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Measuring immigration and foreign population in Italy *

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MEASURING IMMIGRATION AND FOREIGN POPULATION IN ITALY

Introduction

1. At the beginning of the 1970s Italy was still one of the main emigration countries in Europe. In the second half of that decade the first communities of immigrants began to appear. In the following years the size of the foreign population started growing, but only from the beginning of the nineties did the phenomenon acquire relevance in numbers, in the media and in the public opinion.
2. The 1991 population census found 360 thousand foreigners, representing less than 0.6 percent of total population. In 2001 they were four times that number, that is, a share of 2.3%. During the more recent years, the number of foreigners has rapidly grown, also because of a regularization law for non-regular workers. According to the latest estimates, foreigners recorded in the population registers are about 2.7 million, adding up to 4.5% of total population.
3. Within this context, various legislative provisions were introduced to deal with some aspects of the phenomenon and the immigration issue focused the interest of national political discussion. The legislative acts and administrative rules adopted were mainly aiming to control the inflows and to regularize the position of illegal immigrants. Since 1990, four regularization laws were enacted, allowing the issue of 1.3 million residence permits. Only very recently has arisen in the public debate the need for policies formulation on problems of integration, and more general, on how to manage immigration further than control and public order.
4. Official statistics on immigration and foreign population in Italy are mainly based on administrative sources, strictly linked to laws and procedures rather than to statistical needs. ISTAT, the Italian national statistical office, since 1993 is doing many efforts to improve the information in this area in accordance with international standards and to produce more relevant data for the analysis of immigration and to better support policies formulation. Efforts are also being made to improve the timeliness for data dissemination.
5. The trend of immigration to Italy still allows the acceptance of a definition of the phenomenon which does not distinguish between immigrants and foreign population, identified by the criterion of **citizenship**. This simplification is possible only in the first phase of the immigration process – the one interesting Italy at the moment – when the large majority of immigrants keep their own citizenship for a long period and almost all foreigners are immigrants. During this phase, the equation “foreigner equals immigrant” can be used without causing too large errors. In addition to that, in an initial stage of the immigration process the number of nationals with a foreign background is still very limited.
6. Official statistics are mainly focussed on legally present foreign population, evaluated on the basis of three sources: the surveys on municipal population registers, dealing with resident foreigners; the administrative information related to valid residence permits (both available yearly); and the Population Census, carried out every ten years, including some information about foreigners living in Italy, regardless of their residence status. The following presentation will focus on these sources.
7. At the same time, it is important to mention that other sources are available, based on the criterion of citizenship. They mainly focus on demographic features of the foreign population and on labour market issues, such as:

