

# POVERTY WATCH 2017

## ITALY

### Contents

Foreword	2
What do these numbers tell us?	2
What do we talk about when we talk about poverty	3
Italy: the numbers of poverty	4
Europe: the numbers of poverty	5
Italy and Europe: the most vulnerable groups	6
Measures to fight poverty and social exclusion in Europe	9
Measures to fight poverty and social exclusion in Italy	10
Our proposals	10
Some figures	12

## Foreword

It is clear by now that, notwithstanding the many efforts, the European strategies against poverty and social exclusion do not affect people's lives. It is a fact that today in Europe the poor are poorer, the rich are richer and that the middle class, once the backbone of our societies, has lowered its status and has been largely overtaken by fear and uncertainty, becoming easy prey of those who blow on the fire. All this while the political forces that since the Second World War represented the working class and the people at large have disappeared.

In the past, Europe sent a great number of migrants to North, South America and to Australia. Today, the internal migrations of the 1950s and 1960s from the Mediterranean countries to the North of Europe has left the place to migrations from Africa and the Indian subcontinent, countries that have not found their own path of development, remaining under the influence of those that had exploited them for decades. Instead of the well-being we hoped was going to be shared by all, the gap between those who have and those who have not has widened. Instead of prosperity for all we have growing inequalities within the EU member states, between member states and between them and the rest of the world.

The failure of two last European strategies - the Lisbon strategy (2000-2010) that promised to make Europe "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world and Europe 2020, that promised to work for a "Smart, Sustainable, and Inclusive Growth" - clearly shows the EU failure to make itself understood and win the trust of its people.

Many are the negative pushes of today: in some Eastern EU countries, nationalist governments have replaced those elected after the fall of the old regimes; xenophobic and racist movements and parties, taking advantage of the economic crisis, are at the head of important member states; populist movements have more and more impact on public opinion wiping out the ideologies of the twentieth century that have not only led to two world wars and the death of over 70 million, but have also signed many of the civil and social rights we enjoy today. Referendums as that in Catalonia endanger the stability of central states and Brexit put the EU in front of a crossroads: whoever wants to go may go. All this will certainly not make Europe stronger, on the contrary, it will open the door to alliances between those member states that will be able to share strategies for their national interest. The risk is the return of Europe's nation-states: one country, one language, one religion.

Let's stop for a moment, let's try to understand what is happening, let's think about the real meaning of the words we are so often hearing these days against the EU and, above all, let's be honest with ourselves. Do we still believe in the founding values of Europe spelled out by Spinelli, Schuman and the Treaties of Rome as revised during these 60 years of EU history? Do we still believe in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights? In the UN Charter on Human Rights or in the Convention on the Right of the Child?

CILAP EAPN ITALIA and its member organizations still believe in all this, still believe that Europe can make the difference. This is the reason why we turn to people in poverty, those who risk their jobs, those who are poor, those women and young people who do not have access to statistics, do not attend conferences, but live on their skin the difficulties of everyday life. People who do not scream and shout their discontent but want to change the state of things.

In writing this Report we have deliberately used a simple, but not simplistic language, to be read by all the people our organizations are made of, to give them another tool and to make available to them the knowledge and information coming from Europe and going back to Europe. This is what we have been doing for many years, together with the national networks of EAPN by exchanging work practices, by analyzing and trying to change for the best those European policies that have an impact on the lives of the people living in Europe, people in poverty first.

## What do these numbers tell us?

We have taken the opportunity of this brief report not to thoroughly analyze all the "numbers of poverty" or all "vulnerable and at risk groups", but to use the most recent statistics from EUROSTAT and the Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) to reflect on what it means today to be poor in Europe and in Italy and not to forget that behind these numbers there are many, many people, men, women, children who have a very hard life though they live in one of the richest places in the world.

These numbers tell us that time is running short and that with all probabilities the member states will not be able to meet the commitment made in 2010 to "lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and social exclusion by 2020". These numbers tell us that it is unrealistic to think that Italy will succeed in achieving its goal of decreasing the number of people in poverty of 2.2 million.

These numbers tell us that such a rise in poverty and social exclusion, unthinkable until 2008, was perhaps caused more by the austerity measures decided at EU level than the economic and financial crisis.

These numbers tell us that perhaps the refrain that, "social policies and the fight against poverty and social exclusion are the exclusive competence of member states" is not entirely true when inequalities, poverty and social exclusion are firmly linked and caused by those macro-economic and financial policies many of which decided at European level.

These numbers tell us that the inequality between and within EU member states has reached a very high level, maybe too high to be endured by democratic countries. The rich are increasingly richer and the poor are increasingly poorer, the middle class has lost a lot of its certainties and today is faced by reduced pensions, children who do not find work, a labor market that for the most part can only offer ephemeral, flexible contracts.

These numbers tell us that the streets of our cities are increasingly the home of desperate homeless people, and that the soup kitchens are increasingly crowded.

These numbers tell us that if the European Union wants to win back the trust of hundreds of millions of its citizens and people living in its territory, must go back to aspire to be again the beacon of justice, equity and democracy for which it was born.

These numbers tell us that the real emergencies today in Europe are poverty and social exclusion.

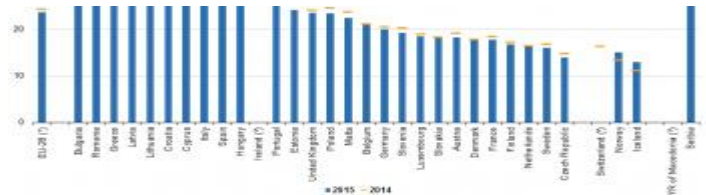
### What do we talk about when we talk about poverty?

