# GOOD RECEPTION: WHERE TO START FROM
## *A Comparative Study of EU Hospitality Systems for Asylum Seekers*
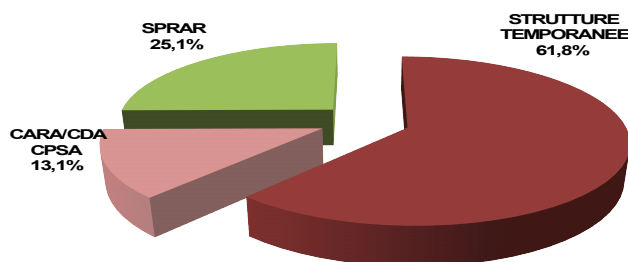
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In the Italian debate on immigration issues, arrivals by sea are undoubtedly one of the most widely debated issues by the general public and media, In recent months this has been compounded by another issue, that of refugees: where should they be hosted in order to prevent any conflicts with the local population and to avoid squandering resources? Furthermore, the recent police investigation on the infiltration of Rome's municipal administration by the Mafia has roused public outrage by drawing attention to the illegal profits allegedly linked to the management of reception. Considering that the EU Commission itself has emphasized the need to reduce the causes of irregular migrations and to create a system to redistribute migrants among EU member states,[1] Italy is still faced with an emergency situation turned permanent and shows inadequate durable solutions for seekers of asylum and international protection. The current reception system for asylum seekers shows a number of inadequacies, including the dispersion and overcrowding of the existing reception centers, their uneven distribution over the national territory, and the uncertainty concerning the length of stay. In view of providing clarification on Italy's current reception system, and to propose a few good practices in use at the EU level, the Leone Moressa Foundation, in cooperation with the Open Society Foundations, conducted a comparative study of Italy's reception system for asylum seekers. The study brings together quantitative data and an analysis of the systems existing in six key countries, i.e. those that receive the largest number of asylum applications: Germany, Sweden, Italy, France, Hungary, and the United Kingdom.

## 1. Italy's reception system

Currently, the Italian reception system for asylum seekers is highly fragmented and is comprised of facilities of various types. In Italy there exist currently: 4 CPSAs (first-aid and reception centers); 10 CARAs (reception centers for asylum seekers) and CDAs (short-term reception centers); the SPRAR network (protection system for asylum seekers and refugees), plus temporary reception facilities called CAS (centers for extra-ordinary reception). The SPRAR network, though considered the most efficient of the three existing types, as of June 2015 received only one quarter (25%) of the 78,000 asylum seekers currently present in Italy. Governmental centers—the CPSAs, CARAs, CDAs—now host over 10,000 migrants, but 62% of all beneficiaries are hosted in temporary reception facilities.

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# Distribution by type of reception facility, as of 18 June 2015



*Source:* Leone Moressa Foundation on Ministry of the Interior, ANCI-Association of Italian Municipalities data

# Number of migrants hosted at Italian reception centers as of 18 June 2015

| Region | Temporary facilities | CARAs/ CDAs and CPSAs | SPRAR | Total migrants hosted | Distribution |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sicily | 5,457 | 5,135 | 4,457 | 15,049 | 19.2% |
| Latium | 2,961 | 900 | 4,569 | 8,430 | 10.7% |
| Lombardy | 7,013 | | 806 | 7,819 | 10.0% |
| Puglia | 1,669 | 2,315 | 1,739 | 5,723 | 7.3% |
| Campania | 4,405 | | 1,050 | 5,455 | 7.0% |
| Emilia Romagna | 4,029 | | 782 | 4,811 | 6.1% |
| Calabria | 1,577 | 1,336 | 1,795 | 4,708 | 6.0% |
| Piedmont | 3,597 | | 889 | 4,486 | 5.7% |
| Tuscany | 3,399 | | 549 | 3,948 | 5.0% |
| Veneto | 3,576 | | 303 | 3,879 | 4,9% |
| Marche | 1,687 | 106 | 538 | 2,331 | 3.0% |
| Friuli-Venezia Giulia | 1,732 | 256 | 323 | 2,311 | 2.9% |
| Sardinia | 1,622 | 253 | 88 | 1,963 | 2.5% |
| Liguria | 1,227 | | 311 | 1,538 | 2.0% |
| Molise | 975 | | 405 | 1,380 | 1.8% |
| Umbria | 918 | | 364 | 1,282 | 1.6% |
| Abruzzis | 1,026 | | 217 | 1243 | 1.6% |
| Basilicata | 667 | | 382 | 1049 | 1.3% |
| Trentino-Alto Adige | 827 | | 149 | 976 | 1.2% |
| Valley of Aosta | 103 | | | 103 | 0.1% |
| **TOTAL** | **48,467** | **10,301** | **19,716** | **78,484** | **100,0%** |

