



# Migrant children in Italy

## Highlights

- Italy has been the main entry point for UASC in Europe over the last years - 45 thousand UASC arrived in Italy by sea between January 2016 and September 2018 - and continues to be so also in 2018 together with Spain.
- Challenges faced by unaccompanied and separated migrant children are widely recognized; nevertheless there is a dearth of empirical evidence and comprehensive data describing their experiences and perceptions to inform policy and practice.
- Stress, anxiety and depression are more frequent among unaccompanied children than other migrant children. Indeed, most children travelling alone arriving in Italy by sea endured various forms of violence, in several locations and multiple times before, during and after their journey.
- IOM upholds the principle of the best interest of the child at all times, including the right to family reunification, and supports relevant authorities to respect this principle and migrant children's rights.
- IOM in Italy provides technical advice to Italian authorities in support of the implementation of the legislative provisions in favour of UASC, including those envisaged in the c.d. Zampa Law.
- In 2018, IOM Italy has assisted more than 2,200 UASC arriving by sea, contributing to the correct identification of many of them; has built the capacity of more than 300 professionals that assist migrant children; has traced the families of more than 300 UASC; has conducted more than 2500 DNA tests (since Jan 2017) to support family reunification; and relocated about 160 UASC to other European countries.

## Introduction

Since 2015, the number of migrant children arriving in Europe from the Mediterranean and the Balkan region, and of those seeking asylum in the European Union (EU) has increased significantly. One in four migrant children arriving via this route seeks asylum.

Many of these children travel alone.<sup>1</sup> Unaccompanied children are often exposed to traumatic experiences throughout their journeys and upon arrival, with significant implications for their well-being, mental health and development (Curtis et al. 2018). Indeed, stress, anxiety and depression are more frequent among unaccompanied children than other migrant children. At destination, conditions in reception centers and overall prospects for integration do not necessarily match their own or their families' expectations, often inducing them to distance themselves from the reception centres and the protection system.

Disturbing experiences as those reported by IOM over the past years (see Galos et al. 2017) can have long-term effects on children's psychosocial well-being and development, educational progress and social participation (Crepet et al. 2017; Curtis et al. 2018).

Although there is a widespread recognition of the challenges faced by unaccompanied and separated migrant children, there is a dearth of empirical evidence and comprehensive data describing their experiences and perceptions (Sanchez, 2018) to inform policy and practice.

This briefing aims at presenting available evidence to date on the demographic profile and experiences of migrant children in Italy. It also illustrates IOM's assistance and protection activities, particularly those focusing on unaccompanied or separated children (hereafter "UASC").<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Between January 2016 and September 2018, almost 45 thousand unaccompanied children registered in Europe arrived in Italy by sea (IOM: <http://migration.iom.int/europe?type=arrivals>). See also Fig.3.

<sup>2</sup> Children are "unaccompanied" if they are not cared for by another relative or an adult who by law or custom is responsible for doing so; 'separated' if they are separated from a previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but who may nevertheless be accompanied by another relative" (UNGA 2010).



## Migration of children to Italy

### Recent trends

Recent arrivals in Italy by sea have been characterized by a high proportion of children disembarking alone and being registered as unaccompanied by national authorities.

Overall, the share of children on total arrivals by sea has remained relatively stable, at above eleven per cent since 2013 (Fig.1). Despite the decrease in the absolute number of children arriving in Italy by sea between 2016 and 2017, the share of those unaccompanied increased by 31 per cent. Likewise, notwithstanding the significant decrease of total arrivals in Italy by sea throughout 2018 (-87% by the end of September compared to the same period in 2017), the proportion of children on total arrivals in the first three quarters of 2018, and of those unaccompanied and separated among all arrived (15%) remains high (Fig.2).

Italy continues to be a major entry point for most UASC registered in Europe, together with Spain.

Fig. 1: Share (%) of adult men, adult women, accompanied children and UASC on arrivals by sea in Italy, 2013-2018.

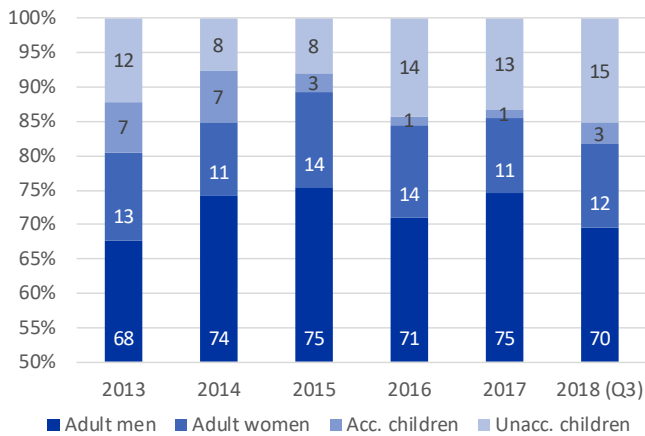
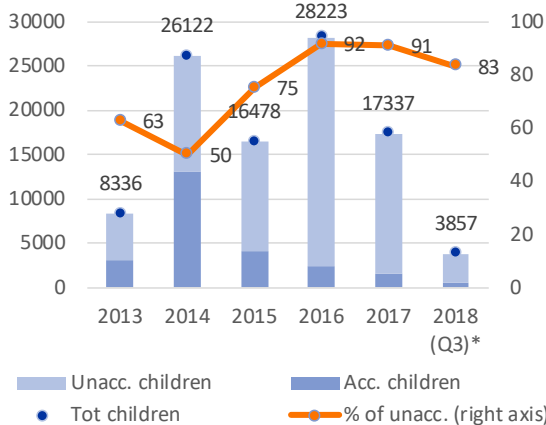


