Country: ITALY
Key Policy Issues Paper*

1. Specific Issues

Common European Asylum System (CEAS)
Key policy issue 1: **Reception capacity and conditions for asylum seekers**

Italy experiences serious overcrowding of its reception system. Italy's reception capacity is 7000 places, with additional places provided through Civil Protection for emergencies. Asylum seekers intake varied between 10.000 and 30.000 in the last years. The places available are therefore insufficient to cater for structural needs, and the capacity to respond to sudden peaks in asylum applications (Arab Spring) is very limited. The distribution of competencies is not totally clear and there are varying standards across Italy's asylum system, comprising the "regional" system (SPRAR) and the "national" centres (CARA), depending on the geographical location of the centre, which reveals a limited nationwide capacity to monitor and ensure standardized quality of the services provided. This is also reflected in varying screening practices and capacities to identify vulnerabilities at an early stage of the process.

Although exposed to peaks in the influx of asylum seekers, with a very large coast line and territories prone to sudden arrivals, Italy does not have an adequate monitoring mechanism and contingency planning, to ensure that the country is ready to provide adequate assistance to asylum seekers if/when such influxes occur.

Desired outcome:

- Adequate reception conditions ensured to all asylum applicants, including under Dublin procedures.
- Development of a flexible reception system, easily adaptable to situations of sudden arrivals.
- Setting up of a structured screening system to allow identification of vulnerabilities at the early stages of the asylum process, including age assessment, and catering for the specific needs of these vulnerable categories.
- Setting up of a system to monitor the standards and capacity (ensuring constantly updated information on the possible gaps and necessary adaptation to current or future constraints)..
- Establishment of national contingency planning for possible influx of large number of asylum seekers.

Comments from the Member State: The survey carried out by the European Commission will be updated soon. In fact, by the end of December 2013 reception places will be increased up to 11,000 units.

In addition, as of 2014, in view of the increasing migration pressure that led to the complete absorption of the initial reception capacity of the national system, we intend to create a new model aimed at standardizing the current reception systems for applicants/beneficiaries of international protection (government centres and local authorities' projects), by incorporating them into a single "widespread" reception system through the expansion of the SPRAR (Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees) which is scheduled to provide 16,000 places.

In this regard, it should be noted that on 4th September the call for tender "SPRAR 2014-2016" was published with the intent to expand – to the extent specified above – the maximum accommodation capacity of the system. In order to improve the flexibility of the reception system, the new call "SPRAR 2014-2016" will immediately make available new reception places in case of sudden increases in migration flows. The call also envisages services specifically intended for vulnerable categories. As from now we can specify that the total amount of the financial resources required for the enlargement of reception places is estimated at approximately EUR 600 million.

The goal of the implementation of a new reception model, and the related increase in the number of reception places, in the seven-year period from 2014 to 2020, will be pursued through the following:

- enlargement of reception centres' capacity by expanding the existing structures and/or restructuring available buildings;

- development of a flexible reception system, with the involvement of regional and local governments, through the creation of reception centres aimed at short-term reception *("hubs")* in close coordination with the SPRAR projects, for housing asylum seekers as quickly as possible;

- strengthening of the existing screening and profiling system – already implemented with the *"Praesidium"* project – allowing the identification of potential vulnerabilities and a corresponding expansion of the reception capacity and the appropriate catering for the specific needs of vulnerable categories (unaccompanied minors, asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking, single women, families with children);

- setting up of a system allowing to assess the age of the child, by promoting a holistic and multidisciplinary identification approach uniformly applied throughout the national territory;

- improved monitoring of existing standards and management skills as well as procedures for monitoring compliance with them also through the creation of specific inspection mission teams;

- improved dialogue between the computer systems used by the various reception and integration structures for a better governance of migration. This new procedure would also increase the efficiency of transfer of individuals from the first to the second reception through a mapping and tracking of the various phases of migrants' reception and integration in the country.

As regards the establishment of a national contingency planning for the possible influx of a large number of asylum seekers, it is recalled that the development of this instrument is one of the results to be achieved under the EASO Special Support Plan to Italy and that adequate resources are needed for the elaboration of an emergency manual, the training of institutional operators involved in emergency activities and the standardization of procedures throughout the national territory.

