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FOREIGN IMMIGRATION IN THE MOLISE REGION OVER THE LAST DECADE.

INTERVENTIONS TO COUNTER THE DEPOPULATION AND STRENGTHEN THE ECONOMIC STRUCTURE (*)

Research framework. – Between 1951 and 2011 the population of the Molise region went from its all time high of 406,823 inhabitants to its all time low of 313,660 inhabitants, recording a decrease of 93,163 residents, equal to 22.9%. A number of studies, carried out before the last census, had highlighted the critical conditions of marginality and socio-demographic hardship that have existed in many municipalities of the region for some time (Casacchia and Crisci, 2006; Fanelli, 2006; Forleo, Pascotto and Pilati, 2007; Crisci, 2010), often focussing the attention on the mountain areas, which had fallen into a severe spiral of depopulation-ageing (Pesaresi, 2004, 2006, 2014a; Ciaschi and Pesaresi, 2007, pp. 93-137; De Vecchis and Pesaresi, 2006, 2008), and reiterating the concerns expressed on many an occasion decades ago (Simoncelli, 1969, pp. 81-98, 1979, pp. 247-260; Migliorini, 1982; Bucci, 1984, pp. 13-28; Argiolas and Cannata, 1989; Migliorini and Salvatori, 1990). In this way, the decline of the last decade (-2.2%), in an opposite trend with respect to what happened at national level (+4.3%) and in southern Italy (+0.4%), led to it being described as a «demographic fall», leading to reflect on the future scenarios, which would suggest further drops (about -18% between 2011 and 2061), with the likely disappearance of municipalities whose survival is already being threatened (Pesaresi, 2014b).

From the comparison of the data it emerges that what worsened the negative dynamics of 2001-2011 was the natural balance, heavily conditioned by the above mentioned ageing of the population, while the migration balance showed positive values, thanks to the contribution of the international component, which – unlike the internal one – has always been active, representing the only valve aimed

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at countering the ongoing decrease. There is therefore the need to draw up and start a series of short, medium and long term interventions that make it possible to: limit the outgoing movements which are mainly towards other regions in Italy; bring back consistent numbers of skilled labourers from other regions; increase the number of immigrants from abroad, strengthening the trend that has been generated over recent years. In this way the migration balance would grow, which would increase its relevance and progressively the preconditions would be created for a rebalancing of the natural balance and a readjustment of the age pyramids as a result of the greater presence of young people.

Moreover, even the economic-production system shows clear signs of imbalance, with few relatively strong rings surrounded by a close network of municipalities that are little connected to each other, which remain in an uncertain state of waiting. The picture that appears is one of a region still searching for an identity with peculiar features, which requires specific planning and *ad hoc* strategies, in order to achieve its own unexpressed potential from each «tessera» and to build a solid fabric, with collaboration centres, able to sustain proactive synergies. A firm commitment is therefore necessary which cannot be postponed any longer, since there is the risk of sinking into a chasm out of which it would be difficult to get out. A «turning point» is needed that has been long awaited but without any tangible results, which makes it possible to increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of the region, broadening the range of municipalities with pull factors, able to create employment for the local young and to encourage others from Italian regions and abroad for specific activities.

Since the migration balance due to the international component is at present the only active variable within the population movement, this work first of all gives an overall picture of foreign immigration on a regional scale, analysing the recent variations concerning the number of resident foreigners and comparing the situation in Molise with the Italian one, in order to identify possible elements of differentiation. Successively the municipalities are considered in which the greatest number of foreigners is concentrated, looking at the perception that the immigrants from abroad have of the various local contexts, their dynamism and the opportunities that might be offered. Furthermore, as the literature continues to confirm the absence of a «widespread and self-propulsive development» (Zilli, 2011, p. 123) – in a context in which few municipalities stand out and which in turn are not without hardships – and to reiterate the importance of «strengthening the economic fabric and enriching the social fabric» (di Laura Frattura, 2011, p. 229), the aspects of an everlasting immobility are considered and there is assumption concerning the interventions that could contribute towards strengthening the demographic and economic-production structure – moreover raising the employment and social integration indexes of the immigrants and fostering their active involvement – so as to generate positive effects of a certain reach.

The principle resident foreign communities. – As highlighted in a previous study (Pesaresi, 2014b), between 2002 and 2011, according to the ISTAT data of the *Bilancio Demografico e popolazione residente per sesso al 31 dicembre* (Demographic Balance and resident population on 31 December according to sex), the migration balance (and for other reasons, including also the entries «others registered» and «others deleted») always recorded positive values, included between a minimum of 305 units in 2006 and a maximum of 1,682 in 2007 (with the exception of 2005 which had a slightly negative value). A fundamental role was played by the migration balance linked to the foreign component, which recorded constantly positive values of a certain consistency, unlike the internal component, which after the first two years (with positive values) was no longer able to give its contribution, registering only negative values ⁽¹⁾. It can therefore be said that the internal movements are decidedly more copious – as usually characterised by 5,000 incoming and outgoing units – but tend towards negative values, while the external movements show positive values that manage to establish a «surplus» of the overall migration balance.

