



Cofinanziato dal Fondo Asilo
Migrazione e Integrazione
dell'Unione Europea

FINAL RESEARCH REPORT

**CAMPANIA, PUGLIA,
BASILICATA, CALABRIA
AND SICILIA: YESTERDAY,
TODAY AND (PERHAPS)
TOMORROW.
DEMOGRAPHIC
EVOLUTION AND FOREIGN
IMMIGRATION IN A
MULTISCALE
GEOGRAPHICAL
PERSPECTIVE**





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Introduction

The five surveys started in October 2020 and were completed in July 2021. Therefore, the start coincided with the outbreak of the second Covid19 pandemic wave, which led to changes in the research path, especially where the fieldwork, i.e. the direct observation of the territorial context of analysis, on the one hand, and the carrying out of the interviews, on the other, was planned.

Two research projects had to deal with these critical issues. The other three - being second-level research - followed the planned design without any particular problems. The set of the research efforts involved about 25 researchers (5 seniors and 20 juniors, mostly researchers with a well-established research experience) and 6 trade unionists of the Placido Rizzotto Observatory. The research projects were coordinated - from the scientific point of view - by Francesco Carchedi, in close cooperation with the corresponding research managers.

The five research projects - to which two others have been added since the end of July 2021 (one to be carried out in Campania and the other in Sicily, with a methodological approach in part similar to and in part different from the previous ones) - focused on the knowledge needs expressed by the partner-regions during the project, in particular, on the structural aspects giving rise to the phenomena correlated with illegal gangmastering, or forms of labour exploitation detectable in the agro-food sector.

The research work assignments, which the respective researchers have adequately fulfilled, were specifically concerned with:

- Analysis of demographic and immigration dynamics
- Analysis of regional laws, the system of supply to migrants, the rate of use of territorial services
- A reasoned survey of the main sources of funding
- Territorial case study: Piana di Sibari (Calabria), Alto Vulture-Bradano (Basilicata)

Territorial case study on the value chain related to tomato growing in Alto Vulture Bradano. The case studies were supported - with reference to the empirical part, i.e. in the phase concerning the identification/involvement of key actors to be interviewed - by the Placido Rizzotto Observatory - FLAI CGIL, coordinated by the Head Jean René Bilongo and Tina Bali of the National Secretariat - Agriculture Department. In particular, a close collaboration was put in place to conduct the case studies: both for the analysis of the tomato value chain conducted by Prof. G. Martino, and for the two case studies about the working conditions of workers of foreign origin carried out by Prof. E. Pugliese.



RESEARCH ABSTRACT:

“Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria and Sicilia: yesterday, today and (perhaps) tomorrow. Demographic evolution and foreign immigration in a multiscale geographical perspective”

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Premise: background, objectives and report's structure

The migration “hemorrhage” from the South of Italy has never stopped, even though for several decades the net outflow of population has been less intense than in the past. Residents of southern Italy and island regions kept on moving to the central and northern regions and abroad looking for better living and working conditions. However, with regard to the recent demographic dynamics of the South of Italy two innovative trends are worthy of mentioning.

The first one concerns the change in the natural demographic balance (difference between births and deaths). If in the past the positive natural component partly compensated for the demographic hemorrhage caused by net emigration, for at least a decade (ever longer for Abruzzo, Molise, Basilicata and Sardinia) this is no longer the case.

The natural component turns into one with a negative sign, thus contributing to the demographic decline of the Italian southern and island regions.

Fertility is well below the replacement level (about 2.1 children per woman) and the average size of reproductive age in female generations has been progressively reduced, due to the exit of the cohorts of the baby boomers and to the entry into fertile age of the less numerous cohorts of the 90s.

The combination of low propensity to have children and reduction in the number of cohorts in fertile age has produced in the last two decades a significant decrease in births (from more than 200 thousand to about 150 thousand born per year), as against the increasing deaths (from about 180 thousand to over 200 thousand per year) caused by the ageing of the population, despite the continuous decrease in mortality levels.