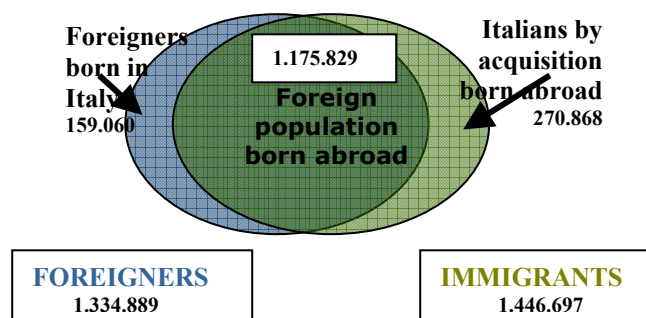
- **Survey on the new-borns (Istat).** These data are collected from each municipality every year, asking for the characteristics of the children registered in the population register, including the citizenship of the new born and of the parents. This source allows to monitor the contribution of the foreign population to the overall number of births, and to evaluate differentials in fertility rates.
 - **Survey on deaths (Istat).** As for the above mentioned, these data are collected from each municipality every year, asking for the characteristics of people who died, including the cause of death. At the moment, the particular age composition of foreign population (very young compared to the Italian one) implies a very small number of them in these statistics.
 - **Survey on mobility (Istat).** Also this survey is addressed to municipalities every year, aiming to have the number and characteristics of people who move from one municipality to another, or to/from abroad. Among others, it allows to analyse internal migration patterns of the foreign population.
 - **Sample survey on labour force (Istat)** Since January 2004, ISTAT is implementing the new LFS harmonised at EU level that, thanks to new methodological features, has improved the quality of data and started providing information on foreigners. In addition to the standard information produced by the survey on the labour issues, citizenship and birthplace of foreigners are recorded. In 2008, an ad hoc module on the labour situation of migrants and their immediate descendants will be attached to the LFS questionnaire in the EU member states, to allow for comparison of labour market outcomes with other groups, to provide information on the migrant integration and adaptation to the national labour context, and to analyse the factors affecting such integration.
 - **Survey on marriages (Istat).** Every municipality gives information about spouses, both for weddings officiated under civil law and for the religious ones. Marriage with an Italian is the main reason for acquisition of Italian citizenship.
 - **Data on work authorisations (Ministry of Labour).** Data refer to the programmed flows of entry established annually by the government. Available information for authorized workers are: professional qualification, citizenship, gender and age group, economic sector and type of contract.
 - **Data on foreign workers (INPS-National Institute for Social Security).** This institute collects different kinds of data. The most important in terms of statistical relevance is a joint ISTAT-INPS survey (*OROS*) that provides data on foreign employees, by type of contract and sector of activity. The “*Casellario dei lavoratori attivi extracomunitari*” (Records office for extra-EU active workers), activated a few years ago, contains data on foreign employees for whom at least one contribution has been paid during the year.
 - **Data on recruitments and terminations of employment relationships (INAIL-Italian workers’ compensation authority).** Unlike the previous ones, these data relate to immigrants classified by country of birth and not by citizenship. They enable to know the type of contract, the region of employment and the region of origin (EU or extra-EU) of workers.
8. The UN recommendations for the harmonization of definitions and data collections techniques about foreigners and immigrants implemented in occasion of the population censuses have helped to clarify some of the methodological problems implied by practices adopted so far and, at the same time, have highlighted the new and additional needs for statistical information required by the users, particularly

by the policy makers. At European Union level, the development of Community policies and legislation on migration and asylum has highlighted the need for comprehensive and comparable European statistics on a range of migration-related issues. This is why it is particularly relevant the forthcoming “Regulation of the European parliament and of the council on Community statistics on migration and international protection”, proposing a set of definitions that will bring to the Member States’ attention possible discrepancies to be explained or adjusted. Nevertheless, National Statistical Systems are complex, usually deeply shaped by the set of national laws and administrative procedures, thus making the introduction of radical changes a sensitive and hard issue to be dealt with.

Definitions and related issues

9. In available statistical sources it has not been felt necessary to strictly distinguish between the concepts of immigrant and foreigner, both identified broadly by the criterion of *citizenship*. As noted in the introduction, this simplification can be accepted in situations, such as Italy’s one, where the majority of immigrants keeps their own citizenship for a long period.
10. Only the Population Census allows the complete distinction between “immigrants” and “foreigners” since data are available by citizenship at birth, citizenship at the Census time and by birthplace. The 2001 Census data show (Fig. 1) that immigrants and foreigners largely match, so that about 81% of immigrants can be correctly identified by means of citizenship, as they are foreigners, and 88% of foreigners are immigrants, as they were born abroad.

Figure 1 – Population Census 2001



11. Between 2001 and 2005, a large regularization process took place allowing about 650 thousand immigrants to obtain a residence permit and, consequently, to be counted in the Italian population. As the matter of fact, this new wave of immigration has widened the overlapping area between foreigners and immigrants.
12. In the near future, this broad correspondence is expected to decrease, as the stabilization of the foreigners’ presence is causing an increase of both foreigners born in Italy and foreigners acquiring Italian citizenship. In 2001, they were still a minority: people born in Italy with foreign parents

numbered 174 thousand (including those who had acquired citizenship), where the total number of people having acquired Italian citizenship – wherever born – were 286 thousand¹.