It is not easy to define poverty. The EU generally refers to two types of poverty: **absolute and relative poverty**. **Absolute poverty** is when people lack basic necessities for survival while **relative poverty** is when some people's way of life and income is so much worse than the general standard of living in the country or region in which they live that they struggle to live a normal life and participate in ordinary economic, social and cultural activities.

In the EU, **people falling below 60% of the median income** after the social transfers are said to be at risk of monetary poverty.

Within "Europe 2020" the EU has adopted a specific indicator, called **AROPE** (At risk of Poverty and Exclusion), which, being harmonized at European level, allows comparison between member states. This indicator combines monetary poverty (income poverty) with low work intensity and material deprivation.

<sup>3</sup>Figure 1- At risk of poverty and social exclusion, 2014 - 2015, EUROSTAT



(T) 2015: estimate  
(P) 2015: not available

According to AROPE, 118.7 million (23% of the EU total population against the 24.4% of 2014) people were at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU in 2015.

Poverty is directly related to the **level of inequality** existing in a given country. A poor country characterized by a low inequality level will have a low poverty rate as well since a large part of the population will live in similar conditions or within a small range. Conversely, a rich country, driven by strong inequality will have a large number of poor people because many live in conditions far from the average, i.e. beyond the poverty line.

**Many have been the commitments taken in the course of time to try to combat poverty and social exclusion.** Worldwide, on September 25, 2015, the United Nations has endorsed the Global Sustainable Development Agenda and its 17 Goals (SDGs), articulated in 169 targets to be achieved by 2030. First goal: to put an end to poverty, which in turn translates into two sub-objectives: 1.1. By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day and, 1.2. By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

At European level, in 2010 was launched the strategy **Europe 2020** aimed at reducing the number of people living in poverty by at least 20 million by 2020, an objective that, by mid-2017, seems far removed if not impossible to reach.

**But behind numbers, definitions and rates there are people.** *“We are a family of two: myself and my daughter. She went to school but as soon as she reached the right age she went to work in a call-center. She has by-monthly contracts of 400 euros per month. Too bad because she was a good student but with my off-the-books work cleaning people’s houses we could not make ends meet. She had won a scholarship and would have received the books for free. But books cannot be eaten can they?” (woman, 40 years old, from Bari).*

*“I have a university degree in economy. I work off-the-books as a waiter for 500 euros per month. My wife works as a baby-sitter, off-the-books, of course. We cannot do or plan anything, not even a child. We are going to Spain now where I have found a job, always as a waiter but at least I will have e regular contract” (man, 35, Naples).*

**Italy: the numbers of poverty**

In our country, the poverty threshold varies with the place of residence: it is set to 817,56€ monthly if living in a metropolitan area of the North, 733,09 if residing in a small northern town and 544,03 if living in the South and in the Islands.

Regarding absolute poverty<sup>1</sup>, the 2017 annual Report by the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) draws a list of nine social groups<sup>2</sup>, thus mapping the phenomenon in social and geographical terms.

In Italy in 2016, more than 13 million people were living in poverty, absolute or relative, its incidence being broadly stable compared to 2015. The Report highlights the presence of 1 million 619 thousand households, i.e. 4 million 742 thousand persons, living in absolute poverty and 2 million 734 thousand households, i.e. 8 million 465 thousand individuals, living in relative poverty.

Poverty	Absolute poverty		Relative Poverty		
In Italy	Incidence		Incidence		Totals*
Households and Individuals	%		%		
Households	<b>1 million 619 thousand</b>		<b>2 million</b>		<b>4 million</b>
		6.3	<b>743 thousand</b>	10.6	<b>362thousand</b>
Individuals	<b>4 million 742 thousand</b>		<b>8 million</b>		<b>13 million</b>
		7.9	<b>465 thousand</b>	14	<b>207 thousand</b>

• Elaboration from ISTAT 2017 Report

<sup>1</sup> For absolute poverty, ISTAT means the economic capacity of a family, defined on the basis of the age of its members, the geographical and the type of municipality of residence, to purchase a basket of goods and services considered essential to a dignified life. Relative poverty is calculated on the basis of per capita spending, updated annually and referring to a nucleus of two. A nucleus of two persons is considered to be in relative poverty if it consumes less than what a single person spends in any given year

<sup>2</sup> With this Report, ISTAT inaugurated this new methodology, not easy to understand. The nine groups have been categorized taking into account the different aspects of economic (income, occupational status), cultural (education) and social nature (citizenship, household size, type of residence). The groups are: 1. low-income households with foreigners, 2. low-income Italian households, 3. traditional provincial households, 4. Retired blue-collar households, 5. Clerks’ households; 6. Silver pensioners, 7. Ruling class, 8. young blue-collars, 9. Elderly female living alone and young unemployed. The report “The State of the Nation” is available at <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/199318>

## A country split in two

In our country there are some specific factors that multiply the poverty risk such as being foreign and / or living in the South and Islands.

Absolute poverty indicator by geographical area. Years 2015-2016 (in thousands and percentage values) (Istat)								
	North		Centre		South and Islands		Italy	
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016
<b>Absolute values in thousands</b>								
Poor households	613	609	225	311	744	699	1,582	1,619
Resident households	12,301	12,306	5,302	5,299	8,185	8,192	25,789	25,797
Poor individuals	1,843	1,832	671	871	2,084	2,038	4,598	4,742
Resident individuals	27,600	27,562	12,014	12,001	20,827	20,763	60,441	60,326
<b>Percentage composition</b>								
Poor households	38.8	37.6	14.2	19.2	47.0	43.2	100.0	100.0
Resident households	47.7	47.7	20.6	20.5	31.7	31.8	100.0	100.0
Poor individuals	40.1	38.6	14.6	18.4	45.3	43.0	100.0	100.0
Resident individuals	45.7	45.7	19.9	19.9	34.5	34.4	100.0	100.0
<b>Poverty incidence (%)</b>								
Households	5.0	5.0	4.2	5.9	9.1	8.5	6.1	6.3
Individuals	6.7	6.7	5.6	7.3	10.0	9.8	7.6	7.9
<b>Poverty intensity (%)</b>								
Households	19.6	21.8	13.2	18.6	19.9	20.5	18.7	20.7