Fig. 2: Accompanied children and UASC, and share (%) of UASC on total children arrived by sea in Italy, 2013-2018.



Source: IOM elaborations based on data from Italian Ministry of Interior.\*

\* Note: official data on arrivals disaggregated by age/sex are available until April 2018, data for the period May-September 2018 are IOM estimates.

In 2017, 39 per cent of UASC came mainly from three West African countries (Guinea 12%, Côte d'Ivoire 10%, and the Gambia 9%) and Bangladesh (8%). Instead, in the first 4 months of 2018, Eritrea (25%), Tunisia (20%) Guinea (8%) and Côte d'Ivoire (7%) are the main reported countries of origin.

Fig. 3: UASC arriving by sea in Italy, by month and cumulative, 2016-2018.

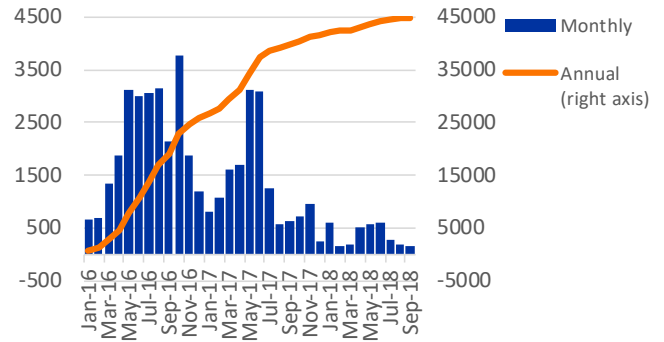
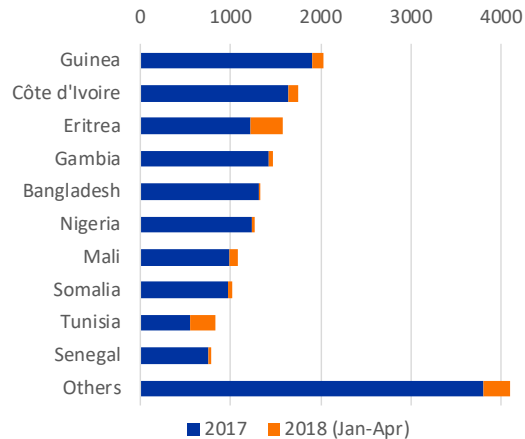


Fig. 4: UASC arrived by sea in Italy in 2017 and 2018 (Jan-Apr), top 10 nationalities and others.



Source: IOM elaborations based on data from Italian Ministry of Interior.

### Children's journeys along the Central Mediterranean route

As said, most migrant children arriving in Italy by sea travel alone. IOM regularly conducts surveys to understand the profiles of those disembarking. The 84 per cent of the 754 child respondents to surveys in 2017 and 2018 reported to have travelled alone.<sup>3</sup>

Migration is a complex phenomenon, as revealed by the decision-making processes many children undergo during their journeys. For instance, at the time of their departure, 43 per cent of UASC interviewed intended to reach Italy, 18 per cent had Europe as general destination in mind, and 14 per cent reported to be aiming to stay in Libya for work.

<sup>3</sup> IOM's **DTM** carries out regular rounds of surveys, interviewing migrants (adults and children between 14 and 17 years) arriving in Italy by sea and land. This Briefing presents data from surveys conducted in February-September 2017 and June-October 2018. The total sample is of 5,892 migrants, including 754 children.

Once in Italy, the majority reported to be willing to stay in the country (79%); and a few reported the intention to reach Germany (4%), France (3.8%), the United Kingdom (3.6%) and other European countries.

Many children described long and difficult journeys: 32 per cent of those interviewed spent more than a year in Libya, while 36 per cent transited through four or more countries before arriving in Italy. The reported cost of the journey is high, usually including transportation and living expenses, bribes, and ransoms, which indicate exposure to several risks. In addition, most children (80%) reported exposure to exploitative practices (unpaid work, forced work, unlawful detention, arranged marriage), experienced physical violence (88%) and suffered from threats of sexual violence (30%). Lower education levels and longer journeys alone across the Central Mediterranean route are associated with higher vulnerability to such risks (Galos, et al. 2017).