Key policy issue 2:	**Quality of asylum decision making process / procedures and engagement in practical cooperation**

Italy still faces many challenges regarding the quality and speed of decision-making at administrative and judicial level. Registration of applications is often delayed, reducing access to reception conditions, asylum procedure standards at national level are not uniform, there are no uniform training standards and courses for decision makers, and central coordination by the National Commission in this regards is still quite weak. Concerns relate also to Country of Origin Information (COI) (lack of funding and no dedicated unit/system for COI information).

Italy's participation in EASO activities is so far quite low, not using the European Asylum Curriculum or the COI Portal on a regular basis. Increased cooperation with EASO and use of such tools would surely improve the quality of its decision making process and could be supported by, for instance, translating relevant EAC modules or COI resources and disseminating them at national level. Hopefully the situation will improve now that Italy signed with EASO, on 4 June 2013, a Special Support Plan.

Desired outcome:

- Establishment of a national system of continuous evaluation of the asylum procedures and assistance provided to asylum seekers.

- Improvement of the quality and speed of the asylum decision-making process, notably through improved training of Italian officials (decision makers, border guards, judges, etc.), reinforcement of COI capacity, and increased engagement in practical cooperation, notably with EASO.

Comments from the Member State: On 4th June 2013, Italy signed, with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), a Special Support Plan for the enhancement of its asylum system.

The Plan, under implementation, provides for technical and operational assistance (training sessions, thematic workshops, operational guidelines, etc.) until the end of 2014 in specifically identified areas: monitoring of asylum procedures and strengthening of data analysis capacity, reinforcement of COI capacity, in-depth training as to Dublin procedures, monitoring of the reception system, emergency management.

Activities will start on 7th October 2013 with the measure relating to the support of the Dublin Unit. Three experts from EASO will be hosted for two weeks by the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration to learn more about the Italian system as well as to establish a training programme. The other measures envisaged will follow at close intervals.

As regards the training needs, it is stated that:

- The Plan also includes specific training for the ordinary courts (the relevant High School has already started its activities as a result of direct contacts with EASO, and on 30th August published a notice for the selection of the first sixteen judges who will participate in a special seminar to be held in October (two more seminars are scheduled at a later stage in Malta).

- An amendment will be shortly made to the Plan, allowing the translation by EASO of an EAC (European Asylum Curriculum) module concerning the "Interview techniques", that will be addressed to all institutional actors, including judges.

Since training activities, in order to be effective, must be permanent and achieve all the institutional players in the field of asylum, we intend to facilitate the access to the training provided by EASO through:

- the translation into Italian of the EAC modules (excluding the one relating to the interview techniques, which -

as stated above - will be translated by EASO);

- the organization of training initiatives, both central and decentralized, throughout the territory.

For the implementation of the above-mentioned actions, we intend to employ the resources available under the Asylum and Migration Fund.

Moreover, in order to increase the transparency of the decision-making process as well as to protect the rights of asylum seekers, we deem it necessary to further support the ongoing activities of the National Commission on Asylum and the Territorial Commissions for the Recognition of International Protection (for example, with regard to the increase in the number of foreign languages and dialects into which the decisions are translated; the development and implementation of mechanisms for assessing the procedures applied by the Territorial Commissions).

Integration of third country nationals (including beneficiaries of international protection)

Key policy issue 3: **Continuing efforts towards integration of third-country nationals**

Integration measures are necessary due to the fact that, in general, Third Country Nationals (TCN) can be disadvantaged in terms of access to services, facilities or to the labour market, including as a result of lack of information and tools available to them and to the organisations and bodies they are in contact with.

The unemployment rate of TCN in Italy was 14,1% in 2012, which corresponds to EU average. Between 2011 and 2012 there was a significant decrease of TCN employment in manufacturing activities, with an increase of in the tertiary sector and in the agriculture. 52% of TCN are women. Family reunification, together with high rates of employment of female TCN's in the homecare and healthcare sectors, are the main reasons for such strong increase in recent years of female TCN. The majority (54,8%) of TCN's residing in Italy belong to low educated segments of their country of origin. However, even those with high skills also often face difficulties in having their qualifications and skills recognized: as a result, the potential contribution of highly skilled TCN's to fill the skill gaps in the labour market is severely underexploited.