ISTAT tells us that “of the people living in the South and Islands about 10 out of 100 are in absolute poverty, compared to just over 6 in the Centre and in the North” and, that in the southern regions the risk of poverty “is triple compared to the rest of the country: Sicily (39.9%), Campania (39.1%), Calabria (33.5%).” According to Mr. Giuseppe Provenzano, vice director of SVIMEZ, the Association for the industrial development of Southern Italy, “If the Italian South and the island continue with the current growth rates, they will recover pre-crisis levels in 2028 only, thus setting a twenty-year “zero growth” that would follow the stagnation of the first years of 2000 with badly adverse economic, social and demographic consequences.”

## Europe: the numbers of poverty

The number of people living in poverty or socially excluded has lowered in 2015 (from 24.4% of the total population in 2014 to 23.7), nonetheless the numbers are staggering: we are talking about 118.7 million people. When we translate this number in the percentage of poor living in each member state, we realize that, at least as far as the well-being and equality of its citizens are concerned, the EU is far from achieving a Social Europe capable of guaranteeing the wellbeing to all its citizens. Bulgaria recorded a poverty rate of 41.3% but Finland of 16.8; Romania 37.3 but Sweden 16%; Greece by 35.7% but the Netherlands by 16.4. Italy had a poverty rate of 28.7% (see: Table 1, page 12).

The most impressive figure is that of children at risk of poverty, who reach 26.9% and are the most vulnerable group in 20 out of 28 member states. Again, the differences between the member countries are striking: more than 40% in Romania and Bulgaria against 14% in Sweden, 14.9% in Finland or 15.7% in Denmark (see: Table 1, page 12).

## Poverty according to AROPE

**At-risk-of-poverty after social transfers (income poverty)** - In order to measure the rate of risk of poverty, the EU applies a hypothetical situation where there are no social transfers (pensions are not considered as social transfers). Comparing this hypothetical situation with the rate of risk of poverty after social transfers shows how important the redistributive effect is to reduce the number of people in poverty. **In 2015, 17.3% of the EU-28 population was at risk of income (monetary) poverty.** The highest rates are found in Romania (25.4%), Latvia (22.5%), Lithuania (22.2%), Spain (22.1%), Bulgaria (22.0%) and Italy (20%). The lowest in Finland (12.4%), Slovakia (12.3%), Denmark (12.2%), Netherlands (11.6%) and Czech Republic (9.7%) (see: chart 2, page 13).

**The material deprivation rate** gives us an estimate of the number of people whose living conditions are severely compromised by the lack of resources. **Persistent material deprivation rate** is defined as the enforced inability to pay for at least three (material deprivation) or four (severe material deprivation) of the following nine items:

1. to pay rent, mortgage or utility bills;
2. to keep the home adequately warm;
3. to face unexpected expenses;
4. to eat meat or proteins regularly;
5. to go on holiday;
6. to be able to buy a television set;
7. to be able to buy a washing machine;
8. to be able to buy a car;
9. to be able to buy a telephone (mobile included)

Around one out of six (17.0 %) members of the EU-28 population were materially deprived in 2015, with close to half of these (8.1 % of the total population) being considered as experiencing severe material deprivation. Focusing upon severe material deprivation, more than 20 % of the population was found to be severely materially deprived in Bulgaria (34.2 %), Romania (22.7 %), Greece (22.2 %), Italy (22%). On the other hand, only 3.7 % or less in the Nordic countries: Austria (3.6 %), the Netherlands (2.6 %) and Luxembourg (2.0 %) (see: chart 3, page 13).

**Persons living in households with very low work intensity** - The work intensity of a household is the ratio of the total number of months that all working-age household members have worked during the income reference year and the total number of months the same household members theoretically could have worked in the same period. A working-age person is a person aged 18-59 years, with the exclusion of students in the age group between 18 and 24 years. **In 2015, low work intensity affected 10.5% of EU households.** The highest percentage of low work intensity households is found in Greece (16.8 %), Spain (15.4 %), Belgium (14.9 %), Croatia (14.4 %), Italy (12%). The lowest in Poland (6.9 %), Check Republic, (6.8 %), Estonia (6.6 %), Sweden (5.8 %) and Luxemburg (5.7 %) (see: chart 4, page 14).

## Italy and Europe: the most vulnerable individuals and groups

**Being homeless.** The [second report on housing exclusion in Europe](#) released by FEANSTA (2017) - the European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless – speaks of an “alarming evidence of rising homelessness”. The report says homelessness is rising in all European countries except Finland, and singles out many big European cities where the housing system is particularly under strain. In London, the number of families in temporary accommodation has increased by 50% since 2010, and in Copenhagen, youth homelessness has increased by 75% since 2009. In Italy, according to the last survey carried out by FIO.PSD, the national branch of FEANSTA, in 2014 there were 50 thousand homeless persons, with a 6% increase between 2011 and 2014.

**Households** – the picture of families in absolute poverty is characterized by the high number of members and their young age, by their low degree of education or qualification and by the reference persons being employed in unskilled positions. Compared to 2015, the incidence of absolute poverty at the household level in 2016 was stable, i.e. 6.3% in terms of residing households (1 million and 619 thousand households, that is 4 million 742 thousand people).

The share of poor households composed of non-national members compared to households with national members only, was almost six times higher (25.7% vs. 4.4%).