The second innovative element concerns foreign immigration: this phenomenon has been increasing on a national scale for over forty years even if it mainly affected the Italian central-northern regions, while the southern ones were a transit area for a part of the migratory flows actually heading to other Italian realities or to Western and northern Europe. Nevertheless, over the last few years of last twenty-year period, the foreign component got such a numerical importance also in the Italian southern and island regions as can be inferred by the increasing number of inhabitants and by their impact on the whole population. Even if a clear difference still remains between central-northern regions and southern/island ones, a new idea has begun to take hold: perhaps the demographic “desertification” of the South can be averted with measures aimed at the socio-economic development of the territory that may promote a recovery of fertility, a



greater ability to retain its inhabitants and a “call effect” on young foreigners from the countries of the Mediterranean and other realities of the so-called South of the World.

This assumption seems quite bold and it is based on the adoption of measures that should be defined with accuracy and whose hoped-for effects are not necessarily taken for granted. At the same time, a review of the demographic evolution of the populations of the *Mezzogiorno* (southern Italy) seems to be appropriate which includes an analysis of the size and characteristics of recent foreign immigration and a look at the future short- and medium-term population dynamics in the absence of migration, in order to clarify the demographic picture already “shaped” in the absence of extraordinary interventions such as the ones envisaged in the National Plan of Recovery and Resilience (PNRR) launched following the socio-economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The demographic analysis of the evolution of the population and the presence of foreigners in Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria and Sicilia has been carried out adopting a multi-scale geographic perspective, focusing on the provinces and some selected local areas within the five regions (Baia Domizia and Piana del Sele in Campania, Area Foggiana Estesa in Apulia, Vulture-Bradano and Piana di Metaponto in Basilicata, Piana di Sibari and Piana di Gioia Tauro in Calabria, Piana di Catania and Piana di Ragusa in Sicilia).

It also seemed appropriate to open a window on the future by answering the question: what would happen to the provinces of the five partner regions if in the next few years there were no migration flows with the demographic dynamics being exclusively determined by the natural component?

The study consists of three parts:

- in the first part, an analysis of the demographic dynamics and foreign immigration into the Italian regions is proposed in order to provide the necessary elements to place the five partner regions within the overall national framework and allow for an understanding of their specificity;
- in the second part, the analysis is concentrated within the host regions as mentioned above, with a variable territorial scale ranging from the provincial to the municipal level, with an in-depth analysis of the situation of some local areas significant for the overall project in each region;
- In the third part, demographic projections are proposed for twenty years on a provincial scale in order to evaluate the future dynamics of the population in the absence of migration and to make some policy considerations in light of the findings of the report as a whole.



Results

First part

The first part of the report is focused on a comparative analysis of the demographic trends and immigration in the Italian territorial areas and region. This will result in background picture against which expect to find an answer to the following question: is still there a demographic specificity in the South of Italy? If we take as reference a purely quantitative dimension, the answer is no, quite the contrary, the answer is yes if we emphasize the *quid*. As a matter of fact, as widely seen, the macro-demographic phenomena that characterize Italy, primarily aging and low fertility, now concern all territorial divisions and even if there is a certain variability - the South of Italy is still slightly less old than in the other territorial areas- the gap is by now narrow and destined to disappear. Instead, what has to do with population exchanges is different, and this not only in terms of volume but also, precisely, of individuals involved, therefore in terms of *quid* (used in Italian contexts to indicate something indeterminate or not easily definable). From this point of view the Italian *Mezzogiorno* Southern Italy is the weak link in the Italian demographic territorial chain. It is an area that is not able to retain its own population, especially the young or, in any case, those of working age, who migrate first of all towards the other areas of the country. At the same time, compared to other territorial areas, it attracts little from abroad and too little from within.