13. Data based on population census would need frequent updating, since few years are important when dealing with a matter evolving so quickly as in the case of immigration. Using the existing current surveys on stocks it is not possible to count people who are Italian by naturalization – either born in Italy or abroad – and people born in Italy with foreign parents. Anyway, flow data are available, which allow to evaluate recent trends in these two phenomena.
14. Those data show an increasing number of acquisitions of Italian citizenship (Tab. 1), due in the majority of cases to marriages between a foreigner and an Italian. Very often the groom is Italian, and the bride is a foreign woman. A growing number of people who obtain Italian citizenship after ten years of continuous residence in the country, in accordance with current legislation, is recorded too.
15. As Italian immigration is relatively recent, up to now the number of foreigners that could apply for citizenship has been still quite low (19% of total foreign resident), but it is going to increase quickly in the next years. Therefore, an increase in the number of acquisitions is expected. In addition to that, the new government is debating a major change in the law, which could lower the eligibility requirements to 5 or 6 years of continuous residence in Italy. This change would double the number of foreigners who could apply for Italian citizenship.

Table 1 – Acquisitions of Italian citizenship (1996-2004)

Years	Acquisitions	Index numbers (base = 1996)
1996	8,931	100
1997	11,633	130
1998	10,780	121
1999	13,648	153
2000	11,566	130
2001	12,671	142
2002	12,267	137
2003	17,205	193
2004	19,140	214
2005	28,659	321

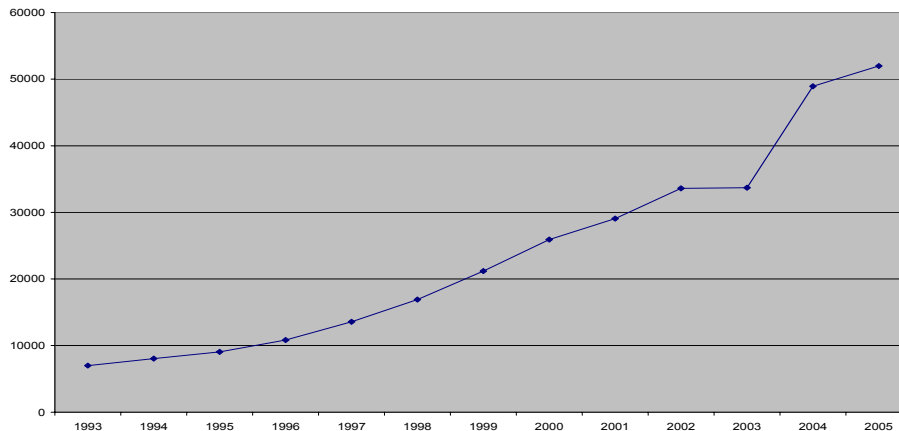
Source: Istat

16. The other emerging issue is the new born with foreign parents. As immigrants become more stable, improving their living and working conditions, it becomes easier to form a family, marrying and having a child. Often, the regular immigrant requests for a residence permit for family reason in order

¹ According to the current legislation, Italian citizenship can be acquired by naturalization, after ten years of continuous regular residence in the country, or after three years in case of a marriage with an Italian citizen; resident spouses can obtain Italian citizenship after six months.

to let his spouse entry the country. As a consequence, the number of children born in Italy from foreign resident parents is rapidly increasing (Fig.2) doubling in 5 years. Those children –the second generation of immigrants – are characterized by peculiar patterns of socialization and integration, compared with their parents and, more in general, with immigrants. Just to quote an important feature, they can attend Italian school from a very young age, acquiring mastery of language and local customs.