*Source:* Leone Moressa Foundation on Ministry of the Interior, ANCI-Association of Italian Municipalities data

# CHIEF SHORTCOMINGS OF ITALY'S RECEPTION SYSTEM

**FRAGMENTATION.** Though the SPRAR network has increased its capacity, only 25% of all asylum seekers in Italy are currently hosted at its facilities. 13% are hosted at governmental facilities, whereas more than one half (62%) are hosted at temporary facilities.

**OVERCROWDING.** The ratio between the number of arrivals on the Italian shores in 2014 (170,000) and the capacity of SPRAR facilities (about 20,000) suffices to show the extent of the problem. One example: as of 31 March 2015, the CARA at Mineo, Sicily, with a capacity of 2,000, was hosting as many as 3,219 persons.

**EXCESSIVE LENGTH OF STAY.** The CARAs were originally designed to receive asylum seekers only in the initial stage, that is, before they were transferred to SPRAR facilities. However, the shortage of available places led to a more intensive use of CARAs and even more of extra-ordinary facilities. This has greatly increased the length of stay, which is now 12 months on average.

**EXCESSIVE LENGTH OF WAIT FOR ASYLUM APPLICATIONS.** According to the *Practical Guidelines for Seekers of International Protection* produced by the SPRAR system,[2] Italy's Territorial Commissions on International Protection are to conduct auditions in view of the granting of asylum status no later than 30 days from the applications' submission, and then decide within three days. However, according to estimates by the SPRAR database, the wait now averages 12 months. This slows down the internal turnover and damages the projects' ability to receive more beneficiaries. Again according to SPRAR data, not all local police authorities (particularly in large cities and in areas loaded by reception facilities) follow the same procedures, which results in unnecessary slowdowns and complications. UNHCR, too, has denounced that overcrowding slows down procedures for the granting of international protection.[3]

**LACK OF REFUGEE INTEGRATION POLICIES.** Italy lacks policies, strategies and programs to facilitate the beneficiaries' social and economic integration in the 'post-reception' stage. UNHCR itself denounced Italy because 'integration prospects for beneficiaries of international protection in Italy continue to be seriously limited and constitute therefore one of the most problematic areas of the Italian asylum system. Italy lacks a comprehensive strategy and specific measures for the local integration of beneficiaries of international protection.'

**TERRITORIAL DISTRIBUTION.** For the distribution of asylum seekers on its territory, the Ministry of the Interior of Italy generally adopts the sole criterion of resident population. However, one look at the number of asylum seekers received by each Italian region will show that this criterion is not observed in actual fact. Thus, those areas of the South of Italy where the largest governmental facilities are located currently host a larger number of asylum seekers. In particular, Sicily hosts one fifth (20%) of the total number of beneficiaries of reception in Italy.

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2 SPRAR, *Guida pratica per richiedenti protezione internazionale*.
3 UNHCR, *Recommendations on important aspects of refugee protection in Italy*, July 2013.

## 2. A comparative analysis of reception costs in Italy and in Europe

Considering the specific characters of Europe's different reception systems and their different financial management systems (different budget items, different funding sources), a financial comparison of European reception system is not easy. An interesting comparison was conducted in 2012 by EMN-European Migration Network,[4] that analyzed the EU members' public expenditure for asylum seekers.

The data was provided by the Italian Ministry of the Interior. In 2011, the asylum system absorbed approximately EUR 120 million (CARAs, CPSAs, SPRAR network, European Refugee Fund programs). To this should be added the EUR 740 million allotted for the (extraordinary) management of the so-called 'North Africa emergency.' A look at the costs incurred by the various member states in 2011 will show that Italy's expenditure, though incurred in an emergency situation, Italy spent all of EUR 860 million. Italy spent an average EUR 21,000 for each of its asylum seekers, Germany spent almost EUR 24,000, and Sweden over 38,000.