Since the international component has therefore represented a deterrent able to contain a demographic decrease, which in its absence would have been even more pronounced over the last intercensal decade, the dynamics taking place in Molise were analysed as far concerns the resident foreign communities, on the basis of ISTAT's *Bilancio Demografico e popolazione residente straniera al 31 dicembre per sesso e cittadinanza* (Demographic Balance and resident foreign population on 31 December according to sex and citizenship).

Starting from the 31.12.2002 data (fig. 1), the first available in the demo.istat.it database and concomitant with the year of the promulgation of the Bossi-Fini Law (No. 189, 30 July 2002), there were 2,500 foreigners resident in Molise, with primarily the Albanian community with 641 residents, and Moroccan community with 613, together constituting 50.2% of the total foreign resident population. Instead, the other communities ranked well behind, considering that the Argentinean and Romanian communities with 108 and 107 residents came third and fourth, with more or less equal values.

By 31.12.2010 (fig. 2), the general scenario had considerably changed ⁽²⁾. First of all, the resident foreigners have increased 3.6 times, reaching 8,929, with 6,511 in the province of Campobasso and

(1) The external migration balance was equal to: 644 (944 registered from abroad and 300 deleted for abroad) in 2002; 1,005 (1,433 and 428) in 2003; 669 (1,161 and 492) in 2004; 703 (1,128 and 425) in 2005; 632 (1,186 and 554) in 2006; 1,877 (2,200 and 323) in 2007; 1,292 (1,766 and 474) in 2008; 976 (1,385 and 409) in 2009; 1,059 (1,375 and 316) in 2010; 743 (1,147 and 404) in 2011. The internal migration balance was equal to: 334 (4,977 registered from other municipalities and 4,643 deleted for other municipalities) in 2002; 144 (4,849 and 4,705) in 2003; -150 (5,037 and 5,187) in 2004; -388 (4,857 and 5,245) in 2005; -156 (5,149 and 5,305) in 2006; -206 (5,273 and 5,479) in 2007; -188 (5,269 and 5,457) in 2008; -224 (5,391 and 5,615) in 2009; -350 (5,050 and 5,400) in 2010; -70 (5,487 and 5,557) in 2011.

(2) 31.12.2010 is considered since for 31.12.2011 and 31.12.2012 the data on the various communities of origin are not yet available. Nonetheless, according to the ISTAT data, the foreign population resident in Molise on 31.12.2012 amounts to a pop. of 9,110, showing a slight difference with respect to 31.12.2010.

2,418 in the province of Isernia, with a high female incidence – which at regional level amounts to 56.8% (five percent more with respect to the value of Italy) ⁽³⁾ – employed above all «in the care services sector, healthcare and social assistance, in public and company services» (Caritas and Migrantes, 2011, p. 419).

Among the resident foreign communities (figs. 1, 2 and 3) the Romanian component completely exploded and is employed in the construction and restoration field, cleaning services, assistance for the elderly and the primary sector, which – with 3,112 residents – in percentage terms has risen from 4.3% to 34.9%, becoming an anomaly for the entity of the value registered also in the Italian context, where it already represents the community maintaining first place at the top of the ranking (21.2%). The Moroccan community, reaching 1,121 residents employed in the commerce sector, kept second place, but as a percentage with respect to the total number of resident foreigners dropped from 24.5% to 12.6%. With regard to the Albanian community with its 766 residents, it went from first to third place and constitutes 8.6% of the total. On 31.12.2010 there follows the Polish community, which thanks to a considerable increase went from 89 to 638 residents, equal to 7.1% of the total, not far behind the Albanian community which registered a rise in absolute values of a modest entity ⁽⁴⁾.

(3) According to the regional synoptic tables of the *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2011* (Caritas and Migrantes), which refers to the same data on foreign residents on 31.12.2010, after Campania, with a female incidence of 58.3%, Molise is in fact the region with the highest value, followed by Basilicata, with a percentage of 56.1%.

(4) The data on the Albanian community – with a considerably lower growth in the last years with respect to those of other communities – must be classified in a context that takes into account the roots that it has put down in some municipalities of Molise and which could have given reason to imagine even higher values. In Molise there are in fact four arbëreshë municipalities – Campomarino, Montecilfone, Portocannone and Ururi – where, not without a series of difficulties, the settlement of small groups of Albanians began in the fifteenth century, becoming more marked following the invasion of Albania by the Turks (1435) and above all following the terrible earthquake which on 5 December 1456 (Meletti et al., 1988) hit central-southern Italy (Lat. 41°18' N, Long. 14°43' E, magnitude – macroseismic – equivalent to 7.1, maximum intensity on the MCS 11 scale; Boschi et al., 2000, p. 849), resulting in a positive evaluation of possible repopulation processes. At municipal level, the Albanians resident on 31.12.2010 are: 100, out of 392 total resident foreigners, in Campomarino, where they are in second place after the Romanian community (134); 53, out of 163, in Portocannone, where they take second place after the Romanian community (69); 99, out of 148, in Ururi, where they decidedly make up the first foreign resident community; no longer present in Montecilfone, where there are nonetheless traces of them in the dialect and traditions.