Figure 2 – Children born in Italy from foreign resident parents. Years 1993 – 2005



Source: Istat

17. As for acquisition of citizenship, the evolution of immigration in Italy will probably lead to a further increase in the number of children born from foreign parents, and to a growing importance of the foreign contribution to overall population dynamics (in 2005, the share of new-born foreigners was already 9.4% of total births). Moreover, the present fertility rate for foreign women is higher than the Italian's one (2.61 vs. 1.26). Such strong inclination to family formation by the foreign women will probably last for at least some years.
18. A particular issue, which does not completely fall under the immigration matter, but can be read as an indirect indicator of the opening of society to immigration and part of the process of integration, is that of children with one foreign and one Italian parent. Generally, they are considered Italians at birth, but they surely bring a more complex connotation on the side of culture heritage and self-perception. Children with only one foreign parent represent a significant share of the whole number of births recorded in Italy every year, and is rapidly increasing: in 1992 they were about 7,000 (1.3% of the total number of births), while in 2004 they were more than 18,000 (3.3%).
19. When immigration becomes a more mature phenomenon, as is occurring in Italy, it has to be defined in a more specific way, adding foreigners born in the country, to naturalized people, and people with foreign background. As for the first specification, it seems that considering together country of birth and citizenship can help to identify it completely. For the other two groups, the statistical problem is more significant, as it requires additional information that is not always easy to get.
20. Even though naturalized people could be distinguished by the birthplace (which is abroad in 95% of the cases), this variable alone is ambiguous. In fact, the total number of resident people born abroad includes an important proportion (around 35%) of Italians by origin, due to a long tradition of Italian emigration. It would be necessary to get information on the previous citizenship as well, as done in the population census.

21. As for the children born in Italy from foreign parents, they are just counted as foreigners. Again, taking into consideration birthplace and citizenship together could help to identify them, as long as they do not acquire Italian citizenship (which is possible after they are 18 years old, under the present regulation). After that moment, the above considerations apply.
22. The last group of interest – children born Italian, with foreign background – looks as the most difficult to evaluate by means of statistical tools. In fact, it would be necessary to get information about the parents' origins (birthplace and citizenship – either acquired or not). Considering the present organization of statistical sources, it would not be straightforward to implement such a change.

Main sources for statistics

23. The *survey on demographic balance and resident foreigners* was started in 1993 by gathering data from the municipal population registries (*Anagrafi*); respondents are all the 8.101 Italian municipalities. The aim of the survey is to collect information on stock data at the beginning and at the end of the reference year, for the whole foreign population and for the minors' component. The key variable is citizenship. Flow data on demographic balance (births, deaths, immigrants, emigrants) are also collected as well as the distribution by single citizenship at the end of the year.
24. The necessary condition to apply to the registries - for everyone who intends to do it, both Italians and foreigners – is to live stably in the municipality (*comune*), considered as the place of usual residence; in addition, extra-EU citizens must have a valid residence permit. It is not clearly specified in the current legislation whether all permits allow the application to the registry or there is a minimum length of the document. Nevertheless, it is mostly assumed that a foreigner applying to the population register has the intention to settle for quite a long period of time in the municipality, due to the bureaucratic burden necessary to do it. Therefore, this data source largely complies with the UN recommendations on the definition of “long term migrants”, identified as those who intend to reside in the host country for at least one year.
25. As for the reference time, this data source refers to the time when the application to the register is submitted, rather than to the moment when the migrant has actually entered the country. As registration needs a valid residence permit, the time lag can be of some months. This is not seen as a major problem for the aims of description and analysis, apart from the periods when a regularization occurs. In this case, the time lag between the obtaining of the residence permit and the registration at the municipal register tends to increase, and can determine a significant gap between regular and resident foreign population. This is particularly true for the larger municipalities, where the number of foreigners can be quite significant. Moreover, the time lag between actual entry (as an illegal) and registration can be up to several years, so that inflows that took place during a long time span are recorded all together at the regularization time.
26. Considering that foreigners' residential mobility is normally higher than the Italians', it is particularly important that municipal registers on resident population are checked frequently and with accuracy. The check can be based on the expiration date on the residence permit, by verifying the position of those foreigners who failed to communicate the renewal of their permit to the municipality. As some municipalities fail to carry on such verification extensively, missed deregistrations are probably one of the main limits of statistical data from this source.