Another challenge is the high number of TCNs amongst early school leavers (41%). Although this might have several reasons, early school leaving is strongly linked to social disadvantage and low education backgrounds; it is part of a process which often starts in primary education with first experiences of failure and alienation from school.

There is also scope for improving the perception of legally residing TCN's in general, including asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection.

Desired outcome:

- In accordance with the European Agenda for Integration pursue the implementation of policies promoting the integration of third-country nationals, including beneficiaries of international protection.

- Facilitation of TCN access to the labour market, notably through actions such as pre-departure training in the country of origin, information on job and study opportunities, retraining courses,

- skills recognition and better skills matching, promotion of entrepreneurship, as well as more diversity-friendly and TCN-sensitive employment services, with particular regard to women.

- Improvement of the effectiveness of orientation mechanisms for the choice of upper secondary education by young people with TCN background, with a view to making these services more sensitive to the specificities of such component of the school population and thereby reducing the risk of indirect discrimination and early school leaving.

- While maintaining, as appropriate, a horizontal approach at the national level, particular attention should be paid to regional and local approaches, strengthening the involvement and capacities of local authorities and the cooperation between competent public bodies, NGOs and other actors.

Comments from the Member State: First of all, it is necessary to highlight the changing phase determined by the impact of economic crisis on the employment of foreign nationals staying in Italy, which resulted in an increase in the number of unemployed people also among the long-term residents with dependant families, who are exposed to the risk of losing their possibility of staying in the national territory.

This situation also resulted in the compression of new-labor input requirements and has limited the labor market requirements to a more selected and qualified workforce.

In the meantime, the entries for family reasons have increased, so that the reunification has become the first item among the reasons to obtain a residence permit. These categories require specific actions for integration, even with regard to their families.

Another phenomenon that has assumed a great importance in our country is that of the second generations and the need to offer good opportunities to migrants to be integrated firstly in the school system and then in the social and job environment.

In this new context, it is essential to increase the systemic impact of the interventions overcoming some difficulties, such as in particular the extra fragmentation of the interventions carried out so far and the difficult long-term sustainability of the experiments financed without a new public support.

With reference to the future planning, special attention should be paid to the following aspects:
- the use of funds of different nature, but complementary;
- the consolidation of forms of governance aimed at strengthening cooperation between the different institutions and with the association operators and private social organizations, in particular through the sharing of information and monitoring systems , the qualification of the actors and operators involved and the divulgation of best practices at the local level;
- the assessment of the sustainability of the interventions at the end of the financing;
- the time duration of the interventions: the annual basis, in fact, produces a concentration of efforts on the administrative and bureaucratic aspects to the detriment of the quality of the actions (allocation of resources, implementation of the interventions, reporting).

With reference to the methodology to be followed to achieve the integration of migrants, including asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, we intend to extend to other areas the model already implemented during the previous management of the European Integration Fund with "Regional Plans for language training and civic education", promoted through a full cooperation between the central government and the regions. In fact, such a model has ensured the involvement of all the institutional and non-institutional actors engaged in this context (ministries concerned, Regions, Regional Education Offices, Permanent Local Centers, local authorities, sector associations, etc.), optimizing the skills in a logic of network intervention, participated and shared in all the phases.

We stress, however, that the effective promotion of the integration process requires a specific attention to the mainstreaming issue and the coordination of services. In particular, the areas of intervention in which it is necessary to provide adequate services are manifold and often complementary (language training, improvement of public services, school, employment, fight

against discrimination, etc.).

As regards the pre-departure training in the country of origin, the evolution of the labor market, mentioned above, requires more selected and qualified inflows for work purposes and has to shape more integrated training modules in the countries of origin, as well as activities for integration in the host countries, in order to improve people capacity to settle in and adapt themselves, while they are trying to reach new experiences of life and work.

Concerning the access facilitation to the labor market of third-country nationals, it is necessary to support the empowerment of migrants by strengthening and qualifying their skills for a positive inclusion in the Italian social and working fabric. Therefore, we intend to improve the professional skills of migrant workers through targeted information services, orientation, tutoring, enhancement of informal skills and job accompanying measures for vulnerable targets.