These children arriving by sea are an heterogeneous group, as revealed by their experiences concerning access to education and participation in the labour market prior to departure. Most children interviewed (63% of those travelling without their families) claimed to have completed basic (primary or lower-secondary) education, but a significant share stated to have never attended school (33%). Among main nationalities in the sample,<sup>4</sup> Bangladeshi children reported the highest share of completion of secondary education (60%). Many children (61%) reported to have been out of school for more than one year at the time of the interview, and to have been employed or self-employed (31%) prior to departure in agriculture, manufacturing, or sale services.

### Migrant children in Italy: demographic profile

The number of foreign children residing in Italy<sup>5</sup> was at about 1 million in 2017 (Istat 2018), in slight decrease in comparison with 2016 (Fig.5). Three quarters of them resides in five regions in the North and Center of Italy (Fig. 6).

Most children regularly residing in Italy belong to the main migrant communities in the country: Morocco, Albania, China, Egypt, India, Philippines, Tunisia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka amount to 67% of the total migrant children population. Children represent over one fifth of the Albanian, Chinese (26% both), Egyptian (33%) and Moroccan (27%) communities, revealing the young age, the family formation and the family reunification trends that characterize them (Istat 2018).

Indeed, the population of foreign children regularly residing in Italy is rather young: children of 9 years old and below make up 59 per cent of the total, while adolescents between 15 and 17 years old represent 13 per cent of the total.

<sup>4</sup> The Gambia, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Somalia, Mali and Nigeria.

<sup>5</sup> This includes foreign born children and children born in Italy to foreign parents who have not yet been naturalized.

Fig. 5: Foreign children residing in Italy, absolute number and share of total foreigners, 2002-2017.

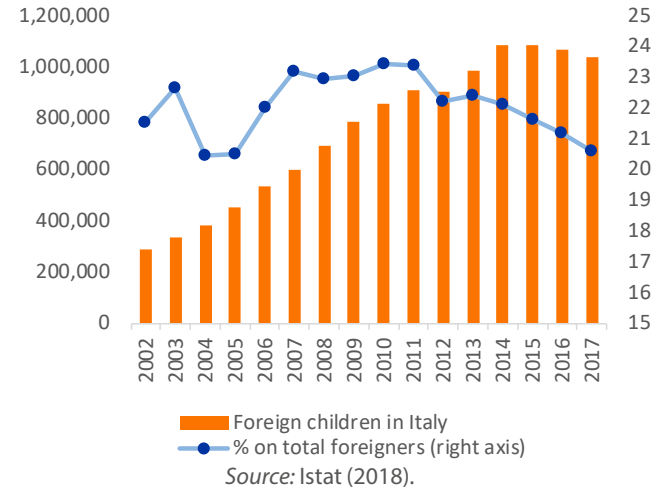
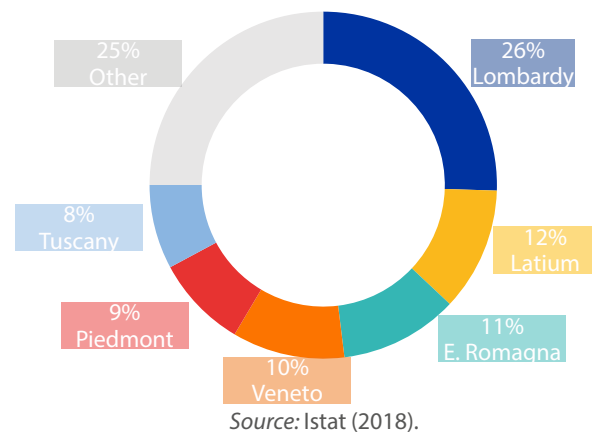


Fig. 6: Foreign children in Italy by region of residence (%), 2017.

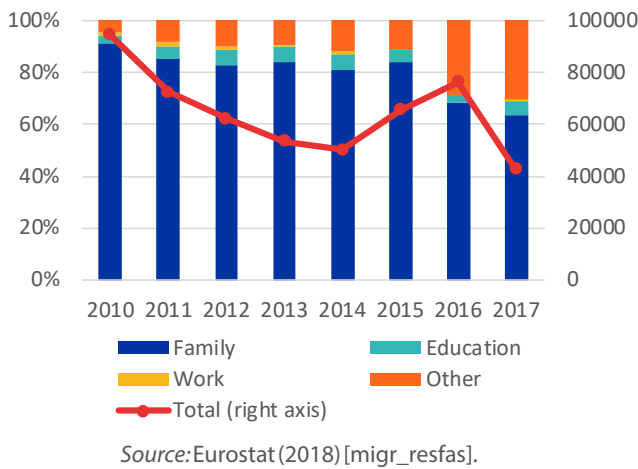


Data on school enrollment confirm this: almost half (46%) of all foreign pupils (645,122) is enrolled in primary schools, a quarter is enrolled in secondary-lower education and the remaining 29 per cent is enrolled in secondary-higher education (MIUR 2018). Foreign children represent 9.2 per cent of all students enrolled in Italy, and 77 per cent of them are non-EU citizens.