27. *Population census* collects every ten years a large number of information on foreign resident population and also on foreigners found on the Italian territory at the census time, regardless of their legal status. Census data provide more details necessary for the classification used for studying migration, allowing the distinction between *foreigners* and *immigrants*.
28. The foreign population includes all the persons born in Italy or abroad, who declared a citizenship other than the Italian one at the census, being thus in line with the definition adopted in the administrative surveys carried out in Italy. On the other hand, the immigrant population at the census includes all the persons born abroad who declared to be foreigner or Italian by naturalization; all foreigners born in Italy, as children born from foreign parents, are therefore excluded from immigrant population. Census data allow a great detail at territorial level, with reference to many socio-economic information, such as housing conditions, household composition, educational level and professional status. Nevertheless, because of the complexity of Census operations, some under enumerations might occur especially with reference to foreign population.
29. Data on the valid *residence permits* are provided by the Ministry of the Interior, and ISTAT disseminates statistically adjusted data with regard to the stock of foreigners. This source makes available a wide variety of information: besides the main demographic characteristics of the foreigners, each document indicates also the reason of stay. All these information make it possible to monitor the changes in terms of number and characteristics of the regular foreign population. As an example, tracing the changes in the reason of stay, it can be seen that over the years, the quota of permits released due to family reasons is considerably growing, confirming what is aforementioned about stabilization of the immigration process.
30. Those who have a residence permit do not always apply to the population registers, at least not immediately, bringing some discrepancies between the two sources. Moreover, according to Italian laws, children under the age of 15 can be only recorded on an adult's permit. This is a second reason for discrepancy between data from registries and residence permits.

Perspectives

31. It has been shown that Italy is facing a rapid evolution of the migration phenomenon. According to the brief description of the characteristics of the main statistical sources available so far for the production of information on the migration issues, it is clear that there is a need for improvement. The aim should be, in first place, to distinguish the "immigrants" from the "foreigners" aggregates (so far possible only at the Census) in order to produce more relevant statistical information for the analysis of integration issues. This aim can be obtained by introducing in the main sources information on birthplace, even though it has to be stressed the need to use this information jointly with that of citizenship.
32. ISTAT is working on inter-institutional agreements to make possible, in the short term, to survey and analyse the data on population with foreign background, including the second generation of immigrants, by bringing some improvements to the current surveys based on population registers. The birthplace is already present on the population registers, and by adding a piece of information about the citizenship at birth, it would become possible to identify those who became Italians by naturalization, whether born in Italy or abroad.
33. As regards the definition of long term migrant, Italian practice produces data substantially in line with the UN specific recommendations. As aforementioned, population registers are the main current sources for statistics on foreign population and on migration flows. This administrative source is based

on individual data: almost 1,500 thousand national and international changes of residence are recorded every year. These changes of residence can be considered long-term migrations – following UN definitions - since, to apply to the registry, a person has to declare that she/he wishes to establish her/his own “usual residence” in the municipality.

34. A drawback common to examined current sources is related to the difficulty in surveying the outgoing flows, because of the difficulties in keeping registers updated. A benchmark can be drawn in occasion of every population census, as it allows municipalities to clean up their registers, cancelling people who are no longer residents. A revision of the regulation on population registers, at the moment under study, foresees to establish a tighter procedure for the cancellation of foreigners, obliging the municipality to start a checking procedure whenever the residence permit expires and, in case the foreigner fails to reconfirm his presence in the municipal offices, to cancel his position straightforward.
35. Eventually, as aforementioned, a proposal is being currently discussed for European Community regulations on migration statistics. The new legislation is being delivered in order to better supply policy makers with comprehensive and harmonised information about different aspects of the migration phenomenon: flows and stock of third countries’ citizens; naturalisation processes; asylum seekers and refugees; prevention of illegal entry and stay; residence permits. The regulation, due to the extensiveness of the topic, involves various institutions, thus promoting inter-institutional collaboration, in order to guarantee the production and dissemination of timely and reliable statistics. Under this regard, a recent project is led by the Ministry of Interior to connect the 8,101 municipalities’ registers and to build a centralized data base as reference index for the whole resident population. When fully operational, it will improve the availability of updated statistical information on population stocks and flows, including foreigners.

