**Task Force:**

**Advocating a human rights approach to Migration/Refugees**

***National Context Fiche***

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* **State of play on migration/asylum**

2015 has been the year in which more people than ever crossed the Mediterranean (about a million overall: 850,000 via Greece, 150,000 via Italy, *cf.* UNHCR). As a consequence of the agreement EU-Turkey, in March 2016, the number of arrivals to Greece has been drastically reduced. After the closure of various national borders in the Balkans, now also the passage through the Alps has been closed. In 2016 (up to now) approximately 300,000 migrants have crossed the sea, among them 130,000 via Italy and 165,000 via Greece (*cf.* UNHCR). While the number of individuals coming from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan via Greece has decreased, the number of individuals mostly coming from Africa via Italy has remained stable. The countries which are more represented, among asylum-seekers, in Italy are: Nigeria, Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea, Sudan, Ivory Coast, Somalia, Senegal, Mali (only 3,000 arrivals from Africa via Spain in 2016, *cf.* UNHCR).

* **Policy responses**

Policy responses, in Italy, concern, first of all, the rescue at sea, which since 2015 has been implemented within the EU joint action FRONTEX. After disembarking, migrants are immediately allocated in reception centres all over Italy (this stage has been sped up over the last year). These reception centres are generally managed by NGOs and differ by size (10-100) and location (urban/rural). After the identificational procedures, migrants apply for asylum and receive a provisional permit of stay. Their request is processed in a 18 month time (also this step is currently being sped up). After 2 month from the request, asylum-seekers are allowed to work (within certain limits). Those who are then recognised as refugees enter a pathway of integration (SPRAR). For all the others, which actually represent the majority of the claimants, no solution has been found yet. In fact, only 26% of migrants arriving to Italy come from one of the top 10 refugee-producing country *versus* 88% of migrants arriving to Greece (*cf.* UNHCR). Moreover, also the profile is different: in Greece 41% while in Italy 70% of asylum-seekers are men (*cf.* UNHCR). In Italy, in 2015, around 85,000 claims were presented, in 2016 (until June) around 40,000 (*cf.* Italian Ministry of Interior). This is a new trend (+32% between 2014 and 2015) for a country with a relatively low incidence of refugees (0.19% of the population). However, in spite of the Dublin Convention, the majority of claimants does not intend to stay in Italy. Referring to this, EU states have not taken yet their own share of migrants, as agreed (up to now, only 4,000 asylum-seekers from Greece and 1,000 from Italy have been relocated over the EU, *cf.* UNHCR).

* **General civil society response**

Italy is not new to disembarkments, which have been constant since the 1990s. The Albanian migration in 1991 could actually be seen as the first 'emergency' in the history of Italy as an immigrant (former emigrant) society. Referring to the current 'emergency', reception projects have been implemented also at a civil society level (besides the reception centres). In fact, not only refugees but also asylum-seekers are now being hosted within Italian families. Besides this 'private' contribution, there have been also episodes of xenophobia as well as criticisms referred to the EU, labour market, government, municipal authorities, etc.

* **How your organization and EAPN is responding/working with the issues.**

My organisation, *Differenze Culturali e Nonviolenza Onlus*, which is part of the CILAP-EAPN network, manages some reception centres for asylum seekers in the province of Florence and Siena, in Italy. In its premises, small groups of asylum-seekers are hosted. The staff helps asylum-seekers in terms of bureucracy and health care assistance. In addition, Italian language courses are offered on daily basis. Asylum-seekers are directly involved in the community life, sharing house chores and encouraged to take part into various activities in the neighbourhood and town as well. In this way, the organisation not only intends to offer a temporary accommodation to the asylum-seekers but also support them in a long-term process of integration (as repatriation is unlikely to be put into practice).

With reference to this, in public statements, CILAP-EAPN has pointed out the importance of implementing cases of best practice like the above-mentioned, but it has also indicated the necessity of establishing state-policies in the field of reception and integration. Moreover, it has stressed the urgency of a EU joint action not only in relation to the migrants, but also in relation to the phenomena which are behind these migrations (war, climate change, etc.).