The migrant children population is also progressively shaped by the number of children born in Italy to foreign parents residing in the country; children reuniting with their parents (permits for family reasons); children and youth who obtain a residence permit for work or study reasons; and those who obtain other types of permits. Permits issued for family reasons are the majority in absolute terms, but their number decreased in relative terms from 91 to 64 per cent between 2010 and 2017, in favour of "other" types of permits (e.g. permits for unaccompanied children; permits for protection reasons including asylum seekers, refugees, and other types of protection).

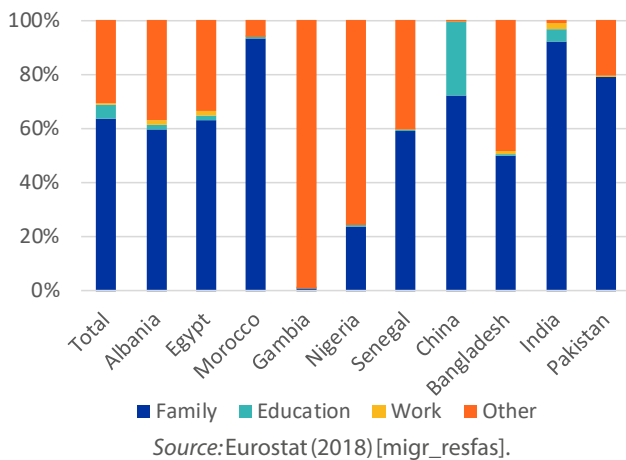
This is consistent with trends in arrivals of foreign children through non-ordinary channels. In 2017, most permits granted to Gambian (99%) and Nigerian (76%) children were issued for "other" reasons (i.e. minor age or protection reasons; Fig.8).

Fig. 7: New residence permits issued each year in Italy in favour of children and youth (0-19 years) by reason, shares and total, 2010-2017.



In contrast, during the same year most (90%) of new permits granted to Moroccan, Indian and Pakistani children were for family reasons (i.e. in favour of children reuniting with their parents or born in Italy to foreign parents).

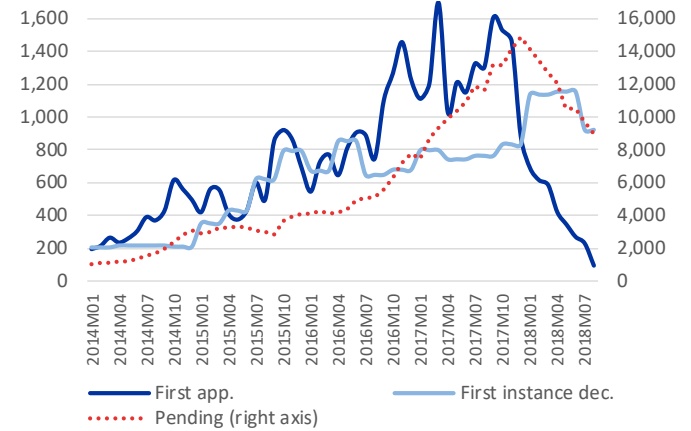
Fig. 8: New residence permits issued in Italy in favour of children and youth (0-19 years) by reason, first 10 nationalities and total, 2017.



The number of (first-time) asylum applications lodged by children increased steadily between 2013 and mid-2017 (Fig. 9) but decreased over 2018. In 2017, 63 per cent of the 15,495 first-time asylum applications lodged by children were lodged by UASC. This share increased to 97 per cent in the first half of 2018 (Ministry of Interior). Half of all applications lodged by children in 2018 were from Gambian, Nigerian, Malian and Guinean unaccompanied children.

The number of first-instance asylum decisions has increased thanks to an enhanced capacity to process asylum applications (the staff assigned by the Ministry of Interior to Territorial Commissions responsible for asylum claims processing has increased). As a result, the backlog of pending applications started to decrease since early 2018 (Eurostat 2018).

Fig. 9: First-time asylum applications, first-instance decisions and pending applications at the end of the month of children in Italy, 2014-2018.



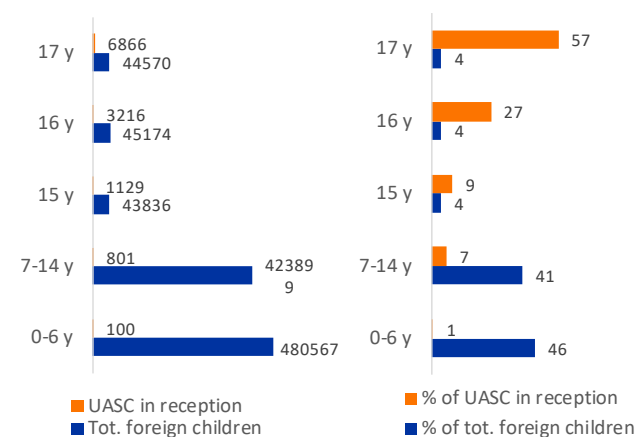
Source: Eurostat (2018) [migr\_asyappctzm] [migr\_asydcfstq] [migr\_asyenctzm].