Technical Annexes on data sources²

3.1 Population register

3.1.1 Name of register

Anagrafe della Popolazione Residente (Register of the resident population)

The *Anagrafe* is hosted locally as the population register for those usually resident in the municipality (*comune*). A centralised population register does not exist. For the past 15 years each Italian municipality has also held a register of Italian citizens resident abroad for more than one year, named AIRE (*Anagrafe degli italiani residenti all'estero*). The *Anagrafe* is updated through the registration of vital events, marriages, migrations and change of address⁽³⁾ and to some extent the same applies to AIRE (see below). A third register of population with a reference address (*domicilio*) in the municipality⁽⁴⁾ also established by the *Regolamento anagrafico* has not been updated since the beginning of the nineties.

3.1.2 Persons included in the population register

The *Anagrafe* includes the following persons:

- Citizens usually resident in the municipality
- Foreigners usually resident in the municipality

Each AIRE includes the:

- Citizens living abroad who had their previous residence in Italy in that municipality

3.1.3 Registration of international migrants

Whenever people move from abroad to an Italian municipality and vice versa the movement must be reported in terms of registration or deregistration (respectively *iscrizione* or *cancellazione anagrafica*). Although the principle is the same for nationals and non-nationals, there are differences in practice and requirements, which are that the AIRE is for Italian citizens and non-EU nationals require a residence permit as a pre-condition for registration (cfr. 3.1.5).

3.2 Register of residence permits

3.2.1 Name of register

² THESIM w. p., Country report – ITALY

³ Name, relationship to reference person, sex, date of birth, place of birth, marital status, citizenship, educational qualification and economic activity are recorded for each person. Educational qualification and occupation are infrequently updated.

⁴ *Schedario della Popolazione Temporaneamente Presente*.

Archivio dei permessi di soggiorno (Register of the permits of stay). Data are registered at local level by the Police Headquarters (*Questure*) and processed centrally. There is no connection with the *Anagrafe*.

3.2.2 Persons included in the register of residence permits

- Nationals of EU Member States and other ‘facilitated’ countries granted long-term residence permits.
- Third country nationals granted short/long term residence permits.

At expiration of the validity of the permit the data concerning foreigners are not removed from the database but moved to an archive section.

Excluding cases of adoption, custody and unaccompanied minors, minors under 15-years of age are recorded on the permit of one parent with name and photo and are not counted separately. Inclusion of specific individual information on each accompanying child (such as name, sex, date and place of birth) in the database seems feasible and has already been considered by the Ministry of the Interior.

3.2.3 Type of residence permits

With the exclusion of working purposes, the duration of the residence permit corresponds to the duration granted by the visa issued by the Italian embassy or consulate abroad. On the basis of international agreements, citizens from many selected countries such as Argentina, Canada or the United States of America are exempt from the requirement of a short-term visa for tourism, business, mission, invitation and sports. In addition, citizens of San Marino, Switzerland and the Vatican are exempt from all visa requirements.

