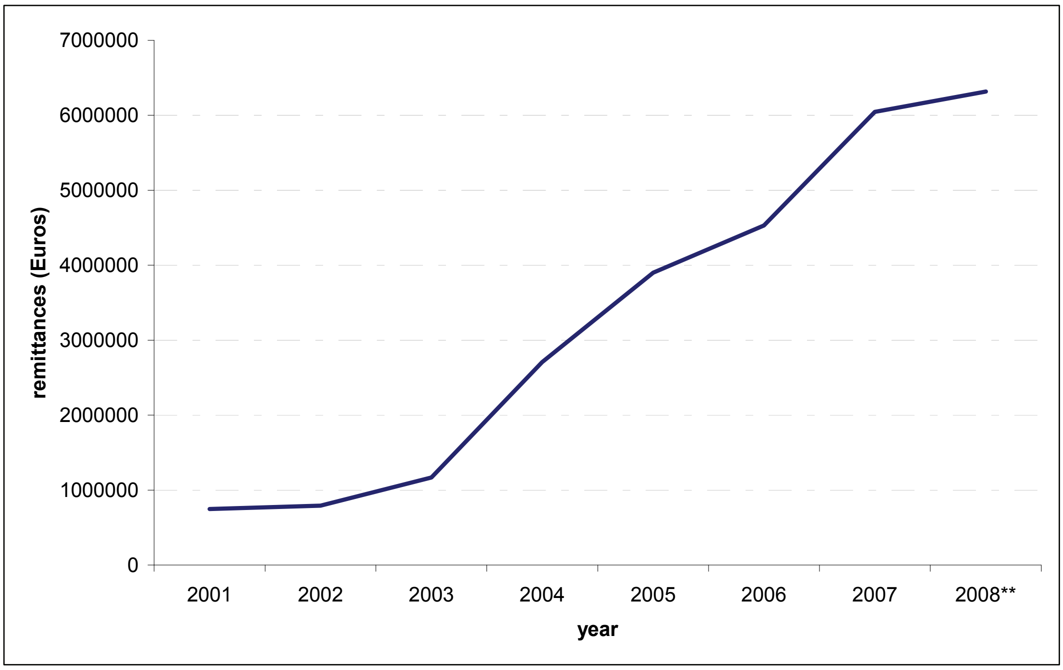
Figure 18 show a high increase in remittances amount between 2003 and 2007 and a stabilization during the last year. According to statistics by country of destination of remittances (figure 19), in 2008 there was a slight decrease of money transferred from Italy to Morocco, Tunisia, China and Romania. Economic cycle, together with structural factors (changing migrations flows) could be responsible of this inverse trend. According to World Bank in fact since the third quarter of 2008 at a global level, remittances flows to developing countries began to slow down. And forecast for 2009 predict a further slowdown in response to the global financial crisis (World Bank, 2008). Anyway the global amount of remittances sent to developing countries has recorded an increase of 7% during 2008 compared to 2007. Regional patterns of flows are changing: flows from US to Latin America and the Caribbean and those from Western Europe to Europe and Central Asian are slowing. Flows from the GCC countries to East Asia are increasing fast. Flows to Middle-East and North Africa are strong and stable. Flows to Sub-Saharan Africa are growing but at a slower pace than in the past.

The future is not easily predictable: past crisis experience shows that remittances are stable during the crisis, but this time the crisis is global so forecasts are more difficult for several reasons. First the global crisis in the OECD countries; second the impact of the crisis on developing countries; third the impact of the fall on oil prices on the Gulf economies and fourth the high uncertainty about exchange rates. The impact will be directly linked to the economic situation in the respective migrant-destination countries. In Middle East and North Africa, according to World Bank forecast the growth of remittances will fall by nearly 7% in 2009. The main source of remittances for this region is Europe (43% of the total) followed by GCC (26%) and US (15%). The negative forecast is mainly due to $/€ exchange rate: during 2009 in fact there will be a strengthening of US dollar compared to the average

[15] Decree of the Prime Minister of the 3rd of December 2008

of 2008. As a consequence outward remittances from the EU15 are expecting to decline by 8% in 2009. So far we can stress that the trend observed in Italy during 2008 is online with those forecasts.