The proportion of poor households in relative terms remained stable (10.6%, it was 10.4% in 2015) as well, whereas the relative poverty intensity increased (from 23.1% to 24.3%), especially in the North and Centre areas (respectively

from 19.9 % to 24.7% and from 18.8% to 23.7%). Households in relative poverty were 2 million and 734 thousand and in terms of individuals were 8 million 465 thousand (equal to 14.0%).

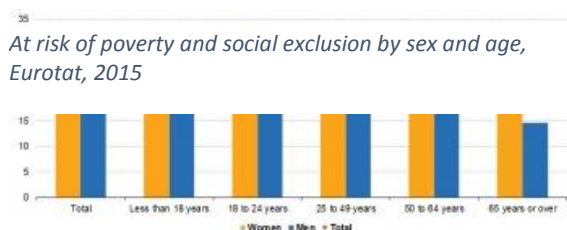
**Children** - Italy is no country for old people or children, child poverty worsening year after year. The latest estimates tell us of 1 million and 292 thousand children living in absolute poverty (12.5% versus 3.9% in 2005) and, of 2 million and 297 thousand children who live in relative poverty, accounting for 22.3% of the total population aged 0 to 18. The issue is a political and social one that cannot be ignored by public policies or public opinion. Children do not face a shortage of economic means only, they face a widespread deficiency of basic socio-sanitary services and of the education system coupled with the lack of an overall system for protection and care.

It is therefore urgent to act, swiftly and well, fleeing from temporary remedies that only serve to cover the absence of coherent public policies. What we need are measures, capable of eradicating the inequality and social marginality of children, being aware that this is the only way to stop the cycle of transmission of poverty from one generation to the next.

Child poverty is a social plague that weakens the entire social body and the cohesion between people and generations. Living in a poor household means not to be able to take advantage of many opportunities for personal growth; few readings, few or no books at home, few friendships, little emotional and sentimental stimuli that affect the development of our children, and thus compromise their chance of a physically and psychologically good adult life. (For data on children’s poverty in the EU, see: table 1, page 12).

**Women** - The graphic shows how gender and poverty are linked. In 2015, the rate of poverty among women was 24.4%, while that of men was 23% with a difference of 1.4 percentage points. The EUROSTAT figures also show that in 2015, 50% of single-parent families were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, a figure that closely affects women who, in the EU, account for 85% of these families.

In Italy in 2016 women worsen their condition: from 7.3% in absolute poverty in 2015 the rate goes up to 7.9 while the status of men improves, though very little, from 7.9 to 7.8. With regard to relative poverty, of the 8 million 465 thousand individuals (14.0% of the entire population) living in relative poverty, ISTAT estimates that, in 2016, 4 million 339 thousand were women (14.0%).



Many the causes of such a situation, here the most common:

	Italy		European Union	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>Activity rate</b>	74.1%	54.1%	78.3%	66.8%
<b>Employment rate</b>	65.5%	47.2%	70.9%	60.4%
<b>Part-time</b>	7.8%	32.4%	8.9%	32.1%
<b>Gender pay gap</b>		6.1%		16.7

**Unfriendly labor market.** As shown in the EUROSTAT (2015) chart published here, the female activity rate in Italy is very low, 54.1% compared to the EU average of 66.8. In addition, only 47.2 percent of the Italian women are employed. ISTAT data for 2016 show that the employment rate of 15 - 64 years old is 48.1 per cent, with a distance of 18.4 percentage points compared to that of men (66.5 per percent).

**To be a mother.** Almost a mother on four leaves work in the two years following the birth of a child, more than 30 thousand in 2015. Difficulties in family-work reconciliation, an asymmetric division of family work, albeit in slight improvement, few and too expensive early childhood services, in addition to precarious or fixed-term contracts and low pay, push many mothers to renounce to work. These women would like to go back to work after a few years but by then the labor market has no place for them.

**Being alone with dependent children.** ISTAT highlights that 13.9% of single parent households live in poverty but unfortunately do not report the sex of the parent. We know, however, that the number of these families is steadily increasing and that in most cases they are composed of single women with children.

**To be old and living alone.** ISTAT does not give us a breakdown by gender of poor elderly people and puts together data concerning two very different categories: old women and young unemployed. But ISTAT tells us that 4.2% of individuals over 65 years live in absolute poverty and 8.2 in relative poverty, with a small decrease since 2015. Our experience tells us that the majority of these people are women, widows with very low reversibility pensions. If they own their own house it is often inadequate and if they rent, they fail to pay regularly and live in fear of being evicted.

**Young people – In EU-28**, 31.3 % of young people aged 18 to 24 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2015. One of the Italian emergencies in today's Italy is the unemployment and the low social and economic status of young people. Compared to 2005, the absolute poverty rate among people aged 18 to 34 is more than tripled (10.0% against 3.1 %) and compared to last year it increased by 0.2%. To date, it is estimated that the young poor are 1.17 million. Regarding relative poverty ISTAT shows that the highest rate (14.6%) is that of families with a reference person under 35. It is no surprise, therefore, that EUROSTAT indexes reveal that Italy is high above the European average for the rate of **young people living at their parents' home** that in 2007 involved 61% of our youth.

Italy is faced with a progressive and inexorable increase in retirement age, today 66 years and 7 months. The equation is simple: if the jobs are taken by the elderly, there is no space for the young. Compared with pre-crisis times, young people who work have fallen by 10.4%. ISTAT reports that today 39.4% of young people between 15 and 24 are unemployed. The rate of youth not participating into the labor market (36.1%) which includes, in addition to the unemployed, those who do not seek employment but would be willing to work is staggering (Istat, <http://www.istat.it/it/giovani/lavoro>).