The comparison shows one significant aspect connected with the special nature of Italy's situation: in the 'emergency' period 2011 (which then proved similar to 2014 and 2015), Italy's expenditure for its asylum seekers was basically in line with that of other EU member states that were not facing an emergency. Italy's per-capita expenditure was also not particularly high, in fact it was less than what Sweden and Germany spent.

It is fair to conclude that the Italian public seems to have a remarkably imbalanced and exaggerated perception of what the country is spending to maintain its asylum seeker reception system. Even in emergencies such as the current one, Italy's expenditure appears to be in line with that of other EU member states. In fact its per-capita expenditure is less than that of Germany and Sweden.

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4 European Migration Network.

**Public expenditure for asylum seekers in 1ˢᵗ six EU countries, 2011**

| 1ˢᵗ six countries | Total expenditure (million €) | Asylum seekers-2011 | Per-capita expenditure (€) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Germany* | 789 | 33,035 | 23,884 |
| Sweden | 1,148 | 29,710 | 38,640 |
| Italy | 860 | 40,355 | 21,311 |
| France | 821 | 57,335 | 14,319 |
| United Kingdom | 400 | 26,940 | 14,848 |

* 2009 data

*Source:* Leone Moressa Foundation on Ministry of the Interior, ANCI-Association of Italian Municipalities data

As one studies the overall expenditure for the reception of asylum seekers, it will be interesting how the single items are distributed. Moving to the local dimension, it is possible to examine the budgets of projects submitted by Italian municipalities for the management of reception within the SPRAR network.[5] We analyzed the chief expenditure items in view of assessing the economic impact of reception on each territorial area. The overall expenditure for the SPRAR network was EUR 146 million, or 94,5% of the overall expenditure for SPRAR at the national level (EUR 155 million). The per-capita daily costs fluctuated between EUR 33,7 and 34,7, depending on the number of projects considered.

The largest amount was personnel costs (38%). The first consideration is that more than one third of the approximately EUR 35,00 per-capita spent on the SPRAR network was used to pay staffers and professionals. SPRAR's practical guidelines show how the requirements for staffers working in their facilities are not fixed, but rather depend on each facility's specific organizational needs as well as its beneficiaries' characteristics. However, the guidelines clearly spell out that 'every reception project should be conducted by a team including a certain number of professionals possessing specific qualifications: social workers and/or psychologists; professional educators; inter-cultural and linguistic mediators; legal workers and/or attorneys.'

The second largest expenditure item is 'general aid costs': these include food, clothing etc., but also the so-called pocket money, i.e., 'a small amount of money to be provided to each beneficiary for small personal expenses in addition to goods and services provided by the reception project.'

The study thus shows how reception facilities have a positive impact on the territory, as they generate a spin-off in terms of employing professionals, consultants, and a variety of services.

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5 The data refers to a breakdown of provisional budgets for SPRAR projects. In particular, the data refers to provisional budgets connected with 90% of all active and funded projects (387 out of 430).

### A breakdown of total SPRAR expenditures

| Expenditure items | 2014 expenditure (€) | % of total |
|---|---|---|
| Personnel costs | 55,625,564 | 37.9% |
| Adjustment costs | 18,185,695 | 12.4% |
| General aid costs | 34,853,051 | 23.8% |
| Integration | 9,075,885 | 6.2% |
| Consultancies | 5,546,084 | 3.8% |
| Indirect costs | 1,274,592 | 0,9% |
| Other costs | 22,041,895 | 15.0% |
| **Total** | **146,602,766** | **100.00%** |

*Source:* Leone Moressa Foundation on Ministry of the Interior, ANCI-Association of Italian Municipalities data

### Per-capita SPRAR expenditures per day (11,584 places)

| Expenditure items | 2014 expenditure (€) | % of total |
|---|---|---|
| Personnel costs | 13,16 | 37.9% |
| Adjustment costs | 4,30 | 12.4% |
| General aid costs | 8,24 | 23.8% |
| Integration | 2,15 | 6.2% |
| Consultancies | 1,31 | 3.8% |
| Indirect costs | 0,30 | 0.9% |
| Other costs | 5,21 | 15.0% |
| **Total** | **34,67** | **100.00%** |