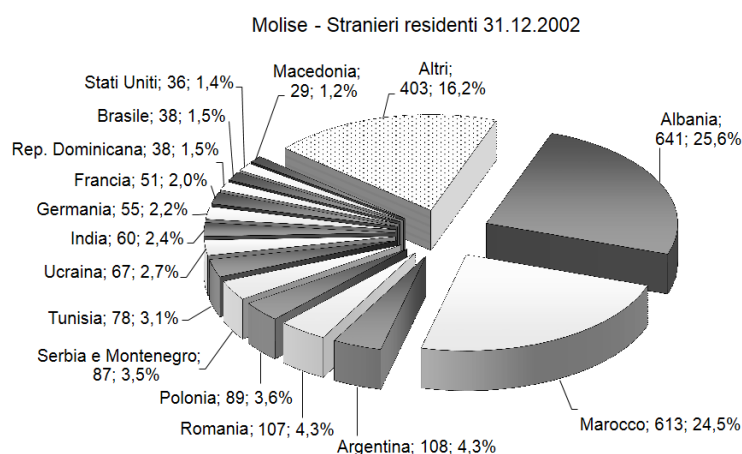


Fig. 1 – Foreign population resident in Molise (absolute values and percentages) on 31.12.2002 for citizenship (first 15 communities)

Source: elaboration on ISTAT data (*Bilancio Demografico e popolazione residente straniera al 31 dicembre per sesso e cittadinanza*), 2002

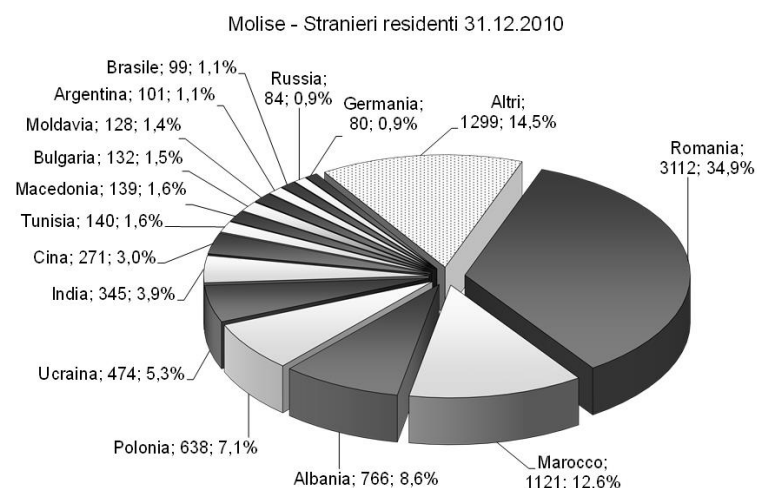


Fig. 2 – Foreign population resident in Molise (absolute values and percentages) on 31.12.2010 for citizenship (first 15 communities)

Source: elaboration on ISTAT data (*Bilancio Demografico e popolazione residente straniera al 31 dicembre per sesso e cittadinanza*), 2010

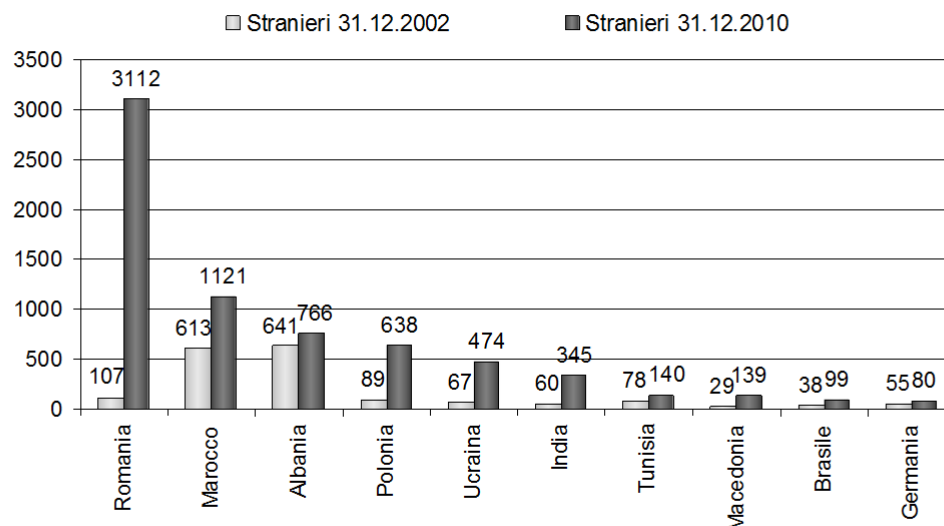


Fig. 3 – *Variations (absolute values) registered in the number of foreigners resident in Molise, between 31.12.2002 and 31.12.2010, in the first 10 citizenships common to both data returns*

Source: elaboration on ISTAT data (*Bilancio Demografico e popolazione residente straniera al 31 dicembre per sesso e cittadinanza*), 2002 and 2010

It must furthermore be highlighted that among the 15 most prevailing communities, other countries have appeared with respect to 31.12.2002, such as China, which is showing a rapid growth and a singular dynamism in entrepreneurship ⁽⁵⁾, Bulgaria, Moldavia and Russia, while others, like Serbia, Montenegro, the Dominican Republic, the United States (a country of «historical emigration») and France (where considerable flows were directed), have gone out.