The effects of the employment crisis produce again job insecurity and, consequently, the family vulnerability, even for long-term residents, as already pointed out above. These crucial problems have to be highlighted, in order to facilitate the access to active labor market policies promoted in the territory, as well as the social and assistance services aimed at guaranteeing the individual and family income. For these purposes it is also necessary to reorganize and strengthen the information systems related to the job-flows, in order to monitor the unemployment basins of foreign nationals, facilitating the implementation of specific actions of active labor-market policies and social welfare support.

These actions will produce the mobilization of the labor services and private-social associations (particularly the Unions) in order to organize the necessary response.

We will also promote actions for enhancing employability of migrants and their level of professional qualification; special attention will be devoted to the assistance services to persons that have a high level of undeclared work and under-employment, with a particular impact on female employment. In this area the programme promoted in the last two years, in agreement with the Regions, will be enhanced with the aim of spreading a network of services to join labor demand/offer, to facilitate families in the management of labor relationships, to organize the qualification for the operators and human resources involved. It is also necessary to support actions complementary to the implementation of the Italian government National Strategy, promoted in collaboration with the regional and local authorities, in order to support the employability of third-country nationals in a position of greater vulnerability, with particular reference to those who have a residence permit for humanitarian reasons. The latter should follow a sustainable path for social and job integration. It is also important to organize orientation courses for people arrived in Italy after family reunification, who actively declare to seek a job. Specific interventions should also be outlined for those foreigners involved in the fight against undeclared work who can continue to stay regularly in the country. Concerning in general the financing of interventions of social integration, we intend to carry out complementary actions of labor and social integration, also jointly using the allocated financial sources.

As for the policies promoting the integration of third country nationals, including the beneficiaries of international protection, the following areas of intervention are of primary importance:

- Language training: we intend to strengthen the offer of language training services and civic education, promoted through an action financed by the European Fund for Integration and promoted since 2011 in cooperation with the MIUR (Ministry of Education, University and Research) and the network of the Regions and autonomous Provinces, through the implementation of "Regional Plans for language training and civic education targeting the third-country nationals". This action aimed at creating a whole system at the national level has ensured the realization of interventions corresponding to the specificities of each territory and consistent with the quality standards shared at the national level. All this was achieved through a homogeneous action. The large number of beneficiaries concerned and the extension of the network of actors involved, both public and private, has qualified this model as a positive one. It is, therefore, a good practice to

support and enhance, in a context of sustainability, avoiding risks of fragmentation and/or dispersion of the programmed policies and services. In the light of the merging of the previous funds, an element of harmonization shall be the possibility to extend this model of intervention also to those foreign nationals who hold an international protection status.

- Access to services: we aim at ensuring a better access to the services targeting the third-countries nationals, promoting the definition and provision of minimum standard services recognized throughout the national territory ("Essential Levels of Service"). To this end, it is necessary to standardize, even on a regional basis, network services for linguistic and intercultural mediation, to ensure quality, consistency and sustainability. With the aim of improving the ordinary offer of public services targeting third country nationals and to ensure the sustainability of the interventions, actions must be developed in order to strengthen the capacity building of Public Administrations, through training, retraining and internal qualification.

The possibility to finance a package of services at "standard costs" can make the administrative action more tangible and effective, by reducing the dispersion of economic resources used in side-activities not directly targeted at migrants.

- Fight against discrimination: the possibility of effectively influencing the fight against discrimination is reinforced by interventions carried out both on a cultural and administrative level. Firstly, we intend to promote a culture of inclusion and acceptance, facilitating the inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue, the mutual understanding and acceptance between host societies and immigrant communities. Secondly, we intend to ensure equal treatment to the third country nationals when they have access to services, through the training of the administrative personnel and the development of local networks between actors and institutions in order to detect, monitor and combat such phenomena and encourage their claims. The identification of the actions described above originates from the results achieved in the period 2007-2013 and from the activity of consultation and confrontation promoted in this period between Responsible Authorities, Central Government, Regional and Local Governments. In view of a greater effectiveness of the orientation mechanisms for choosing the type of upper secondary education (as indicated by the EU Commission), we underline that, while recognizing the importance of implementing orientation services aimed at countering the phenomenon of premature school leaving and drop-outs (which significantly affect the foreign minors who have access to secondary school), it is important to consolidate the overall quality of teaching according to a logic tailored to the foreign users and to ensure a system which accompanies foreign students, providing for particular services such as:

- Support and orientation;
- Linguistic - cultural mediation;
- Orientation to choose the field of study;
- Support to the method of study;
- Tutoring;
- Psychological counseling;
- Support for school learning and Italian language;
- Teacher training, etc. . . .