Part-time, precarious employment has been the only kind of work to grow almost uninterruptedly since 2008, with an increase of 30.8% of part time employees in recent years. Most young Italians only know forms of atypical contracts such as short-term apprenticeships or training on the job. Subsequently, in the eyes of a young person any long-term project, such as buying a home or starting a family, is a pipe dream. In this regard, it is interesting to note that in terms of the birth rate Italy occupied the lowest step in the European pyramid: the newborns in 2015 were only 8 per 1000 residents (*Source: EUROSTAT*).

Dismay, disillusionment and hopelessness have given birth to the generation of Neet (Not in Education, Employment or Training) whose incidence in Italy is much higher than in other European countries: in 2015, 2.3 million young people between the ages of 15 and 29 did not study or work (see: chart 5, page 14).

**Workers** - Labor market data for the second quarter of 2017, show signs of recovery of the Italian economy: there is a growth of both the industrial output (2.6%) and the GDP (0.4% in economic terms and 1.5% on an annual basis). Numbers are all positive, the economy returns to grow showing an increase in total hours worked, (+0.5 percent compared to the previous quarter and +1.4 on an annual basis), 153 thousand more persons employed and a decline of 0.6% of the unemployment rate. But numbers must be read in their actual context characterized by declining independent work, increasing precariousness, women who cannot reconcile work and family.

Mr. Paolo Mameli, senior economist of the Intesa San Paolo Bank, stated that, "All the new employment is temporary that, for the fourth consecutive month, has marked a decisively higher growth than permanent positions" with the risk that unemployment rate will remain in 2017 at 11.3%, placing our country at the bottom of the Eurozone, just ahead of Greece. The lack and the precariousness of work continue to be the two main factors that expose large sections of the population to the risk of poverty.

Apprenticeship, atypical contracts, training on the job, vouchers, off-the-books etc. are becoming more and more the normality, generating insecurity and granting increasingly less protection for the workers and their families.

**Migrants.** Migration is a pivotal phenomenon set to increase both in Italy and in Europe. Some data: according to ISTAT at 31 December 2016 there were 60,589,445 people in Italy, of whom **more than 5 million foreign nationals**, accounting for 8.3% of residents. According to UNHCR data, **between January 1 and August 31, 2017, 98,988 people landed in Italy**, the number decreasing from 2016, when 115,075 people (-14%) arrived.

The foreign migration balance in 2016 is +135 thousand, a level similar to that of the previous year but, compared to the latter, is determined by a greater number of migrants entering the country (293 thousand), and a new maximum of migrants leaving it (157 thousand).

More and more foreigners acquire the Italian citizenship: more than 200,000 new Italians in 2016.

To this we must add the requests for residence permits for political asylum and humanitarian protection. According to figures published by EUROSTAT, the number of people applying for asylum in a European country in 2015 has more than doubled compared to the previous year, exceeding over a million people (1,257,030). The country with the highest number of applications was Germany (441,800, 35% of the total European Union. **In our country, 83,245 applications were submitted (7% of the total requests in the EU).**

In Italy, the permits issued each year for asylum and humanitarian protection has increased considerably: from 3.7% in 2007 to 28.2% in 2015. At the same time, the permits issued for work reasons have lowered drastically from 56.1% to 9.1%. The number of asylum seekers has grown from 9,971 in 2007 to 67,271 in 2015.

At the beginning of 2016 there were 155,177 people in our country with a permit for reasons related to political asylum or humanitarian protection, with an incidence of 4% on total residence permits. If only temporary residence permits are considered, those granted for asylum and humanitarian protection reach 10%. **Many of the people asking for**



**protection in Italy see our country as a temporary residence, planning to move as soon as possible to another EU country.** At the beginning of 2016, 32.3% of the people arriving in 2011 and 49.3% of the entries in 2012 still had a valid residence permit.

Migrants live multiple poverty on their own skin: homeless, without a job - or working off the books and exploited - often excluded, many of them do not speak Italian and therefore cannot integrate, experiencing very serious difficulties accessing education and basic services ... Isolation is the basis of social exclusion. And they come with boats, risking their life: a lot of them die during the trip.

Upon their arrival, foreign nationals are accommodated in **immigration centers** where they receive assistance, are identified and either detained for expulsion or, in the case of international protection applicants, for the time needed to evaluate their requirements. **These immigration centers often do not guarantee the respect of the most elementary human rights.** Migrants who apply for residence permits are therefore hosted in many different centers managed by Municipalities, cooperatives etc., the system being varied and not always working as it should.

Europe can do a lot to welcome the many people fleeing from wars and poverty. In the name of Humanity. EU can relocate and integrate the incoming migrants and can increase its share of international cooperation. Much can do and does Italy in terms of reception, dignity and rights. These days, unfortunately, immigration is exploited by many groups as if it were a "security" issue: this is the stereotype to fight against.

**Older people** –EUROSTAT reports that in 2015 the elderly faced a lower risk of poverty or social exclusion than the overall population both at EU-28 level (17.4 % as opposed to 23.7 %) and in 20 out of the 28 EU member states. The risk of poverty or social exclusion faced by people aged 65 or more in 2015 ranged from 6.1 % in the Netherlands to 51.8 % in Bulgaria. These differences in the relative situation of the elderly depend on a number of factors including the features of the pension systems for current pensioners and the age and gender structure of the elderly population, since elderly women and the very old tend to face much higher risks in some countries. In Italy, ISTAT data that show that in 2016 there has been a positive trend on the incidence of poverty in retirees and people over 65 (8.2% compared to 8.6% of 2015).