### An overview of UASC in reception

Unaccompanied and separated migrant children in Italy are registered in the National Information System for (unaccompanied) Minors (SIM – *Sistema Informativo Minori*) managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (MLSP).<sup>6</sup>

They are prevalently male adolescents<sup>7</sup> between 15 and 17 years of age (93%) (MLPS, September 2018), in contrast with the average younger age of foreign children in Italy (Fig. 10).

Fig. 10: Unaccompanied migrant children and total migrant children by age group, absolute numbers and %.

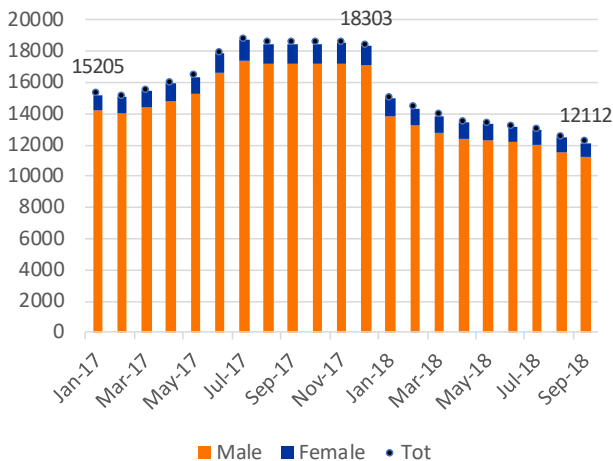


Source: MLPS (September 2018) and Istat (2017).

<sup>6</sup> As per Art.9 of Law 47 of 7 April 2017, and implementing Articles 2, letter i, and 5 of the DPCM 535/199 and article 19, paragraph 5 of Leg. Decree 142/2015.

<sup>7</sup> Females in dedicated reception facilities were 898 or 7.4 per cent of the total as of September 2018, coming mainly from Nigeria (33%), Eritrea (18%), Albania (9%) and Côte d'Ivoire (9%).

Fig. 11: UASC registered and present in reception, by sex and month, 2017-2018.



Source: MLPS SIM (September 2018).

Most officially registered UASC in Italy are accommodated in reception facilities including secondary reception centres (55%)<sup>8</sup> and primary reception centres (34%).<sup>9</sup> Private accommodation and other alternative housing arrangements with co-nationals or relatives represent a minority (3.9%).

The distribution of UASC in reception facilities across different regions has remained relatively stable over the past two years, with a disproportionate number of UASC concentrated in Sicily (40% of the total; 53% of all female UASC), followed by Lombardy (8%), Emilia Romagna (7%), Latium (7%) and Friuli Venezia Giulia (6%) (September 2018). Such distribution and the type of reception centres dedicated to UASC are under revision following the adoption of Legislative Decree 113/2018 in October 2018, converted into ordinary law in December 2018.<sup>10</sup>

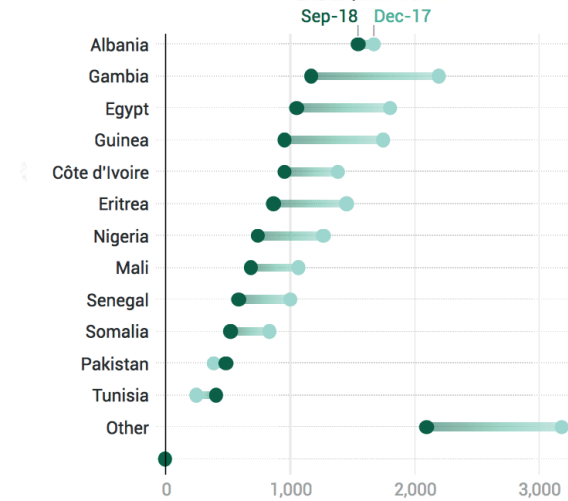
More than half (54%) of all UASC currently present in Italian reception centres are Albanian (1,550), Gambian (1,174), Egyptian (1,056), Guinean (960), Ivoirian (958) and Eritrean (869). Between December 2017 and September 2018, the top nationalities decreased in all cases, except for Tunisia and Pakistan (Fig. 12), and the drop was particularly significant (more than 40% in 9 months) in the case of Gambians, Guineans, Nigerians, Egyptians and Senegalese. UASC leave the reception system as they turn 18 years of age, or withdraw voluntarily, either to reunite with family or co-nationals in a different country, or to remain undetected in Italy.

<sup>8</sup> Secondary reception centres comprise those belonging to the “protection system for asylum seekers and refugees” (SPRAR - Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati), those financed through the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and others authorized at the regional and local level.

<sup>9</sup> This include primary-reception centres financed through the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, extraordinary centres for minors (CAS - Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria), and authorized local primary and emergency shelters.

<sup>10</sup> Law 132 of 1 December 2018: <http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2018/12/03/18G00161/sg>.

Fig. 12: Top 10 nationalities and other of UASC in reception, difference between Dec 2017 and Sep 2018.