As regards the general policies for the integration of third-country nationals, it is considered a priority to establish a permanent network resulting from a stable cooperation among the competent institutions, private and social operators and enterprises, in order to give each migrant, regularly staying in our territory, the opportunity to build a customized project for job and social inclusion. The territorial impact of the integration cannot ignore forms of national co-ordination to ensure the uniformity of the offered services, by reducing the existing differences between the places for people reception and the creation of job demand. To this end, it is necessary to prioritize the interventions financed by different funds, as it is essential to combine actions aimed at taking charge of people and building their social and job path, by promoting access to training and professional opportunities and incentives for recruitment.

With regard to the integration of beneficiaries of international protection, also on the basis of the lessons learned from the 2008-2013 ERF, it is necessary:

- To improve the living conditions of asylum seekers and the services offered, standardize and improve the quality of existing services, integrate the services with additional initiatives for job and social orientation taking account of the personal history and skills each asylum seeker and implementing steps for the training of the reception center operators;

- To promote greater sustainability and effectiveness of linguistic, social and motivational integration path for the asylum seekers, with the involvement of regional and local authorities in complementary paths concerning reception and support for integration, in view of their stay in the national territory.

In particular, we intend to promote personalized interventions aimed at reaching residential and socio-economic autonomy of the beneficiaries of international protection (orientation pursued in the 2013 ERF with actions targeting at the holders of international protection, with a view to complement the reception phases) through:

- Personalized actions aimed at housing integration such as: the creation of an integrated Reception system creating a network among all the actors involved, in order to build a structured process of reception and facilitate the autonomy of the holders of international protection, thus ensuring the passage of migrants from the system of widespread reception (as outlined above) to independent housing solutions; the promotion of forms of independent housing (i.e. individual contracts of lease) or even innovative/alternative host systems (i.e. co-housing , social housing) with the support of Integrated Services and local authorities.

-Personalized interventions aiming the socio-economic integration, through actions for achieving independence, autonomy and economic stability, to be implemented according to the actions outlined above.

Unaccompanied minors

Key policy issue 4:   **Assistance to unaccompanied minors**

Italy is amongst the EU Member States receiving the highest number of unaccompanied minors (UAM). It is estimated that on 31st December 2011 the country hosted 5955 UAM.

Despite having taken several measures to address this issue, the assistance provided by Italy to UAM has still significant shortcomings in areas such as reception conditions, legal guardianship, age assessment, family tracing, education and integration.

Desired outcome:

- Improvement of reception conditions for unaccompanied minors, as well as strengthening of measures regarding legal guardianship, age assessment and family tracing. More specifically, measures should be taken to ensure appropriate care conditions in minors' centres, improve conditions of education and integration, as well as actions preparing for the moment minors reach 18, to avoid irregularity.

- Inter-institutional cooperation between the regional authorities, the Ministry of Labour, the consular authorities and NGOS and International Organisations (e.g. on family tracing), should also be reinforced.

Comments from the Member State: As regards the assistance to unaccompanied minors, we confirm that Italy is one of the EU Member States that receives the largest number of unaccompanied foreign minors (UAM).

In this regard, it should be noted that the Italian legislation recognizes high standards of protection and safeguard to minors, even when we compare the figures with those of other Member States.

Given that a "UAM" cannot be expelled, the national legislation distinguishes two categories of minors as for the reception procedures: the foreign unaccompanied minors (MSNA), as defined by the D.P.C.M. n. 535/1999 , who have not submitted an asylum application, and the unaccompanied minors who have submitted a request for international protection and /or whose status have been recognized (MSNARA).

The General Directorate for immigration and integration policies of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies is responsible for the MSNA, while the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for MSNARA. This two-faced competence, however, is overcome by the constant ongoing collaboration between the two Offices (the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of the Interior).