The present reasons for obtaining a permit are:

- for *business*, issued to non-EU nationals entering for economic and commercial reasons, including trade, contracts or negotiations;
- for *medical treatment*, issued to non-EU nationals needing medical treatment either at public or private facilities or for humanitarian support, in the second case upon authorisation from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- upon *invitation*, issued to non-EU nationals invited by political or private institutions to participate in political, scientific or cultural events;
- for *tourism*;
- for *mission*, issued to non-EU nationals intending to reside in a Schengen Area country for political or governmental functions for a period not exceeding 90 days;
- for *apprenticeship*, issued to non-EU nationals entered for a short period who have been directly appointed by an Italian employer, upon approbation from the provincial Department of Labour;
- for *family reasons*, issued to non-EU nationals for accompanying or visiting a relative in the country;
- for *adoption*, issued to non-EU nationals adopted or under the custody of an Italian citizen, on the basis of a provision adopted by an authority of the foreigner’s country. The duration of this permit is equal to the duration of the entry visa, while a renewed permit will last twice long;
- for *sports*, based on the number of participants allowed each year jointly by the Ministry for Public Goods and Cultural Activities upon proposal and approval by other agencies;

- for *religious purposes*;
- for *chosen residence*, which allows the holders to settle in Italy;
- for *mission (long term)*, which allows non-EU nationals to reside in Italy for a pre-determined period of more than 90 days;
- for *apprenticeship (long-term)*, which allows non-EU nationals to take up training or apprenticeship; at end of the apprenticeship, the foreigner may be employed for the corresponding occupation only;
- for *family reunification* (short or long term, depending on the residence permit of the relative migrant), which allows access to health assistance, unemployment list, education, employment and self-employment activities;
- for *family reasons*, which allows the migrant to accompany an Italian, EU or a foreign family member for a long-term stay in Italy or the husband/wife to reside with his/her spouse, providing the same conditions of permit;
- for *study*, provided to attend courses or carry out research activities and conferring the possibility of work for a maximum of 20 hours per week;
- for *social protection*, issued to victims of trafficking in human beings for an initial duration of six months and the possibility of extension, if necessary, to one year or more, as proposed by the social services, local government bodies or associations and in respect of several conditions such as the person's situation of danger and the acceptance of the measures by the foreigner as well as the structure involved in the integration programme. These permits allow access to assistance and social services, education, unemployment lists as well as allowing the applicant to work and may be converted to another reason;
- for *extraordinary measures*, which may be issued for natural events or as a measure of temporary protection in the case of exceptional political events occurring in non-EU countries;
- for *seasonal work*, valid for periods varying from 20 days to 9 months;
- for *self-employment*, issued for a maximum of two years;
- for *employment*, issued on the basis of a working contract, upon guarantee of the employer of the availability of adequate accommodation and payment of the employees return trip expenses.

In addition to the permits, the *residence card (carta di soggiorno)* authorizes long-term residence in Italy (for an indefinite period of time). This card is issued to migrants who have resided in Italy for at least six years through a residence permit, which may be renewed in perpetuity, provided proof can be provided that the individual possesses sufficient financial means. The residence card is subject to validation, upon request of the person concerned, within ten years of the date of issue. It is valid as a document of personal identification for not more than five years from date of issue or renewal. The residence card may be issued to the spouse and minor children or to the parents living with an Italian or EU national. In addition, the spouse and minor children of a migrant already holding a residence card may be issued the same document, provided there is proof of sufficient financial means.

3.3 Census database

3.3.1 Name and date of the last census

14° Censimento Generale della Popolazione e delle Abitazioni (14th General Population Census and General Housing Census)

Reference date: 21 October 2001

3.3.2 Persons included in the Census enumeration

- usually resident persons, regardless of their enrolment in the municipality population register or not;
- not usually resident persons (i.e. those who work, study in a commune for a more or less prolonged periods, although not usually resident, and those who at census time were found as visitors in a dwelling different from their usual residence, including foreign citizens usually resident abroad).

Census results are used by ISTAT for establishing the legally resident population and must be used by each municipality to update the *Anagrafe* and AIRE.

3.3.3 Questions relevant for migration included in the Census

The 2001 Census collected information on:

- place of birth
- current citizenship, including information on way of acquisition (by birth or naturalization) and previous citizenship
- place of presence on census reference date
- place of usual residence one year before the census