Comparing the situation in Molise with that of Italy on 31.12.2010 (fig. 4), in order to highlight a number of peculiar features, apart from the atypical size of the value regarding the Romanian community, it can be seen for example that the order of the Albanian and Moroccan communities has been inverted and, in particular, in Italy the Albanian community is ahead of the Moroccan one in the first year considered (31.12.2002) and stayed in first place until 31.12.2006, while from 31.12.2007 it

(5) According to the *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2010*, the Chinese entrepreneurship «in the last 7 years has recorded a rise of 390.9% in Molise, ranking this region in second place in Italy as far as concerns the increase of firms run by citizens of this nationality» (Caritas and Migrantes, 2010, p. 427).

was overtaken by the Romanian one to then keep second place. Moreover, regarding the other high positions of the ranking, in Molise the Polish community is in fourth place, with 7.1% of the total, while in Italy it is the Chinese one with 4.6%; in Molise the Ukrainian community is in fifth place, with 5.3% of the total, and in Italy it holds the same position but with a value of 4.4%; in Molise in sixth place is the Indian community, with 3.9%, in Italy the Philippine one, with 2.9%. From these data it can thus be seen that Molise unites most of the foreign immigration in a lower number of communities. In fact, the first 3 communities (fig. 5a) in Molise represent 56.1% of the total, while in Italy they represent 41.7%, and widening the spectrum to the first 6 communities (fig. 5b) there is a further enlarging of the differences, since they constitute 72.4% in Molise but 53.6% in Italy.

As far as concerns the distribution trends at territorial level: «In the administrative centres, where the demand for family services is greater, the citizenships with a female majority are the most represented (Ukraine and Romania), as happens in the big cities of Italy. In the main non-coastal towns, like Venafrò and Bojano, the Moroccans are more numerous and whose widespread residential model in the areas outside the chief towns is to be found also in other Italian provinces. The significant Albanian presence in the coastal municipalities, or near the seaboard area, on the other hand represents what has been defined as the *frontier worker* model, typical of those communities that settle in the areas close to their country of origin» (Casacchia and Crisci, 2006, pp. 670-671).

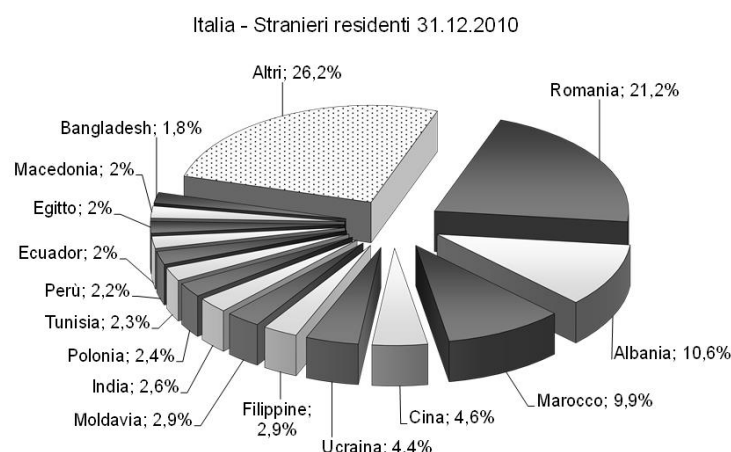


Fig. 4 – Foreign population resident in Italy (in percentages) on 31.12.2010 per citizenship (first 15 communities)

Source: elaboration on ISTAT data (*Bilancio Demografico e popolazione residente straniera al 31 dicembre per sesso e cittadinanza*), 2010

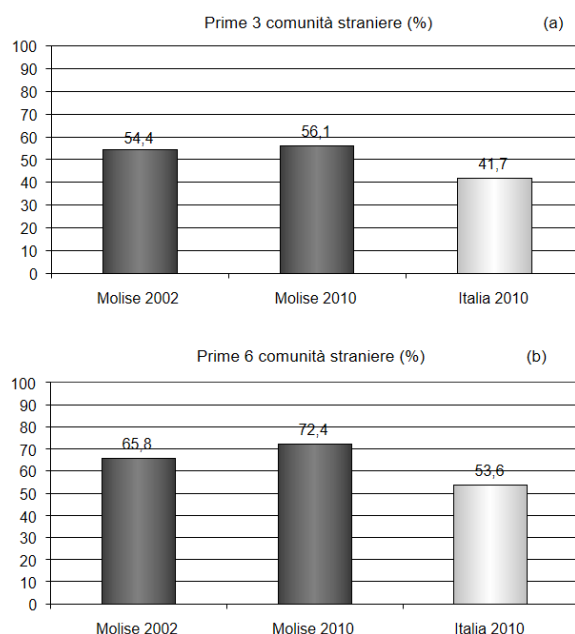


Fig. 5 – Percentage of the first 3 (a) and first 6 (b) foreign communities resident in Molise, on 31.12.2002 and 31.12.2010, and in Italy on 31.12.2010