With the resources provided for the next seven years, we want to expand this collaboration by envisaging accompanying path and by verifying the MSNA emigration conditions in order to allow, if all the requirements are met, the transition to a protection system for the asylum applicants and checking, in collaboration with the police authorities, if they are victims of trafficking in human beings.

The social services of Municipalities are responsible for the reception and assistance of unaccompanied foreign minors, and their costs are borne by these services. In this respect, we shall recall the difficulties faced by Italy, especially in the regions and municipalities most affected by the phenomenon of landings, in managing the reception costs of MSNA. The massive concentration of MSNA in certain areas makes it difficult for the municipalities to bear the costs of the structures. Therefore, it is essential to allocate specific resources to support local authorities in the implementation of national programmes that have an impact at the local level with projects for the reception, support and integration of MSNA in the school activities and/or professional training.

Return Policy

Key policy issue 5:	**Effective return policy - Strengthening of voluntary return and establishment of an effective forced return monitoring system, improvement of return procedures and detention conditions**

Complying with fundamental rights standards and guaranteeing a dignified return procedure are core aspects of EU return policy. Voluntary return is the most humane, efficient and cost-effective method for returning irregularly staying third country nationals. Hence, the use of voluntary return should be given preference over forced return measures. Italy's return policy is still strongly focused on forced return. Renewed efforts to use voluntary return schemes should be made, including support to reintegration in countries of origin .

Italy's return procedures also have some shortcomings: for instance, it does not always provide translations of return decisions in a language the returnee is reasonably supposed to understand. There is also a need to improve conditions in Italy's detention centres.

There is also a need to strengthen its forced return monitoring system. Although Italy has formally created a monitoring body ("*Comitato per il Coordinamento e il Monitoraggio*"), its practical use does not seem satisfactory and effective enough to ensure compliance with the standards imposed by the Return Directive.

Desired outcome:

- Stronger commitment from Italy to use voluntary returns, including provision of information on the programmes and conditions of return and promotion of reintegration measures in the countries of origin.

- Improvement of return procedures and living conditions in the detention centres, in full conformity with the Return Directive.

- Ensuring efficiency and credibility of the forced return monitoring system.

Comments from the Member State: In line with the EU policies, Italy shares the objective of giving preference to voluntary return over forced return measures and, in this respect, is already making considerable organizational efforts. It agrees, in any case, on the need for a more incisive and synergistic action aimed at achieving more satisfactory results and further improving return procedures.

It is believed, however, that the main problem remains the reintegration of returnees in the social fabric of their country of origin. This question cannot be resolved without a change in their conditions and life prospects in the countries of origin. In this perspective, the Italian action might be more successful as part of an overall European strategy, focusing at both political and operational level - even with the contribution of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - on the development of the dialogue with third countries and the involvement of all Member States.

In line with the activities carried out in the 2007-2013 programming period and in consideration of the results achieved, the need has arisen to continue with the strengthening of the Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) and the reintegration in the country of origin, as well as the support to forced return measures. In particular, it is considered a priority:

• the promotion of the use of AVR through:

- the implementation of targeted institutional information campaigns in metropolitan areas where there is a greater presence of potential users of AVR and the publication of notices and information about Assisted Voluntary Returns on free daily newspapers and on public transport vehicles;

- the awareness-raising of local authorities, institutions (prefectures and police stations) and the third sector;

• the strengthening of the Assisted Voluntary Return and the reintegration of returnees in their country of origin, in view of the limited adhesion to return projects without reintegration, envisaging only a small pre-

departure subsidy (EUR 200-400);

• the development, in the context of AVR operations, of adequate personalized reintegration plans through individual reintegration projects envisaging assistance in the country of origin. Measures are also needed to support returnees' housing accommodation (e.g. paying the rent for the first months), education and vocational training (e.g. contributing to the payment of registration fees and granting a subsidy during the courses), as well as to support the start-up of businesses (e.g. through specific training, or other kinds of contributions);

• the involvement of and collaboration with the institutional actors in the country of origin, also with the active participation of the MFA, in order to optimize both the identification of potential recipients and the necessary procedures for migrants' return and reintegration;

• the support for forced return operations and assistance to the relevant *de jure* authorities, also through the implementation of scheduled or joint flights in the context of FRONTEX operations, as well as the upgrading of skills of security operators through training and refresher courses.

