



Restoring Italy: the Immigration Crisis and Ineffective Systems

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Immigration is prevalent all over the world: regardless of location, it has been a persistent catalyst for discourse. Pertaining to Italy, immigration from neighboring countries has risen, simultaneously exacerbated by fruitless policies. This brief will highlight the growing challenges of immigration in Italy, and how they can be combatted with effective policy implementation.

II. OVERVIEW

Italy is facing sustained irregular immigration by sea and land while its population ages and labor sectors require workers. As a Mediterranean gateway with close proximity to Tunisia and Libya, illegal immigration has increased heavily in recent years, while policy lacks to compensate for this increase. Arrivals are concentrated mainly on the southern coast of Italy, and travelers move through slow and irregular screening policies, which feeds into public distrust for lacking systems. In tandem with facing a declining population, Italy follows outdated migration policies that highlight periodic changes, yet implementation lags and capacities vary regionally. At the same time, migrants stimulate Italy's graying population and underemployed labor sectors by adding to the workforce—specifically bolstering agriculture, construction,

and logistic branches. On the other hand, illegal immigration poses a tenuous risk of splitting public opinion and fueling negative attitudes towards immigrants. This paper investigates the drivers of irregular policies, institutional failures, and how political parties fuel national debate.

A. Relevance

As time progresses, Italy has been facing inclining levels of immigration met with faulty systems. Since 2015, which was marked as the official immigration crisis, a total of 153,842 people arrived by sea from African countries such as Eritrea and Nigeria. Astonishingly, Italy implemented their first process for regulating unauthorized migrants in 1986, through Law 943. More recently, coupled with Italian legal policies, the country follows European Union (EU)-framed asylum systems that promote slow hotspot screenings and grant a determined quota of visas. To that end, this has fostered rising illegal immigration by boats, with migrants predominantly coming from Libya and Tunisia seeking asylum. Yet, migrants see Italy as a mere transit country, and are still facing legal battles at the hands of slow systems: without gaining a migratory visa, the immigration predicament is only aggravated. As a result, Italian political parties like Lega, under former prime minister Matteo Salvini, oftentimes staunchly blame immigration for safety concerns and highlight slow systems. This crisis touches Italian citizens: it

increases cross-cultural tensions and ethnocentrism while it can be combatted with clear regulations.

III. HISTORY

A. Current Stances

Rising immigration has become a policy battle in Italy, shaping social debates, budget choices, and relations with the European Union (EU). As a country split within multiple municipalities, EU regulations are slow to implement and have little oversight in a fragmented landscape.

Immigration, however, is not a new quandary for Italy. Following economic growth that began in the 1980s, the country saw a first wave of newcomers in the 1990s. Met with Law 189 in 2002, a rigid border control policy was established which made it difficult for immigrants to become permanent residents. A second wave of travel began in 2015, which resulted in new, emergency EU-centric regulations implemented. This change has been marked by the Istituto Affari Internazionali: these policies include the Dublin Asylum rule, which makes Italy the country responsible for processing asylum claims, and the EU hotspot approach, which requires the registration and identification process of migrants at congested arrival points. While curbing immigration to some extent, the divided municipalities of Italy face slow downstreaming processes, piling up migrants that eventually resort to other means of travel.

Met with cramped immigration hotspots, political parties in Italy have propagated the anti-immigrant narrative with the aim of gaining support. Fundamentally, these populist movements among right-wing parties have

contributed to rising amounts of xenophobia. Supported by researchers Mancosu and Sarcone (2025), as a positive amount of support for political groups like Fratelli D'Italia increased following the 2015 immigration wave, a corresponding rise in societal difficulties faced by Italian natives were attributed to immigrants. This poses the risk that immigration brings forth: not only migrants experience arduous battles for visas, but on the home front, Italians are increasingly following political agendas.