Source: elaboration on ISTAT data (*Bilancio Demografico e popolazione residente straniera al 31 dicembre per sesso e cittadinanza*), 2010

The most attractive municipalities for foreigners. – Additional information that makes it possible to understand how foreigners perceive the potential of the various contexts can be obtained from the data relative to the first 20 municipalities for foreign residents in Molise on 31.12.2010 (fig. 6), to be found in Caritas and Migrantes, *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2011*. In the first three places in this ranking are firmly placed the «reference poles» of the region, that is Termoli with 1,097 resident foreigners, Campobasso with 995 and Isernia with 603. Two other coastal municipalities follow, Montenero di Biscaccia and Campomarino, respectively with 456 and 392 resident foreigners, and Venafro, with 361.

Furthermore, the most evident possibilities for development continue to be essentially concentrated around the «three bipolar urban micro-areas constituted by Termoli-Larino [...], Campobasso-Bojano [...], Isernia-Venafro» (Salvatori and Migliorini, 1986, p. 69) and, with the exception of other rare cases, only in the proximity of these and the narrow coastal strip can hypothetical conditions for growth be surmised (Scarpelli, 1989, pp. 427, 429), perceived also by the foreigners who decide to settle in Molise. Such presumed conditions must nevertheless be supported by modernisation interventions

(infrastructural, productive, tourist), aimed at the innovation, increase of competitiveness, a greater transfer of technological-telematic-organisational knowledge at an implementation and realisation level. Aimed at creating various forms of synergies, generating dynamism and at valorising economic and infrastructural activities, this action represents a positive step both for the consolidation of skills that risk stagnation and to trigger off the real benefits in less defined territorial contexts, which are basically aligned along the development trajectories of «Venafro-Isernia-Bojano-Campobasso-Teroli» (Prezioso, 1995a, pp. 152-153), with the addition of a few other centres and coastal municipalities, which must «be harmoniously organised», with articulated planned options based on local features and resources, in order to deal with and not evade the regional problems (Rigotti and Rotondi, 1990, p. 140). The areas with the greatest industrial development have not managed «in most cases to deeply modify the entrepreneurial culture of the territory and, above all, to guarantee a self-sufficient development of firms» and consequently the regional economy still appears «in a precarious situation between agriculture and the tertiary sector» rather «than an economy where industry has been able to establish itself and grow, thus creating significant job opportunities» and wide scope integration, so much so that the very «industrialisation poles are struggling» (Zilli, 2011, pp. 110, 122) ⁽⁶⁾.

Within the framework of the immigration phenomena, further aspects are given by the municipality scale data in the *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2011*, referred to the foreigners resident in percentages with respect to the population, according to which (fig. 7):

- the first two places of this new ranking are occupied by the municipalities of Pesche (8.2%) – in the first «crown» of Isernia, of which it represents a dormitory offshoot in the eastern sector – and Guardialfiera (7.4%), which considerably increases their role;
- Montenero di Bisaccia (6.7%) and Campomarino (5.4%) confirm their position, with Portocannone in the middle (6.3%);
- a considerable drop can be seen by Termoli (3.3%), Isernia (2.7%) and above all Campobasso (2%), owing to the considerably larger demographic size with respect to other municipalities, which increases the denominator, both because – in the region – they appear as attractive centres in economic-production or institutional-administrative terms, and as suppliers of better

(6) «In fact, the Campobasso-Bojano nucleus never took off [in the ways expected], the Isernia-Venafro one [even though having a number of important facilities and activities at regional level] has become a cemetery of bankrupt companies and that of Termoli, which had been luckier (apart from the chemical industries and the sewage plant), now has all the symptoms of the production and management crisis» (Petrocelli, 2011, pp. 315-316). With respect to expectations, the industrial hubs of the region did not manage to produce, as moreover in most of the South of Italy, the driving effects that had been hoped for, with a healthy competition-collaboration among firms, an adequate capacity to actively involve highly skilled labour, and positive effects over medium-long distances.

services, but with higher property prices pushing people to settle in the neighbouring municipalities.