Internal security

Key policy issue 6:   **Drug trafficking**

According to the most recent EU drug markets report, Italy remains a significant European transit and consumer point for illegal drugs. It is the only country after Turkey and the UK repeatedly reporting annual seizures in excess of a ton in the period 2001–2009, which makes it the second largest seizing country in the EU.

Heroin from Southwest Asian arrives from transit routes in the Middle East and the Balkans, while cocaine enters Italy directly from South America or through the Iberian Peninsula en route to the rest of Europe. In addition to heroin and cocaine, trafficking in synthetic drugs, hashish, and marijuana are also an issue of major concern**.**

Building on the successful actions Italy has taken, special attention should continue to be paid to this issue given the size of Italy's market for drugs and its high sensitivity as a country of transit and destination, and to keep pace with the increasingly sophisticated methods of drug trafficking networks.

Desired outcome:
• Increased number of seizures, prosecutions and convictions.

• Enhanced cooperation with other EU Member States and EU agencies, with increased flow of information to Europol.

Comments from the Member State: We broadly agree with the Commission's analysis.
Italy will be committed, also in the coming years, to ensure an ever more effective countering activity aimed at combating the main routes of drug trafficking and the related financial flows as well as hindering drug spread and marketing strategies, whose purpose is to facilitate the access to narcotic drugs by users.
The strategy adopted in this sector focuses on the implementation of a series of actions, namely:
1) training courses, even at a distance, for Italian and Foreign Police Forces, aimed at training agents for "undercover" activities and favouring the harmonization of Member countries' operational procedures

and the implementation of special operations;

2) development of software/hardware aimed at preventing and combating online advertising and marketing of drugs;

3) training in investigative techniques aimed at combating online drug trafficking;

4) technological enhancement of the activities aimed at identifying and combating transnational drug trafficking;

5) use of drones to locate illegal drug crops;

6) monitoring, in the EU Member States, of the use of animals as drug mules.

Key policy issue 7:	**Trafficking in human beings**

According to the latest (April 2013) Eurostat statistical report on trafficking in human beings (THB) covering the years 2008-2010, most victims, in absolute numbers, have been identified in Italy (2.381 in 2010). On the other hand, the number of police investigations on suspected traffickers decreased over the years, from 541 in 2008 to 360 in 2009 (no data available for 2010). Compared to other EU MS, a relatively low number (around 15%) of the traffickers have Italian citizenship. Italy reported a very low number of convictions for traffickers in human beings: 4 in 2008 and 17 in 2009 (no data for 2010).

The Commission recently held a survey within the context of the national rapporteur meeting on national policy initiatives. According to its reply, Italy has not (yet) established a national rapporteur or equivalent mechanism, has not developed a comprehensive national strategy or action plan on THB (but informed it is working on a National Action Plan) or established a national referral mechanism for the identification and referral of victims. Furthermore, Italy has not carried out regular assessments and evaluations of policy or legislation on THB, although it has evaluated specific elements with EU funding.

Building on the actions Italy has taken, special attention should continue to be paid to addressing trafficking in human beings, given its size and high sensitivity as a country both of destination and transit (due to its location) of THB.

Desired outcome:

- Increased number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions of human traffickers.

- Reduce demand in all forms of trafficking in human beings.

- Develop and implement a comprehensive national strategy or action plan, enhance the collection of data and reporting at national level.

- Enhanced cooperation and training between the different actors, including police, labour inspectors, immigration and asylum officials, border guards, trade unions, NGOs, etc.

- Develop a national referral mechanism for better identification and referral of victims of trafficking in human beings, including addressing re-integration and return of victims.

- Enhanced cooperation with other EU Member States and EU agencies, with increased flow of information to Europol.

Comments from the Member State: The trafficking in human beings is a cross-cutting issue that involves the expertise of various institutional players, primarily the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration and the Department of Public Security of the Ministry of the Interior.