*Source:* Leone Moressa Foundation on Ministry of the Interior, ANCI-Association of Italian Municipalities data

### Estimated overall cost of Italy's reception system

| | No. of beneficiaries- Feb. 2015 | Per-capita average cost (€) | Total per day (€) | Total per year (€) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Temporary facilities | 37,028 | 30,00[6] | 1,110,840,00 | 405,456,600,00 |
| CARAs/CDAs, CPSAs | 9,504 | 34,19 | 324,941,76 | 118,603,742,40 |
| SPRAR network | 20,596 | 35,41[7] | 729,421,56 | 266,238,868,27 |
| **Total** | **67,128** | **32,25** | **2,165,203,32** | **790,299,210,67** |

*Source: Leone Moressa Foundation on Ministry of the Interior, ANCI-Association of Italian Municipalities data*

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6 Source: Ministry of the Interior, *Convenzione per la messa a disposizione di posti straordinari per la prima accoglienza* ['Convention regarding the creation of extra-ordinary places in "first-reception" facilities'].

7 The average SPRAR project figure includes places for minors, whose unit cost is EUR 45,00. In the cost breakdown, attention should be paid to the various groups of beneficiaries: ordinary, vulnerable persons, mentally disturbed persons, unaccompanied foreign minors).

# 3. Good reception practices in Europe

**ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES**
One of the weaknesses of the Italian reception system is connected to its territorial distribution.
In the German and the Swedish systems, immigrants are distributed all over the country. If Sweden is currently debating the compulsory nature of reception by all municipalities, in Germany the law mandates at least one reception facility for each *Land* (federal state).
As far as Italy is concerned, the SPRAR system represents a positive experience in this regard, as it empowers local administrations by leaving it up to them to opt to participate in the system. If they do so, then they can identify specific resources at the local level; also, they are in a better position to estimate the impact of reception and to make decisions more in line with the local economic, social and cultural context.
As this reception system requires planning and a close interaction with local communities, it makes it possible to avoid strife caused by those unplanned emergency reception plans that localities often resent or reject.

**LENGTH OF STAY**
In terms of the length of stay in emergency reception facilities, the British example may be considered as a good practice. Beneficiaries stay a few weeks only before they are transferred to 'second reception' facilities (the British equivalent of Italy's SPRAR network). Also, British authorities require that migrant families are not separated during the asylum procedure, and guarantee satisfactory reception conditions offering exchange and educational opportunities etc.
Asylum Help, the British guidance service for asylum seekers, seems to be one of the most efficient information and guidance systems in the EU. Its Website is currently translated into 15 languages and offers help through simple texts and audio and video recordings that provide useful information to users, explaining asylum procedures and providing answers to frequently asked questions.

**ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT**
In terms of access to employment by asylum seekers, the Swedish system may be identified as European best practice as it grants immediate employment opportunities. In spite of their difficulty in finding employment, partly due to language barriers, the Swedish system seems to provide asylum seekers with opportunities for self-sufficiency at an early stage, so that they will not have to rely exclusively upon the system for reception and care. Also, the importance attached by the Swedish system to education, training and access to employment shows that the system invests in the beneficiaries' quick integration into the local socio-economic context.
Furthermore, opportunities for education and professional training should be provided in order to avoid uneasily long—at times, years long—waits in reception facilities. Based on the Swedish experience, however, this should result into greater care in helping those who do undertake professional training to complete it so that they may then gain access to qualified employment.

**ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE**
In terms of access to health care, among European good practices we wish to cite the health care textbook in use in France. It stems from the cooperation between the Ministry of Health and local NGOs, and is available in 22 languages.
In Italy, a virtuous experience on this score was NIRAST, that lasted until 2012 . NIRAST was a network of health and psychological care centers created at a number of Italian hospitals. It provided care and rehabilitation to refugees who had been victims of torture and had applied for asylum in Italy. NIRAST was managed by the Italian Council for Refugees, by UNHCR, and by the Ministry of the Interior. It represented a point of excellence in Italy at the time of the so-called 'North Africa emergency.'