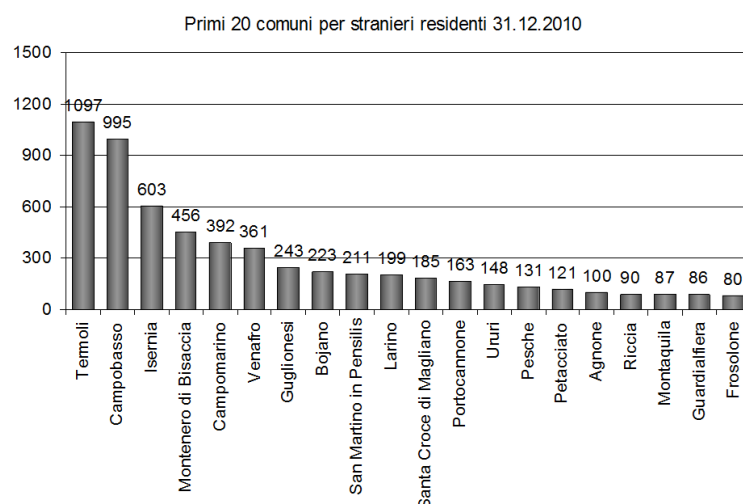


Fig. 6 – First 20 municipalities for foreigners resident in Molise on 31.12.2010

Source: elaboration on Caritas and Migrantes data, 2011, p. 463

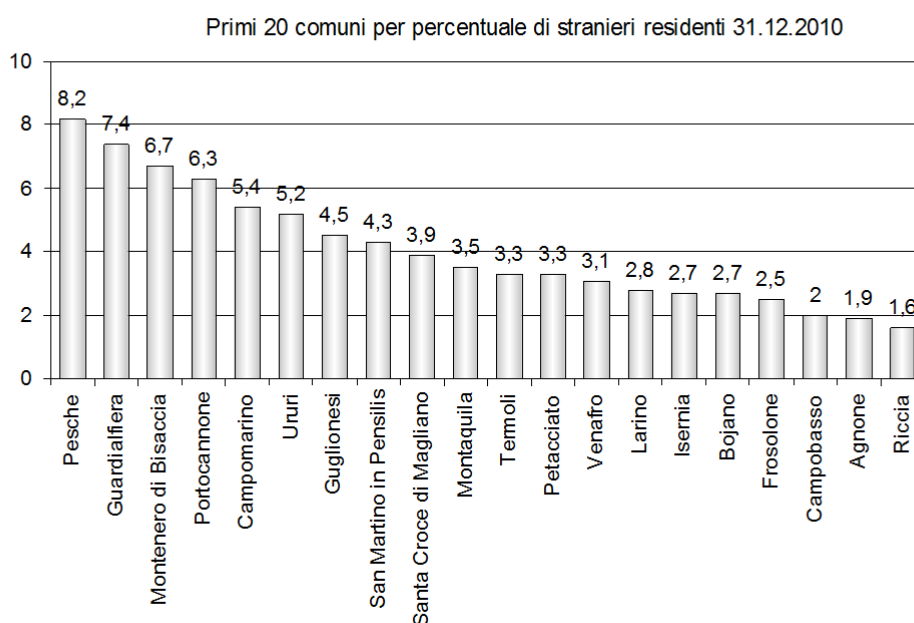


Fig. 7 – First 20 municipalities for foreigners resident in Molise in percentages with respect to the population on 31.12.2010

Source: elaboration on Caritas and Migrantes data, 2011, p. 463

From a summary distribution viewpoint the strong role played by Termoli, Isernia and Campobasso is evident, as together they are the home to 2,695 foreigners (out of 8,929), equivalent to about 30% of the foreign residents in the region, and which for some years have been involved in first help and immigration integration projects ⁽⁷⁾, for their accommodation in suitable either temporary or permanent housing, training and professional courses and their successive job placement etc. Furthermore, in the first 20 municipalities (out of 136) there are 5,971 foreign residents, about 67% of the foreign immigration in Molise, who therefore tend to head for a limited number of municipalities. It is to be hoped that these values are lower in the future, since this would become a sign of fewer imbalances and the socio-economic strengthening of other municipalities, which would begin to be perceived as «possible alternatives» and would contribute to increasing the migration balance and consequently to blocking the negative demographic dynamic foreseen over the coming decades. At the present state of things one must remember «the initiative of a number of local administrations to foster the stabilisation of foreign family nucleuses with children to counter the progressive depopulation of the small municipalities, but often these initiatives are not adequately backed by [appropriate] systematic policies», owing to lack of funds allocated to the social sector (Caritas and Migrantes, 2014, p. 275). Therefore concrete *ad hoc* intervention hypotheses are essential, aimed at encouraging a local and general revival of economic activities, to which measures for social inclusion should be added that could start with the proper reuse of the great number of unoccupied homes characterising many municipalities of the region.

Possible interventions to strengthen the economic structure and counter the depopulation. – As recently stated, owing to endogenous reasons the economic system of Molise struggles to express its true potential and «any form of planning [...] only has any bearing in a slow and haphazard way»; in this way «the regional attractiveness is penalised» and initiative and imagination are held back, in a situation of «resignation» and «widespread slowness» that defines the «identity features» which it is now time to remove (Gianfranco Vitagliano, in Ruggieri, 2011, p. 234), with «the courage to implement a project around a number of ideas» and «to bring choices to completion» (Giovanni Cannata, in Ruggieri, 2011, p. 235). A