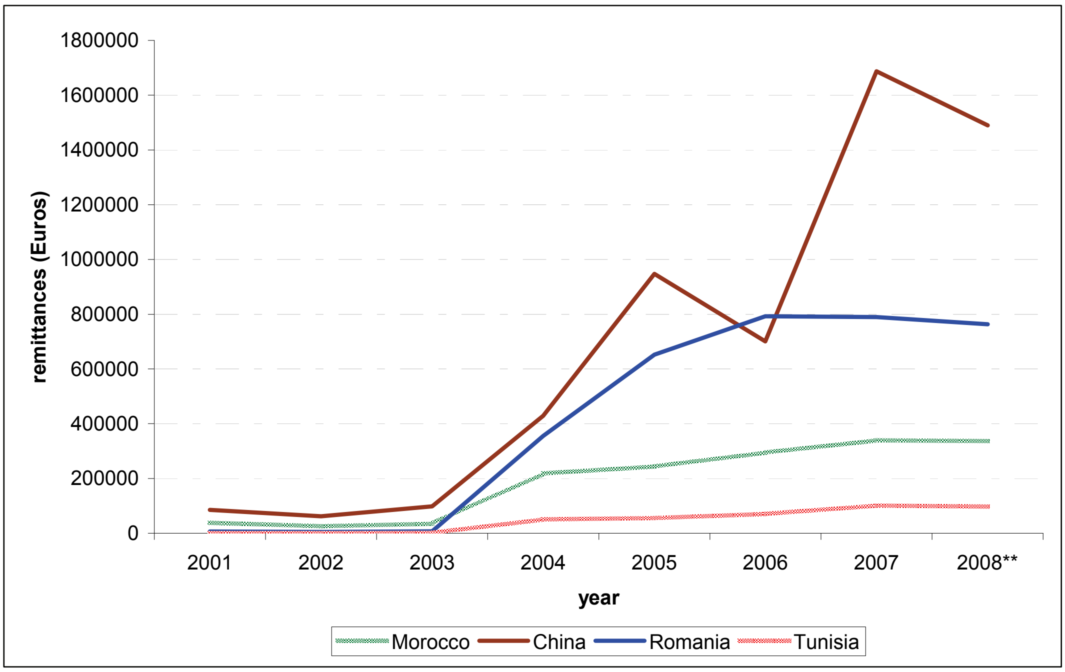
Figure 18. Remittances from Italy to immigrants' countries of origin (2001-2008)



Source: ISMU and Banca d'Italia.

** Estimated by the author

Figure 19. Remittances from Italy to certain countries of origin (2001-2008)



Source: ISMU and Banca d'Italia.

** Estimated by the author

Conclusion

The statistical evidence suggests that inflows of new immigrants to Italy had a slight decrease since the beginning of the crisis. In particular looking at the immigrants category we highlighted a decline on labour migrations. Nevertheless a clear relationship between the economic downturn and the inflows of immigrants could not be established. In fact individuals take their long-term migration decisions taking into account other factors than the economic one, for instance political and social factors are also essential.

We found that recent changes in immigration policies (i.e. the government restrictive policy on quota) adopted by the Italian government since the beginning of the crisis seem to be responsible in large part for the decline of the labour migration flows to Italy during 2008. At the same time we found that undocumented migration is increasing. Looking in particular at the growth of undocumented migration from Northern African we found that they are increasing for several reasons. First, the political instability in the homelands, second the strong pressure on labour markets and the rising unemployment rates, third the effects of the crisis on their economies, forth the strong difficulties to entry Italy legally.

A circular migration policy will be more effective to face the crisis than the cyclical migration policy currently adopted by the Italian government. In the former migration scheme migrants must return to their home countries after working for a period and then they will get the possibility to come back for a second or for several periods (Fargues, 2008). According to several studies[16] circular migration from MENA countries could be a practical migration scheme for both sending and receiving countries. Those schemes should be applied within an EU circular migration policy. Therefore EU has already indicated circular migration as a central component of its immigration policy. According to EU approach such a policy should focus on two main issues: to enhance cooperation and readmission and to allow the return and reintegration of circular migrants in their home countries (Cassarino, 2008).

Circular migration could facilitate the return of immigrants during the periods of economic crisis, prevent or reduce undocumented migration and preserve the social cohesion in the EU countries.

[16] See for instance Cassarino (2008) and Fargues (2008)

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