# Appendix—The European Agenda on Migration

The Juncker Commission, whose mandate began just during the Italian semester of EU presidency, has placed migration right at the center of the debate from the start. The president himself proposed five key points with respect to migration: implement the EU common asylum system; practical support by the European Asylum Support Office; partnership with third countries, in particular North African; managing legal migration and protection of EU external borders.

In the wake of the umpteenth tragic incident in the Mediterranean, that took place on 19 April 2015 and caused over 700 casualties, EU institutions decided to speed up the identification of priorities with regard to migration and draft an Agenda on Migration. After acknowledging that no member state can effectively address migration alone, the Agenda is addressed to all players involved—member states, EU institutions, international organizations, local authorities, third countries—and contains a number of short-, medium- and long-term proposals.

**Immediate action required by the European Agenda on Migration**

| Action | Description |
|---|---|
| **Saving Lives at Sea** | Strengthening joint operations Triton and Poseidon, expanding both their capability and their geographical scope, so that Frontex can coordinate operational border support and help to save the lives of migrants at sea. |
| **Targeting Criminal Smuggling Networks** | Strengthening the joint maritime information operation JOT MARE, managed by Europol. Implementing the CDSP-Common Security and Defence Policy in order to systematically identify, capture and destroy vessels used by smugglers. |
| **Relocation** | An emergency response system for the redistribution of asylum seekers and refugees among member states based on criteria such as GDP, size of population, unemployment rates, and past number of asylum seekers and resettled refugees |
| **Resettlement** | Reception and redistribution of 20,000 refugees per year under the aegis of UNHCR based upon a proportional quota system. The goal is to provide legal and safe channels of entry into the EU and prevent these vulnerable persons from being ensnared by criminal smuggler networks. |
| **Partnership with Third Countries** | Implementation of Regional Development and Protection Programs funded by the EU with EUR 30 million for 2015-2016 starting in the Horn of Africa, in North Africa and in the Middle East. Setting up of a pilot multi-purpose center in Niger, managed in partnership by IOM, UNHCR and the Niger authorities, and tasked with providing information, local protection and resettlement opportunities. Strengthening border management, security and protection policies in a few African countries such as Mali and Niger. Implementation of local protection and development programs with special regard for countries facing a large influx of refugees from neighboring countries. |
| **EU Tools to Help Frontline Member States** | Adoption of a new 'hotspot' approach where EU institutions (European Asylum Support Office, Frontex and Europol) will work in partnership to support member states. Mobilization of EUR 60 million in emergency funding for member states facing particular pressure due to a large influx of migrants. |

# Key Points in the European Agenda



**RIDUZIONE DEGLI INCENTIVI ALLE MIGRAZIONI IRREGOLARI**

L'Unione intende attivarsi sotto questo aspetto interessandosi e colpendo le cause primarie degli spostamenti nei paesi terzi, agendo nella lotta contro trafficanti e scafisti e incrementando il tasso di esecuzione dei rimpatri.

**GESTIONE DELLE FRONTIERE ESTERNE**

L'Unione punta a gestire le frontiere esterne attraverso il potenziamento di Frontex e al coordinamento delle funzioni di controllo delle frontiere.

**POLITICA COMUNE DI ASILO**

Creazione di un sistema di asilo comune, con parametri comuni, promuovendo l'identificazione e il sistema Eurodac e aprendo a una possibile revisione di Dublino.

**NUOVA POLITICA PER LE MIGRAZIONI REGOLARI**

Attraverso una migliore gestione di visti e permessi, il potenziamento della cosiddetta Blue Card e alla cooperazione con i paesi di origine dei migranti.

*Source: A European Agenda on Migration. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. COM(2015) 240 of 13 May 2015.*

RED—*Reducing the Incentives for Irregular Migration:* The EU intends to engage actively on this score by becoming involved and addressing the root causes leading people to seek a life elsewhere, cracking down on smugglers and traffickers, and increasing the return enforcement rate.

GREEN—*Border Management:* The EU intends to manage its external borders by reinforcing Frontex and coordinating border management functions.

PURPLE—*A Strong Common Asylum Policy*: The EU needs to create a common asylum system with shared standards, promoting identification and the Eurodac system and contemplating a possible revision of the Dublin system.

BLUE— *A New Policy on Legal Migration*: Improving the management of visas and permits, strengthening the so-called Blue Card system, and cooperating with migrants' countries of origin.