(7) Worthy of note for example are: for Termoli, the «Rifugio Sicuro» project – which is part of the national reception network SPRAR (Sistema di Protezione richiedenti asilo e rifugiati) – financed by the Ministry of the Interior and co-financed by the Caritas diocesana of Termoli-Larino and by the municipality of Termoli, in partnership with the municipalities of Ururi and Larino; for Isernia, the project «Una casa nel mondo», set up by the municipality with the co-financing of the Ministry for Social Solidarity (later merged into the Ministry for Labour, Health and Social Policies and now part of the Ministry for Labour, Health and Social Policies) and the involvement of the municipalities of Miranda and Longano. For further details of these projects, see the volumes of Caritas and Migrantes (respectively 2014, p. 276 and 2011, p. 420).

plan of action is needed that has precise ends and deadlines and which, on the basis of the main needs, problems and local resources, is able to identify different directions to pursue together towards common objectives at multiple levels (social, demographic, production). In the complex process of the reformulation and modernisation of the economic apparatus, immigration can give an important contribution ⁽⁸⁾, as long as it is aimed at increasing the foreign participation in the employment market, as a first factor of appeal, «steady employment» ⁽⁹⁾, a symbol of real stability and (possibly) the average remuneration earned by the immigrants, considering that Molise has among the lowest values of Italy ⁽¹⁰⁾.

In such a perspective the following could be important:

- strategies to increase the profits of the agricultural and livestock keeping activities, with excellent products, but conditioned and hindered by a series of obstacles – excessive fragmentation, reduced farm sizes etc. – to overcome with associations, cooperatives and trust and, in certain cases, by means of the use of GIS and GPS for the primary sector, aimed at calculating and reducing costs, marking and monitoring farming and livestock activities, aligning the courses of the machines in parallel rows with no superfluous overlapping, creating draining systems, identifying portions of land with a lack of salts and nutritional substances and subject to production deficits, drawing up scenarios, aiming at a «precision agriculture» ⁽¹¹⁾ and opening up possibilities for employment, both for professionals with specific qualifications and for unskilled labour (fruit and olive picking, care of livestock etc.);
- programmes to increase the visibility and spread of the large scale agri-businesses ⁽¹²⁾, as distinguished «by a high level of distinctiveness», but to be considered from a number of aspects, that range from the «lack of logistic infrastructures and the poor use [...] of production and marketing support services», to the micro-dimensional nature of too many firms, from the inappropriateness of some approaches with regard to fertilisation, cultivation and harvesting, to the fragility of the relations between farming businesses and transformation industries, which negatively affect the ability to obtain brand names and certifications and to find adequate outlets

(8) With regard to the foreigners employed per sector of activity, according to the 2010 data in the *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2011* of Caritas and Migrantes (p. 419), «44.0% is employed in services, 37.5% in industry and 17.2% in agriculture» (the rest in other activities).

(9) By «steady employment» is meant the number of those that have not been subject to terminations in their employment relationship that had begun in previous years.

(10) See on this, Caritas and Migrantes (2010, p. 427), where the negative primate of Molise is highlighted.

(11) On «precision agriculture» and on the possible benefits to be gained from the use of geospatial technologies in this field, see for example Zhang et al. (2002), Seelan et al. (2003) and Galindo et al. (2012).

(12) Four main regional large scale production chains can be numbered: olive and olive oil production, the breeding and transformation of meat, milk and dairy products, wheat and the products of the flour milling industry, pasta and bread making (Mariani, 2006, p. 525), to which truffles must be added.

in other regions and abroad (Fanelli, 2011, pp. 91-92 et seq.), subject to the involvement of specific professional figures (Italian and foreign);

- review and technological innovation processes in the secondary sector, in a collaboration system with research activities and the advanced tertiary sector, so as to increase added value, attract highly skilled labour (which is generally inclined to emigrate and, at the same time, not immigrate to Molise) and trigger off vertical and horizontal, solid and lasting relations, between active firms and those that could rise in strategic areas, following geological-geographical analyses and engineering and geomarketing evaluations with the aid of GIS and geotechnologies, that can enable the experts of different countries to interface and interact in an interdisciplinary way;
- development projects, also within the European call for participation which – with the backing of offices for the scouting of calls for funding and the support in the drafting and feasibility assessment of the bids – make it possible «to open up gradually but constantly to the arrival of new professional skills» with leading technical-information approaches, by means of which «to produce an amplification effect» of the possible results and «an orientation to innovation», so as to bring about a considerable rise in both company and regional competitiveness (di Laura Frattura, 2011, p. 221);
- protocols for cultural and scientific collaborations with institutions of other countries, in order to foster international mobility and exchanges of high level figures in branches of research considered crucial, and the hosting of foreign lecturers and researchers who can «export» specific methodologies and knowledge so as to promote the training of young people abroad with specific leanings and skills in technologically advanced bodies, creating a series of chain relations to be spread and finalised ⁽¹³⁾;
- measures for the relaunching of tourism, which require a «fresh» organisation, according to the peculiarities and vocations of the single municipalities, to be connected and harmonised on the basis of the presence of homogenous or complementary elements (De Vecchis, Pesaresi and Marta, 2008), after having carefully reviewed the accommodation facilities, usually lacking both