IV. POLICY PROBLEM

A. Stakeholders

It is evident that the main stakeholders are immigrants themselves, especially those who have experienced strenuous immigration barriers in travel. These physical roadblocks prevent immigrants from advancing in their migratory path, and oftentimes, and result in false prejudice. As result, media and political parties fuel hatred—contributing to decades long layers of xenophobia and prejudice. According to the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), political parties and media affiliation have attributed social stress and petty crime to rising immigration rates, incentivizing public distrust. In an idealistic sense, immigrants should have a say in the policy that surrounds their travels— as they are the very ones who bear the brunt of ineffective systems.

Moreover, the Italian people are stakeholders, as they stand to defend territory, while policies falter. Exacerbated by a graying population and decaying culture, Italians face the pressing dilemma of allowing newcomers into a culture-rich haven. However, these ideations of

wanting to protect Italian nationals are stimulated by political parties and media propaganda. Therefore, it is crucial to promote effective means of immigration policy that not only bolster inclusivity, but also defend cultural nodes.

B. Risks of Indifference

The risks of indifference towards reforming Italy's immigration policy lies within the future of immigrants. That being said, if Italy treats irregular migration as usual, it is given that societal biases and backlogs will worsen. Those desiring asylum will be stuck at border gates, seeking sanctuary in Italy, yet time prevents it. This will only promote illegal means of immigration, which will benefit rings of smuggling. As a result of faulty systems that in a sense, can stimulate illegal immigration to an extent, political parties can wield this fact to their advantage: immigrants can be painted as criminals, for they will be stuck in a cycle of searching for asylum, as time falters to give leeway to travel. Racial perpetuations will ensue, promoting an everlong revolution of travelers biding their time towards the Italian promise. Thus, the risk lies directly in the immigrants themselves: slow systems can misconstrue the image of immigrants and delay future endeavors.

C. Nonpartisan Reasoning

Because irregular immigration affects not only immigrants but also Italian communities, culture, and legal frameworks, nonpartisan reasoning is vital to preserve all parties revolving around the dilemma of immigration. The benefits of this form of intervention include but are not limited to the following:

1) Reforming public trust: Clear regulations

with time-efficient processes in place will enable immigrants to not resort to illegal forms of travel– reconfiguring the public image of immigrants. As of late, political parties perpetuate illegal immigrants, specifically in coastal towns, which are hotspots for travel. When applicants receive migration statuses in a timely fashion, to the common eye, order is perceived. Visible order calms politics, reducing any legitimate reason for public distrust of newcomers.

2) Filling of the workforce and providing opportunities to immigrants: With a graying population, Italy has a grandiose amount of vacancies within its robust workforce. From 2019 to 2023, the job vacancy rate has risen from 1.4% to 2.3%– revealing that the labor market has increasingly more jobs available. By establishing better systems for migration, governmental verified vacancies can create pathways for immigrant labor. As a result of effective systems, primary sector jobs will reap the benefits: GDP can increase with increased productivity via new laborers, and immigrants can establish means of funds through legal job pathways.

3) Reducing the burden of slow systems on Italians: As of late, immigrants are exploited for labor through under the table transactions via firms. In support of this idea, writer Giada Zampano highlights how immigrants are subject to illegal labor contracts and harsh working conditions, specifically in agricultural

sectors. At the same time, Italians lose out on fair labor opportunities as illegal means of employment are at play, while they are simultaneously paying taxes to support immigrant shelters and resources. Promoting efficacious immigration also means less funding from the government, because with promoting clear systems with time-bounded approaches and job pathways, less time means less funds in the long run.

V. TRIED POLICY

In the grand scheme of things, Italy has attempted to advocate for its fair share of policy work to remediate the issues that have arisen via immigration. Most recently however, Italy has amended its yearly Decreto Flussi for 2025—which is a periodic Italian decree that sets annual quotas for travelers. In past years, the policy has promoted legal pathways that fill labor gaps and promote biometric standardization processes; in 2025, the decree has now increased quota levels and implemented new digitized procedures to streamline applications. Still, the EU has influenced immigration policy in Italy: through the advent of the hotspot approach, which promotes standardized id registration policies and EU-level workflows, this policy develops the image of reversing deep immigration bottlenecks.