Source: MLPS (September 2018). Map done with [Datawrapper](https://datwrapp.com/).

At the end of September 2018, the number of registered UASC who were still minors but were no longer in reception was estimated at 5,178; among this group Eritrean (14.9%), Tunisian (12%), Somali (11.5%) and Afghan (9.5%) children were highly represented (MLPS 2018).

## The best interest of the child

### The importance of coherent and enabling policies, legislative and operational framework

UASC are particularly vulnerable, as they are not only minors, but also foreigners and they are alone (Garante per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza, 2018).

In line with existing international obligations in relation to the rights of the child,<sup>11</sup> IOM upholds the principle of the best interest of the child at all times, including the right to family reunification, and supports relevant authorities to respect this principle in favor of all migrant children. In Italy, protection measures in favour of migrant children are enshrined in a comprehensive set of policies. IOM and other international and non-governmental organizations provide technical advice to Italian authorities in support of the implementation of the measures outlined in the c.d. Zampa Law.

As such, the determination of the best interest of the child is key to activate appropriate assistance, protection and integration mechanisms for all migrant children, and especially for UASC

<sup>11</sup> See among others the UN [Convention on the Rights of the Child](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/article/48c94d6c.html) adopted in 1989, and the [Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/article/5d6e6e6c.html) (GCM) adopted on 10-11 December 2018 and endorsed by 152 States at the UN General Assembly on 19 December. Visit: <https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration/>

<sup>12</sup> Law 47, 7 April 2017: <http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/04/21/17G00062/sg>



(e.g. age determination,<sup>13</sup> adequate reception, access to education,<sup>14</sup> work and support during transition to adulthood). There is a distinction between the informal and immediate “best interest assessment” (BIA) for the activation of procedures upon arrival or following the identification of an unaccompanied child; and the formal “best interest determination” (BID) procedure, involving interviews and consultations with the child. Both processes rely on the active participation of multiple actors at national, regional and local level to effectively translate policy provisions into practice.

Assisting UASC arriving by sea, at disembarkation, is a first crucial step to ensure that their medical and psycho-social conditions and vulnerabilities are identified as early as possible. It is essential at this stage that children receive complete and correct information regarding their rights.<sup>15</sup> Coordination among national, international, civil society organizations and other relevant actors, and a clear division of roles and responsibilities related to the management of disembarkations<sup>16</sup> are equally crucial to guarantee an effective provision of information, identification and referral of vulnerable cases to appropriate reception and psycho-social support mechanisms. These steps have a critical impact on children’s integration prospects in Italy.

An individualized approach to identify and address children’s needs is likely to guarantee better and continued care. Approaching children exposed to abuse, trafficking and exploitation is an extremely sensitive task. Specific skills and competence are required to understand the child’s situation, provide effective support and avoid causing further harm (e.g. placing the child in opposition to the family at origin). Adequate legal counselling and orientation services must be in place to provide guidance to children to make informed decisions regarding their participation in specific protection programmes, especially when these imply the interruption of all relations with relatives at origin, potentially aggravating the child’s painful experiences (IOM Italy 2017).

<sup>13</sup> The Art. 5 of the Zampa Law specifies the multi-disciplinary approach and modalities for carrying out a socio-health assessment of the age of young migrants in case of doubt, by trained professionals of the National Health System, with the support of cultural mediators, under the full information and understanding of the child and of the legal guardian about the procedure.

<sup>14</sup> Art. 14 of the Zampa Law foresees the direct action of local institutions and authorities to facilitate the access to education to UASC in reception, including designing *ad hoc* insertion programmes and cultural mediation services to allow for the completion of mandatory schooling.

<sup>15</sup> This includes the right to ask for international protection, the rights and safeguards guaranteed by the relevant national legislative framework for unaccompanied children, and protection for victims of trafficking. Information provision precedes decisions on age determination in case of doubt.

<sup>16</sup> The role of different agencies at disembarkation points is described by the [Standard Operating Procedures](#) (SOPs) adopted in 2015 by the Italian Ministry of the Interior.

Enhancing the capacity of all stakeholders responsible for assisting unaccompanied migrant children, from first arrival and registration to placement in dedicated facilities (e.g. humanitarian operators, local authorities, reception staff at local, regional and national level) is fundamental to empower them to recognize and address children’s needs and vulnerabilities, in line with the relevant legal frameworks and with the best interest of the child as primary consideration. The capacity, means and support available to these stakeholders impact the identification and activation of adequate protection, family reunification, integration or other suitable pathways.

The right to family life is a fundamental right.<sup>17</sup> Family reunification is one among other pathways available to unaccompanied and separated children in Italy, if there are no risks for the child or for the family, and when it is exclusively in the child’s best interest.<sup>18</sup>

### Assistance to UASC arriving by sea

IOM supports Italian authorities in the early identification, referral and protection of vulnerable migrants, including unaccompanied children, in Sicily, Calabria and Apulia; and in monitoring secondary movements in Milan, Ventimiglia, Bardonecchia, and Como, among other locations.<sup>19</sup>

As of October 2018, IOM staff attended 289 disembarkations; informed 18,533 migrants, including more than 2240 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC); contributed to the identification of 162 UASC; and referred for protection 20 potential underage victims of trafficking.