Thus the conditions that are usually at the basis of any kind of economic growth seem to disappear. This fragility also affects the foreign component, particularly the less stable and less visible one. With regard to the first point, it is sufficient to see high numbers of asylum seekers in the South in recent years, while with regard to the second, the regularizations, especially in Campania, have involved a higher number of foreign citizens than in other regions. In the South, therefore, there is a lower percentage of resident foreigners compared to the North and the Centre, but a greater proportion of irregular immigrants. The South, moreover, seems to guarantee a more complicated process of integration of the foreign population, as shown by the lower number of cases of applications for citizenship as well as the lower number of long-term residence permits. These aspects are undoubtedly affected by a less dynamic economic context and labor market than those of the center-north of Italy.

Demographics and territories, with their historical and cultural characteristics, are one and the same, and space, it should be remembered, is a continuous variable that is broken only for 'operational' purposes. In this respect, it is certainly not by chance that southern Italy is geographically close to developing areas, such as North Africa, and that northern



and part of central Italy are located along the European economic backbone known as the 'blue banana', which extends from Milan to London and is characterized by being a highly interconnected area with a high population density that has historically represented the axis of socio-economic development of the old continent. Clearly this cannot be an alibi.

Second part

The second part is focused on the situation of the five regions under study. In the last 40 years there has been either a substantial stability of the population (for Campania, Puglia and Sicily) or a real decline (Basilicata and Calabria). If the period of observation is limited to the last decade, a demographic decrease can be observed everywhere. A marked ageing process accompanied the decline in the population: the number of young and young adult individuals decreased while the number of old people increased. However, the ageing of the population was caused not only by the positive effect of increased longevity, but also by the decreasing of the number of births: even in Puglia, this number has remained well below the levels required to ensure inter-generational replacement (approximately 2.1 children per woman). As a result, the structure of the working population has also shown the increasing weight of older adults (35-64 years) who outnumber young adults (15-34 years). The average age of the population was between 45 and 46 in 2020, while in 1982 it was about 33-35 years. Without the positive contribution of foreigners, the resident population would have decreased even more, and the decline would have started sooner.

In the last two decades the foreign population has increased considerably. In the last decade, the flows of migrants arriving in these areas have been characterized by a high incidence of people seeking international protection, while the numbers of stabilization on the territory are still low, as is the case for long-term residence permits and acquisitions of citizenship, which still remain well below the national average. Despite the presence of historical immigrant communities, such as the Sri Lankans in Campania, the Tunisians in some areas of Sicily or the Albanians in Puglia, the foreign presence still seems to have characteristics of precariousness, temporariness and seasonality. In spite of the increasing foreign presence, these areas mostly remain transitional lands, where it is difficult to start settlement and integration pathways. This is also the reason why, here, unlike in other areas of the country, the contribution to demographics of foreigners is more limited. In fact, we know that the most relevant contribution is given where migrants not only make an immediate contribution to the age pyramid, but also settle down and start a family, contributing to the growth of the population also through their second generations.



Part Three

In the third part of the report a brief reflection is proposed on the expected dynamics of the resident population in the different provinces of the five regions under investigation, should migration flows not occur. By resorting to the cohort-component population projection method, the variation of the population and its composition by age is examined in the theoretical hypothesis that the demographic dynamic is determined exclusively by the natural component, that is, by births and deaths.

The proposed simulations, which were carried out by age brackets and over five-year periods over a short-to-medium time period ranging from January 1, 2020 to the beginning of 2040, made it possible to highlight the intensification of the processes of depopulation and aging of the resident population in the provinces of the five regions involved in this research. Without migration, or rather without a significant immigration from abroad capable not only of compensating for those leaving, but also of determining an overall positive migration balance, many realities of Southern Italy will continue to experience a significant reduction in the number of inhabitants, a decrease in the percentage of young people and young adults, and a significant change in the profile of the inhabitants, with an increase in absolute and relative terms of the over-sixties and the very old. For foreign immigration to be able to play a role in the structure and demographic dynamics of Southern Italy, as it does in other parts of the country, it is necessary that foreign immigrants not only be a temporary or seasonal presence, but rather that the conditions for long-term settlement of this population on the territory be created, thus giving rise to integration processes that could lead to family reunifications and new births.