However, these policies have received countless forms of backlash—both from the governmental front or from citizens. To start the Decreto Flussi, while ambitious, fell short of its commitment: in short, demand outpaced quotas while credential recognition lagged, worsening immigrant gridlock in the end. As for EU approaches, while

standardization proved effective, limited caseworkers were present to meet the surplus of travelers. Critics highlighted soft and vague policy frameworks that left agencies with the ability to interpret what should have been clear regulations, leading to confusion in implementation. As a result, immigration policies still lag, with obstructions present in the way of travelers.

VI. POLICY OPTIONS

Standardization of screening protocol with a time-bounded approach and adjudication

Italy's fragmented landscape plays a crucial role in policy lags. Entrenched in cultural divides and rough landscapes, there is an insurmountable level of difficulty in not only implementing policy, but assuring seamless means of immigration for newcomers.

To overcome policy gaps, I recommend strict deadlines in immigration screening, preferably with a 60 day timeline of making a resolution towards the status of newcomers. Moreover, this new framework would highlight a more robust expansion of caseworkers and judges, which would assist in reducing backlog. Flowing through Territorial Commissions and Interior Ministries, policy will not be up for interpretation, as it emphasizes rigid deadlines of resolve. In turn, bottlenecks will reduce and course through the diverse regions of Italy. The burden of awaiting status for immigrants can be ameliorated with standardized decision making, also reducing the workload on caseworkers.

Verified legal pathways into underemployed sectors

Italy's graying population and shortage in

primary sectors are distinct: employers oftentimes rely on illegal manners of gaining laborers where policy lags. Moreover, racial tensions ensue at the hands of lagging immigration policy as Italian nationals perpetuate the fact that illegal immigration has been at times, a common option for immigrants facing gridlock. By implementing specific job slots coupled with workforce safety rules, immigrants will experience a fluid– and almost transactional– approach towards travel and finding work. This will reduce job vacancies and eliminate xenophobia, as more workers means more economic productivity for Italy. Sequentially, verified job opportunities will reduce tensions between newcomers and natives, by promoting safety within the workforce for travelers, but also reducing reasons for societal upset.

Outcome based funding towards immigration hotspot centers

While the EU has allocated billions of dollars of emergency funding and programs to improve the financial strain that immigration has posed on Italy, it lacks designated targets. In specific, the Asylum, Migration and Integration fund (AMIF) lists indicators where the funding is directed to, but the impact is hard to evaluate, as Italy is still based on emergency planning regimens for remediating immigration strain rather than strictly targeted funds.

Thus, the need for clear funding is potent: I recommend a performance based funding plan that ties funding to efficiency, and tracks all policy decisions on a public dashboard. Funding must be divided evenly across judges, caseworkers, and all other legal informants with the aim of funding being granted after immigrant

approval. In turn, backlogs will cease to exist, and funding will be appropriately distributed on the basis of need. Moreover, automatic stabilizers can be wielded to combat exponentially rising levels of immigration: the more travelers that are granted entry will indicate the steeper need for funding, which will signal increased levels of funds in specific areas. Accordingly, financial logs will be documented, creating efficacious immigration systems with a targeted funding proposal.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have investigated the countless barriers preventing effective immigration in Italy. Undeniably, this issue is omnipotent across the world, but pertaining Italy, the issue only stands to multiply considering the exponential growth that comes with immigration. Out of the options provided, the one that is the most implementable is standardizing screening with time-bounded regulations– for its clarity, precision, and security towards a better future.

All things considered, immigration to Italy is an ever-growing predicament that requires mutual understanding and compassion for all parties involved. Concerning racial biases, these tendencies are perpetuated by organizations thwarted by prestige, which still require much consideration into reforming societal stigma. Wholeheartedly, I believe barriers– whether racial, economic, or systematic– can be overcome through a sensible approach, with the aim of betterment for the future for immigrants.

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