IOM also offers legal support services and training to professionals and first reception staff working in dedicated centres for UASC funded through the European Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF),<sup>20</sup> to facilitate the early identification of potential underage victims of trafficking.

In 2018, about 300 professionals participated in trainings focusing on the identification, protection and referral of child victims of sexual and labour exploitation, and on family reunification. Moreover, between 2017 and 2018, IOM child protection experts deployed in Sicily and Calabria organized training workshops for child protection authorities and staff of UASC reception centres on human trafficking, family reunification processes, stress management and burnout prevention.

<sup>17</sup> This is envisaged by art. 16.3 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#).

<sup>18</sup> Art. 10 of the 1989 [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), stipulates that family reunification applications by a child or by the parents shall be dealt with “in a positive, humane and expeditious manner...” ensuring “...no adverse consequences for the applicants and for the members of their family.” In Italy, art. 7 of Law 47/2017 stipulates that family care shall be preferred to the placement of the child in a community/shelter.

<sup>19</sup> IOM staff deployment at landing points and in transit locations across Italy is part of the project “[ADITUS](#)”, financed by the Italian Ministry of the Interior through the Asylum Migration Integration Fund (AMIF).

To better understand the family's background and context of origin or residence (e.g. a third country), adjust the reception and integration process in Italy, and evaluate the feasibility of family reunification, the child's assigned guardian may require to trace the child's family. Following the family tracing exercise, if family reunification is identified as a long-term solution through the BID procedure, the competent Juvenile Court can adopt such decision. Moreover, regular residents in Italy who meet specific criteria established by the European and Italian legislation (including type of permit, housing and income considerations) can initiate a family reunification process in favour of their children left behind.

Finally, art. 8 and 17.2 of the Dublin Regulation<sup>23</sup> stipulates the right for children in Italy to be reunified with their relatives regularly residing in another European Member State.

### UASC Family Tracing and Assessment

IOM conducts family tracing and assessment activities<sup>21</sup> to support national authorities and local social services in the process of determining the best interest of unaccompanied migrant children in Italy.

These involve tracing and interviewing the children's families either in the country of origin or in a third country to better understand their background and the migration context. The information gathered on the history and condition of the family, can reveal family- or context-related critical issues or vulnerabilities that should be considered in establishing long-term solutions in the best interest of the child.

Over the past two years, at the request of the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies,<sup>22</sup> IOM processed 328 family tracing and assessment cases (as of October 2018), mainly concerning families of Albanian, Nigerian, Kosovar, Tunisian and Gambian children. Some of the assessments involved families residing in other European countries.

<sup>20</sup> IOM works in coordination with the AMIF centres' managing bodies, the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI), UNHCR, Save the Children (Italy), National Institute Migration and Poverty (INMP) under the lead of the Italian Ministry of Interior.

<sup>21</sup> See: <https://www.italy.iom.int/it/aree-di-attivita%3A0/assistenza-gruppi-vulnerabili-e-minori/progetti-di-family-tracing>

<sup>22</sup> In compliance with the provisions about the identification of the relatives of UASC of art. 2, paragraph 2, lett. f, of the DPCM 535/99, of paragraph 7, art. 19 of the Leg. Decree 142 of 18 August 2015, and of art. 6 of Law 47/2017 in case the UASC is applying for international protection. The obligation of Family Tracing for the family of UASC in Europe is part of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) (EASO 2016).

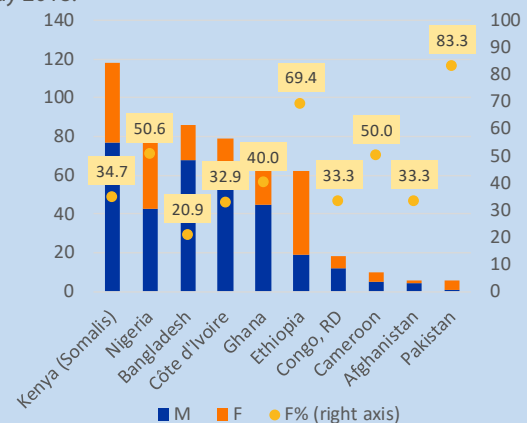
<sup>23</sup> **Regulation (EU) 604/2013** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013, known as Dublin III Regulation, establishes criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person.

### Supporting family reunification in Italy

IOM collaborates with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation since 2001 to support family reunification by conducting DNA tests in favour of foreign residents in Italy (*sponsors*) and their relatives (*applicants*) in the country of origin or residence, when the family relationship cannot be proven through documentation.

IOM conducted 2583 DNA tests in 2017 and until May 2018 for the reunification of children, mainly from Somalia, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Afghanistan and Pakistan, with their parents in Italy. In the case of Cameroon (50%), Nigeria (50.6%), Ethiopia (69.4%) and Pakistan (83.3%) female children represent over half of the total number of children who benefited from this procedure (Fig. 13).