But if we leave statistical data on the side and look at the reality of people in poverty, we see that senior citizens are increasingly more and more alone and more and more exposed to the negative consequences of the crisis, facing impoverishment at a most critical point of life when people are more fragile and less self-sufficient and need help and care. It is a situation that affects the elderly not in economic terms only, but in their social life as well, especially in the big cities. A condition that highlights how the increase in life expectancy has not been matched by measures able to counter the hardships of a daily life made difficult by the disintegration of the social and family networks. A situation made even more difficult by the cuts in social services that, once guaranteed by local authorities, are now operating with less and less resources.

## Measures to fight poverty and social exclusion

### At European level

**FEAD –Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived.** The Fund supports EU countries' actions to provide **material assistance to the most deprived.** This includes food, clothing and other essential items for personal use, e.g. shoes, soap and shampoo. The European FEAD Network, that started in 2016, includes EU level NGOs and EU institutions, national level organizations interested in or delivering FEAD-funded activities and national Managing Authorities.

The network has met 8 times. The last of these meetings, which will take place in Paris in November 2017, will close the program's first phase. Many are the lessons learned in this year and a half of European work. We learned that networking at national and European level is crucial to improving the provision of food to people in poverty; that the work of social services needs to be better coordinated with that of the organizations in charge of the distribution of food so that people in extreme poverty can be taken care of better; that the food should include more fresh produce and less canned or ready-to-eat foods (this not being the case in Italy where the major features of the Mediterranean diet are followed); that each member state should establish its own national network to raise public awareness of the measures taken at European level; that EAPN's national networks should seek to be recognized by their governments as organizations that can engage in information work, awareness raising and networking; that accompanying measures are essential to lift people out of poverty and must complement the provision of food and/or basic material assistance; that people in poverty participating in the European meetings of people in poverty can make an essential contribution to improving the FEAD.

## In Italy

### The inclusion income (REI)

The government has finally launched REI (inclusion income). It is a poverty alleviation measure that was included in the 2015 Stability Law which established a “structural” national fund against poverty not limited, as before, to one year only. The measure rests on two pillars: an economic benefit for families who need it and an active inclusion path under the charge of the inter-municipalities social sectors (Ambiti Sociali<sup>3</sup>). Compared to the previous measure, i.e. SIA (Support for Active Inclusion), REI presents some interesting new elements: can access REI those families whose yearly income, according to the ISEE parameters (the Economic Assessment Tool for those who require social benefits), does not exceed 6000 € (with SIA € 3000) and beneficiaries also include the unemployed older than 50. The Ambiti Sociali must operate to reinforce the integrated social system established in 2000 by Law 328, “For the realization of the integrated system of interventions and social services”. A system that, by focusing on active inclusion and job placement, should see the municipalities, the public healthcare system, the employment centers, the schools, the third sector, the business and economic sector work together.

All is all right then? No, let's be careful and let's keep our expectations low.

In many parts of the country the integrated system has never started, in many others it is under great strain. The National Institute for Social Security (INPS), which has extremely rigid procedures and long waiting times, evaluates the eligibility for the economic benefits. Implementing active inclusion paths in partnership with the Employment Centers is not easy due to the latter's low levels of efficiency.

REI is not what we hoped for. Young adults and people without children are not taken into account and will have to provide for themselves, relying on the family or on the support of those municipalities that are lucky enough to have extra resources for those who cannot benefit from REI. “Better than nothing” certainly, though we are still far from a national minimum income measure ensuring a dignified life to all. Least but not last, we should be aware that REI is not something coming out of the blue. It is the result of 20 years of work carried out at national and European level by the institutions and by many nonprofit organizations.

### Our proposals

**At the European level.** It is necessary to adopt a European Directive that requires all member states to guarantee an **adequate minimum income** to all who need it.

The struggle against poverty and exclusion and the social objectives should have the same dignity (and strategic importance) of the economic and financial ones. To achieve this, it is necessary to put in place a **European strategy against poverty and social exclusion**, based on rights and participation. The Global Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030) and its goals are certainly a good starting point.

The **European Semester** could have a key role in monitoring and helping to progress on social rights – but needs to be transformed. It should open its doors to civil society organizations and become a positive instrument to promote Social Europe moving towards a balanced economic and social agenda.

The new **European Social Pillar** should not become the umpteenth and all-in-all useless “Charter of Principles” but a binding obligation.

Finally, we point out that, in our view and not only, none of the **five scenarios** proposed by the Commission for the possible future of Europe is adequate to overcome the challenge Europe faces today. The EU, if it wants to have a future, needs to be modeled on a further, sixth scenario capable of winning back the trust of its people.

**At the national level.** Adopt a **national minimum income scheme**, hinged to local welfare systems and supported by a tax reform based on the progressive taxation of wealth.

Harmonize social policies and measures across the country, ensuring the same rights to all: too often, today, the opportunity to benefit from services and benefits depends on where you live.

**Involve local authorities** in social policy decisions that are too often the result of decisions taken at government level only.

**Strengthen the skills** of the staff in charge of managing and providing social services at the local level.

**Make the life of workers, families and young people more secure.** Many people today feel insecure without a job they can count on in the long run, uncertain of the age and monetary amount of their eventual retirement, poor services, poor health care system... Not responding to these needs can only lead to a further growth in poverty with

<sup>3</sup> Ambito Sociale is an inter-municipality aggregation with the task of planning social services.

unsustainable costs for our communities and adverse effects on their quality of life. In this context, social economy that always has taken into account the needs of the people and communities must play a major role.