Limits of the research

The research proposed provides a background for the other thematic studies carried out as part of the same project. The approach followed was almost exclusively demographic, thus representing the essential reference base for the next socio-economic studies. From the analyses conducted, it became clear that provincial and local observatories are needed to monitor the various situations in order to have all the information required to prepare targeted measures and actions. These observatories should, however, make an effort beyond what was possible within this research: they should enrich the information framework by widening knowledge beyond demography to the socio-economic aspects. The main limitation of this research lies precisely in the lack of specific information on the condition of the labor markets and local production systems, as well as on the ways in which immigrants integrate into the specific contexts of their host communities. These are aspects that can only be partially investigated through the existing surveys and that may require the implementation of *ad hoc* surveys and investigations.



Operational proposals

On the basis of what emerged from the research, a new approach to immigration policies seems necessary, one that aims not only to manage the emergency linked to the landings and the management of a short-term presence (perhaps through precarious and seasonal inclusion in the labor market), but that instead has the objective of attracting migrants through an integration project that lasts over time and that foresees the possibility of "making a family" with communities rooted in the territory. Certainly, although little is discussed about this in the chapter, for this to happen it is important that there be working conditions that allow the start of paths of social integration, starting with regularization of contracts and conditions.

In this regard, a foreign presence, no longer precarious or marginalized, could also contribute to creating the conditions to revitalize some territories, where the development of adequate infrastructure - just think of the transport system - can allow it. In other territories, the choice of foreigners with families not to live in large cities, but in small towns nearby, has led not only to a spread of foreign residents, but also to a revitalization of the territories (starting with schools). Policies for the integration of young immigrants could, in the short term, also help restart birth rate growth, although it seems difficult that the contribution of migration alone can compensate for the drop in birth rate. This would not, therefore, eliminate the need for specific measures aimed at reducing the progressive and unstoppable decline in fertility. Measures which are particularly difficult to implement in the presence of a high level of public debt, but which, in Southern Italy, if accompanied by appropriate infrastructural interventions and by the availability of maternity support services, could turn to be very effective.

However, as far as the dynamics of migration is concerned, we should not rely only on foreigners. In fact, we have seen that in many of the areas in question there has been a negative migration balance in the last decade - and not only there. It is, therefore, equally important to increase the possibilities of retaining the young population and also increase the effect of attraction to bring back young people who have emigrated to other Italian regions or abroad. It is necessary to act more vigorously through policies aimed at counteracting the brain drain and encouraging the return of Italians who live in the North or abroad. The experience of COVID19 through smart working and distance university teaching has opened up new possibilities and prospects in this direction. If the quality of life in the areas of origin is better, if connections and transport are improved, the "definitive" displacements, those we call "emigrations" may become less inevitable than in the past. There are no reliable data on the effectiveness of the policies implemented in the past to bring back to Italy fellow citizens who had emigrated abroad. However, even



in this case, the effectiveness of these policies seems unrealistic without a significant economic recovery and a development of services and the infrastructure. For this reason, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan represents an opportunity not to be missed to implement development processes that respond to the specific problems of each territory, thus making the areas of Southern Italy more attractive. It should also not be forgotten that the European resources made available through the "next generation" plan are aimed precisely at young people to promote economic recovery, and it is also important from the demographic point of view to make the most of this component of the population.

Finally, we would like to point out that the analysis revealed a certain demographic heterogeneity among the various provinces and areas within the same region. Obviously, in some territories the phenomenon of depopulation is more significant, consequently, policies and actions should be appropriately tailored to different local realities, making the most of their specificities and trying to remedy the peculiar problems typical of different areas. It is clear that small towns have greater difficulty in managing demographic issues, primarily immigration and integration. We believe that the construction of networks connecting local contexts can help start virtuous paths. In this regard, the European Union, aware of the difficulties encountered by small towns and rural areas, has also called for the creation of international networks of territories with similar characteristics that can share best practices in the field of integration and access and use of funds to promote the integration of third-country nationals. We believe that focusing on the local level for the management of integration could favor the launch of virtuous paths that truly respond to the needs, not only of migrants, but also of the local communities. A similar approach could also be adopted with regard to the ability to attract young migrants.



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