Fig. 13: IOM Italy's DNA tests for family reunification for children of migrants residing in Italy, by citizenship, Jan-May 2018.



Between 2017 and mid-2018, 459 migrant children in Italy were eligible for family reunification under the Dublin Regulation (MLPS 2018), out of which 103 were transferred to Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, Norway and Germany; 221 (mostly Eritreans) were awaiting to be reunited; 107 had voluntarily opted out from the reception system; and 28 accessed the Italian asylum procedure following the rejection of their request for family reunification.

### Relocation of UASC from Italy

In the framework of the EU relocation scheme, IOM assisted the relocation of about 160 UASC from Italy to other European countries between January and April 2018. In addition, the DUBS project, funded by the UK Home Office and implemented by IOM, was launched in June 2018 with the aim of transferring 236 unaccompanied migrant children from Italy, Greece and France to the UK, in accordance with the British law.

IOM in Italy provides pre-departure orientation, health and fit-to-travel checks for 50 migrant children to be reunited with their families in the UK.

## Final remarks

Unaccompanied children that arrive in Italy through non-ordinary channels are either seeking protection or have been compelled to move following a family decision, in many cases implying the consequence of a loss or a crisis that the (extended) family at origin is trying to overcome. These children experience severe stress and anxiety at arrival, provoked by the deep effects of the perilous journeys most of them undertake. Indeed, as shown in this briefing, most children travelling alone arriving in Italy by sea endured multiple forms of violence, in several locations and multiple times before, during and after their journey.

All stakeholders responsible for ensuring the protection of UASC should be aware of the ethical implications of collecting reliable data and empirical evidence on this population, including on their daily experiences while in reception and overall access to service provision. The complexity of migrant children's experiences in general, and of UASC in

particular, remains underestimated and largely unexamined and deserves more attention to avoid focusing only visible and mediatic phenomena (e.g. landing at Italian shores) and provide information, protection and services to all migrant children. Assistance and care should be provided at all stages of the migration process, including upon arrival, to guarantee their best interest and future development as healthy, educated, productive and active members of the societies they belong to, not in a utilitarian sense, but because it is right to do so.

The empirical evidence and expertise build by IOM over its long-standing engagement in the field of protection of migrant children suggest that there are high levels of unmet needs to guarantee their psychosocial wellbeing and active participation in the society. A child-sensitive approach is necessary to understand and address the multidimensional factors that promote migrant children's resilience, belonging and contribution to the society.

### DATA SOURCES

Reported data and figures are as of Q3 2018 (end of September) whenever possible.

Data from Istat, Eurostat, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Education and University are used along with internal data from IOM.

### REFERENCES

Crepet, A., F. Rita, A. Reid, W. Van den Boogaard, P. Deiana, G. Quaranta, A. Barbieri, F. Bongiorno and S. Di Carlo (2017) Mental health and trauma in asylum seekers landing in Sicily in 2015: a descriptive study of neglected invisible wounds. *Conflict and Health*, 11:1.

Curtis, P., J. Thompson and H. Fairbrother (2018) 'Migrant children within Europe: a systematic review of children's perspectives on their health experiences' *Public Health*, 158: 71-85

EASO (2016) *EASO Practical Guide on Family Tracing*. EASO: Valletta.

Galos, E., L. Bartolini, H. Cook and N. Grant (2017) *Migrant Vulnerability to Human Trafficking and Exploitation: Evidence from the Central and Eastern Mediterranean Migration Routes*. IOM: Geneva.

Garante per l'Infanzia e l'Adolescenza (2018) *Relazione al Parlamento 2017*. Rome, June.

IOM (2017) *Flow Monitoring Surveys: The Human Trafficking and Other Exploitative Practices Indication Survey, Analysis on adult and children on the Mediterranean routes compared*, September.

IOM Italy (2017) *Human Trafficking along the Central Mediterranean Route, Data stories and information collected by the International Organization for Migration*. IOM: Rome.

IOM (2018) *Family Reunification*, Global Compact Thematic Paper. IOM: Geneva.

IOM UNICEF UNHCR (2018) *Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe - Overview of Trends 2017*.

Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali (2018) *Report di Monitoraggio – I minori stranieri non accompagnati (MSNA) in Italia*. Dati al 30 giugno 2018, Rome.

Pettinicchio, V., M. Aragona, E. Camillo Da Silva, C. Caizzi, S. Ciambellini, M. Mazzetti, S. Geraci (2018) "Unaccompanied foreign minors victims of violence: a comparison between new and old arrivals in Rome", *Dialogues in Philosophy, Mental and Neuro Sciences*, August, 11(1): 32-35.

Sanchez, G. (2018) Introduction, *Migration Policy Practice – Special Issue on Child Migration*, Vol. VIII, N2, May-August.

UNGA (2018) *Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children*, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly A/RES/64/142\*, UN: New York.

### DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the report do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