Lastly, the **migration phenomenon** which certainly will not diminish, urgently needs to be properly managed respecting human rights. The EU and all the member states must make every effort to:

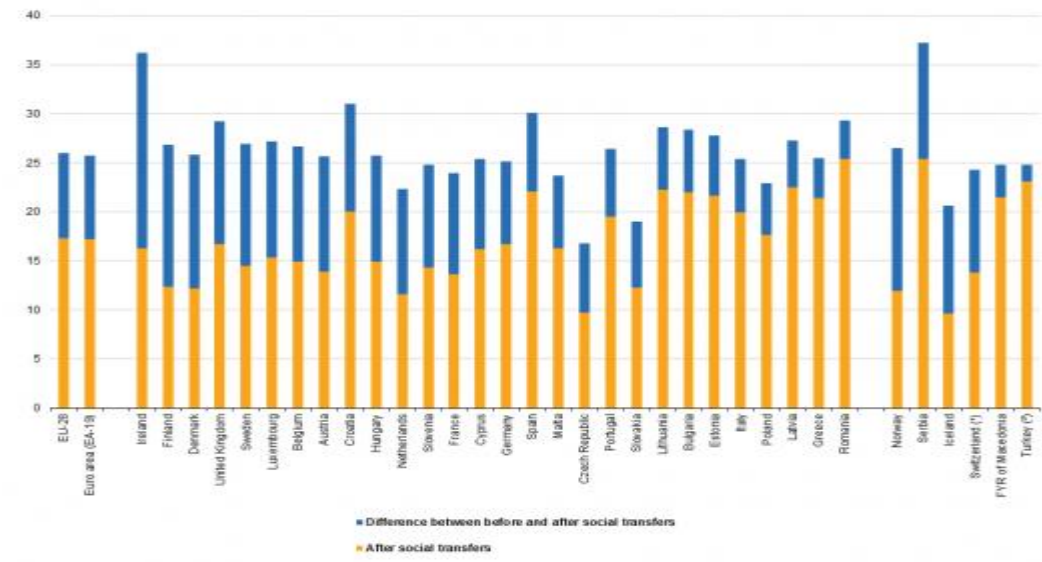
- open humanitarian corridors to allow people to migrate safely
- create reception systems that do not foster tensions between migrants and old residents
- consider Africa as part of the economic and social system of the EU
- Revise the Dublin regulation to better manage migration flows and offer adequate protection to those in need

## Some Figures

	Total	Children (0–17)	Adults (18–64)	Elderly (65 years and over)
<b>EU-28 (*)</b>	23.7	26.9	24.7	17.4
<b>Belgium</b>	21.1	23.3	21.7	16.2
<b>Bulgaria</b>	41.3	43.7	37.4	51.8
<b>Czech Republic</b>	14.0	18.5	13.6	10.9
<b>Denmark</b>	17.7	15.7	20.9	9.9
<b>Germany</b>	20.0	18.5	21.3	17.2
<b>Estonia</b>	24.2	22.5	21.0	37.0
<b>Ireland</b>	:	:	:	:
<b>Greece</b>	35.7	37.8	39.4	22.8
<b>Spain</b>	28.6	34.4	31.2	13.7
<b>France</b>	17.7	21.2	19.0	9.3
<b>Croatia</b>	29.1	28.2	28.5	31.9
<b>Italy</b>	28.7	33.5	30.4	19.9
<b>Cyprus</b>	28.9	28.9	30.5	20.8
<b>Latvia</b>	30.9	31.3	27.3	42.1
<b>Lithuania</b>	29.3	32.7	26.4	36.0
<b>Luxembourg</b>	18.5	23.0	19.2	8.2
<b>Hungary</b>	28.2	36.1	28.9	17.1
<b>Malta</b>	22.4	28.2	20.5	23.7
<b>Netherlands</b>	16.4	16.8	19.1	6.1
<b>Austria</b>	18.3	22.3	18.4	14.0
<b>Poland</b>	23.4	26.6	24.1	17.0
<b>Portugal</b>	26.6	29.6	27.4	21.7
<b>Romania</b>	37.4	46.8	35.7	33.3
<b>Slovenia</b>	19.2	16.6	19.7	20.2
<b>Slovakia</b>	18.4	24.9	17.8	12.8
<b>Finland</b>	16.8	14.9	18.1	14.5
<b>Sweden</b>	16.0	14.0	15.9	18.3
<b>United Kingdom</b>	23.5	30.3	22.9	17.7
<b>Iceland</b>	13.0	14.6	13.1	9.4
<b>Norway</b>	15.0	13.7	17.0	9.2
<b>Serbia</b>	41.3	41.8	42.9	35.2