(13) The involvement of experts and researchers from other communities and the specialisation of graduates and PhD students from Molise abroad could also be considered, with the aim of making facilities with specific connotations and purposes more functional and operational, often linked to geographical position and the intrinsic features of the places, such as planetariums, observatories, weather stations etc. These are often underused marginal facilities, which instead could create job and collaboration opportunities, from a network viewpoint, fostering the «promotion and spread of scientific culture», as stated in the DDL S. 1050 of the Senato della Repubblica, XVII Legislature (<http://www.senato.it/leg/17/BGT/Schede/FascicoloSchedeDDL/ebook/41964.pdf>). On the importance of encouraging and supporting the international mobility of highly qualified persons, researchers and «talents», see for example Koser and Salt (1997), Iredale (1999) and Jöns (2014).

quantitatively and in the standard supply of particular distinctive elements and which have been undergoing overhaul and restoration for some years now ⁽¹⁴⁾;

- interventions for the adaptation of infrastructures – road works, railway lines that (not at present) connect areas of great beauty, systems for the collection and disposal of waste etc. – and measures for the maintenance, cleaning-restoration and valorisation of abandoned or only partially recovered buildings which have then been neglected or awaiting concrete intervention (historical-cultural heritage, livestock trails, rural houses and buildings etc.);
- incentives for the setting up of associations for the placement of carers and the carrying out of home services, giving skilled care and assistance and physical-psychological reassurance to the elderly and their families, thus meeting the increasing demands for these services, considering the marked widespread ageing of the population, particularly in the mountain areas ⁽¹⁵⁾.

This can all contribute towards creating a new image, strengthening and reviving the overall socio-economic fabric without useless constraints, to gradually introduce fitting and incisive solutions and to offer a range of opportunities for the young and the foreigners who could choose Molise as their destination. That is to increase the attractiveness of the region, which must work towards offering diversified regular and long-lasting employment opportunities – thus laying and cultivating the foundations for a satisfactory and continuative permanence – and at the same time aim at raising the job and social placement indexes ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Immigration can be a resource for many municipalities of Molise and can contribute towards curbing the decades old problematic processes, «mitigating» widespread social hardship associated with the depopulation-ageing and giving inputs for economic development (Casacchia and Crisci, 2006, pp. 652, 674), but it is necessary to upgrade and renew the urban facilities and the production and tourist activities of a number of crucial centres, which have been awaiting modernisation and improvement works or which are beginning to show clear signs of deterioration. Therefore, it must be avoided that the more dynamic municipalities lose strength, also due to the lack of possibilities to interweave propulsive interactions, and enlarge the circle of those able to generate activities and positive effects at

(14) Numerous proposals for development in tourism and the reclamation of existing facilities, with reference to mountain municipalities, were recently put forward with regard for example to *glamping*, slow tourism, creative tourism etc. (Pesaresi, 2014a, pp. 117-163).

(15) On the placement of female immigration – coming from eastern Europe – as carers for the elderly, in an interwoven psycho-social framework, regarding ageing and sense of abandonment, on the one hand, and loneliness and nostalgia for one's country of origin on the other, see Bagnoli (2009).

(16) With regard to the social integration of foreign immigrants, Molise is in tenth place in Italy, in an average position. Among the various indicators that contribute to the definition of this complex index, particularly positive elements come from the «accessibility to the property market», insofar as Molise is at the top of the national ranking «for the lowest average rent per sq m calculated per capita for the foreign population». As far as concerns the employment integration of foreign immigrants, Molise is instead fourth in the national ranking (Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS, 2013, p. 432).

a certain level, within a reticular mesh in which the various well-linked hubs may collaborate to foster dynamics that have been in the pipeline for too many years now.

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Abstract. – Between 1951 and 2011 the population of Molise went from the all-time high of 406,823 inhabitants to its all-time low of 313,660 inhabitants (-22.9%). A number of studies have highlighted the conditions of socio-demographic hardships in which many municipalities find themselves, focussing the attention on the mountain areas and reasserting the concerns expressed decades ago. Thus the contraction of the last decade has led to the use of the term «demographic drop», with a reflection on the future scenarios from which further declines are expected. The negative dynamics of 2001-2011 was worsened by the natural balance, conditioned by the marked ageing of the population,

while the net migration balance showed positive values, thanks to the contribution of the international component. Therefore, there is the need to carry out interventions that make it possible to: check the movements towards other Italian contexts; attract a considerable amount of skilled labour from other regions; increase the number of foreign immigrants. In this way the migration balance would be bolstered and the conditions would be created for a rebalancing of the natural balance. Moreover, even the economic-production system shows clear signs of imbalance, with few relatively strong links surrounded by many small coordinated municipalities that remain in an uncertain state of waiting. Since the migration balance due to the international component is at present the only active variable within the population movement, this paper gives an overall picture of the foreign immigration on a regional scale, highlighting the recent variations and comparing the situation of the Molise region with the Italian one. Then the municipalities will be examined in which the greatest number of foreigners is concentrated. Furthermore, considering the need to strengthen the social and economic fabric, interventions are envisaged that could contribute to generating positive effects of a certain reach.

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