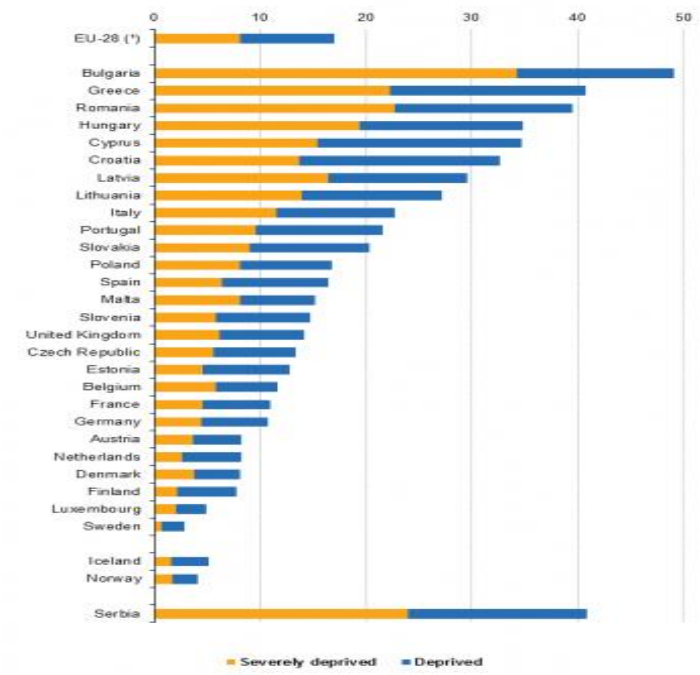
(\*) Estimates.  
: not available

1. People at risk of poverty and social exclusion, Eurostat, 2016



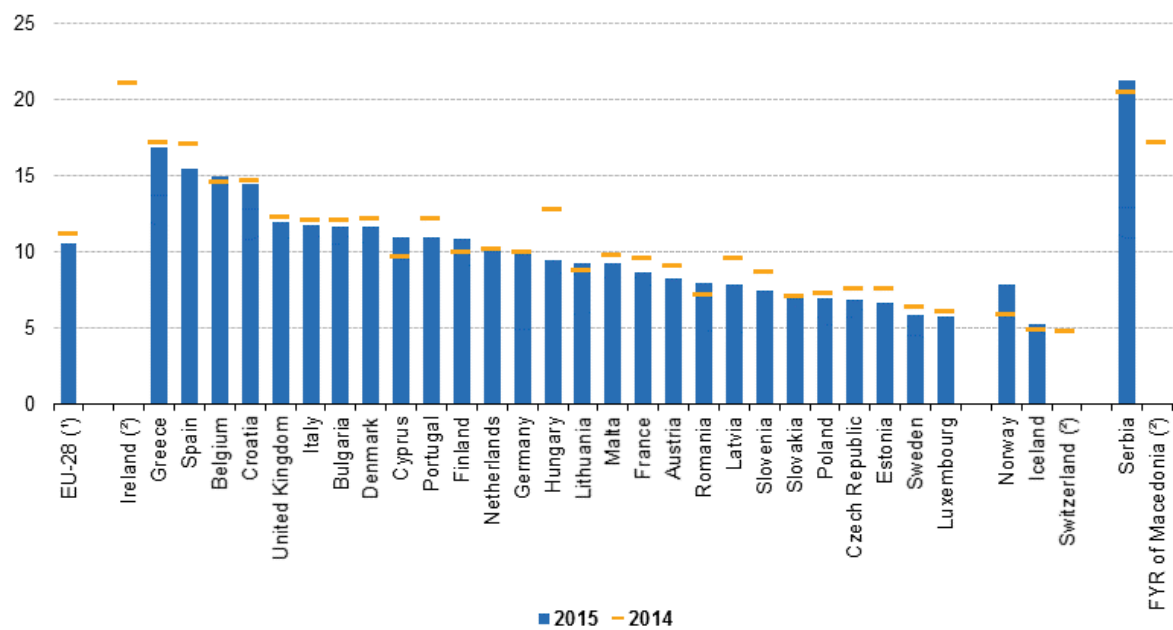
Note: ranked on the difference between before and after social transfers.  
 (\*) 2014.  
 (\*\*) 2013.  
 Source: Eurostat (online data codes: ilo\_102 and ilo\_110)

2. People at risk of poverty and social exclusion before and after social transfers, Eurostat, 2015



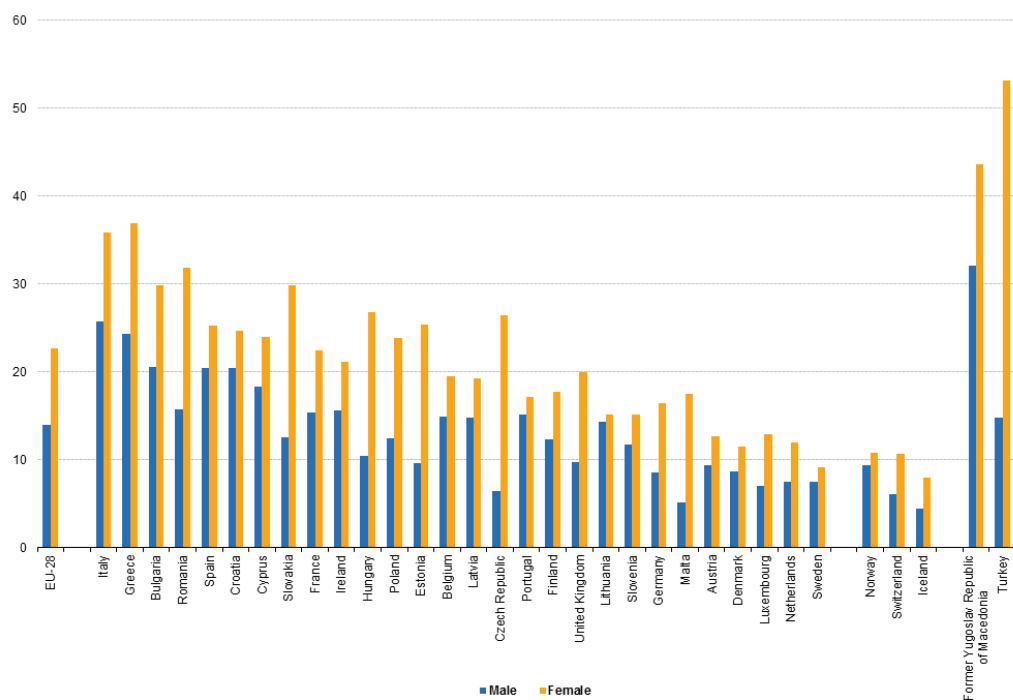
Note: ranked on material deprivation rate. Ireland: not available.  
 Severely deprived (cannot pay for at least four items out of nine).  
 Deprived of three items (cannot pay for three items out of nine).  
 (\*) 2015: estimates.

3. Deprived and severely deprived, Eurostat, 2015



(\*) 2015: estimates.  
 (\*) 2015: not available.

4. Persons living in households with very low work intensity, Eurostat



Note: ranked on the average share for men and women (aged 20–34).

5. Share of NEET (aged 20- 34) by sex, 2016, EUROSTAT