In particular, the Ministry of the Interior will promote concerted actions with other relevant institutional bodies (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Department for Equal

Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council), according to the following guidelines:
1. Prevention: monitoring of the implementation of the European Directive on seasonal workers. The seasonal work, especially in some sectors such as agriculture, construction and personal services, often provides the breeding ground for exploitation and trafficking in persons.
2. Protection: promotion of an integrated approach to mixed flows, starting from an analysis of the possible interrelations between the asylum and human trafficking, taking into account the potential similarity of vulnerabilities and the need for more accurate identification mechanisms that consider human trafficking as a cross-cutting risk lurking in any unplanned mobility phenomenon.
3. Law enforcement activity: promotion of the European Directive on the confiscation and recovery of criminal assets as a remedial measure not only at the individual level, but also at the level of the civil community.
4. International Partnership : promotion of a collaborative approach based on the principle of "shared responsibility" between countries of origin, transit and destination, both within the EU and at the external borders. This concept should be promoted in a cut-crossing manner with respect to all the issues mentioned above.

In addition, the victims of trafficking, falling under the category of "vulnerable", can benefit from all the projects relating to the socio-economic integration and rehabilitation as well as from AVR projects envisaging reintegration in the country of origin. It is therefore necessary to promote:
• victims' escape from situations of exploitation by offering contact, listening and reception spaces;
• sustainable social rehabilitation programmes so as to reduce the risk of falling back into exploitation situations;
• enhancement of the network of institutional actors and of the third sector working with victims of trafficking, also through the involvement of the social and health services in order to create pathways for inclusion;
• higher level of personal independence and full social and employment inclusion of beneficiaries. As regards the socio-economic inclusion, the following actions are considered priorities:
- protection of the individual (health care, psychological support, legal aid, and other consulting services);
- housing care;
- training (language and computer literacy, vocational training courses);
- activities aimed at facilitating inclusion in the labour market (work-study initiatives, work placements, etc.);
- the reactivation of the national freephone helpline for the victims of human trafficking.
It is deemed appropriate to use, in the field of human trafficking, also part of the financial allocations under the Internal Security Fund and, in this perspective, more efforts will be made, in line with the objectives identified by the Commission and with the development of the national initiatives already undertaken.
In this regard, it should be noted that Italy has developed a "National Anti-Trafficking Plan", worked out by a technical committee set up within the Ministry for Equal Opportunities at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, which is about to be approved. After the adoption, the reference National Authority for the fight against human trafficking will be appointed.
Moreover, even in the absence of a national mechanism for the identification and assistance to victims, there is an established system of "best practices" based on a series of projects involving the National Anti-Mafia Directorate and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). These projects are aimed not only at identifying the phenomenon, but also at offering an appropriate assistance to victims of human trafficking.
In addition, Italy ensures a constant exchange of information with Third countries of origin and transit, NGOs and the relevant international organizations, as well as the transmission to the Europol Information System (EIS) of the data available in this regard.

We must point out that the low number of convictions for traffickers in human beings reported by Italy – as emphasised by the Commission – is not so different from that of other European countries.

At the bilateral level, Italy has developed good co-operation with Romania, Albania and Libya, and has started a pilot project for investigative activities with Nigeria, with the secondment of Nigerian police officers.

Finally, in the cooperation agreements with many Third countries affected by this phenomenon, Italy has inserted the offence of the fight against trafficking in human beings in the list of illegal activities to be countered.

Key policy issue 8:	**Lack of progress in the implementation of the CBRN Action Plan and Action Plan on the Enhancement of Security of Explosives**

Italy is not using the exchange information systems SCEPYLT[1] and EWS[2], it has a limited participation in the EBDS[3], and it is not involved in the "Lead Country" initiatives[4].

Also, Italy has not submitted yet the updated scoreboards for the CBRN Action Plan Progress Report and, according to an assessment made by the Atlas Cooperation Network, it has insufficient CBRN response capability.

Desired outcome:

- Active usage of SCEPYLT and EWS as well as active participation in the EBDS community.

- Involvement, as a driving force, in the "lead country" initiatives.

- Ability to tackle small-scale CBRN incidents; ability to cooperate with neighbours.

Comments from the Member State: While endorsing the objectives set, we would prefer to reformulate the sentence "Italy has insufficient CBRN response capability", and replace it with an expression that underlines the need to improve such capability in order to tackle small-scale incidents and operate in coordination with the neighbouring countries in the event of a crisis.
It is worth mentioning, however, the initiative launched by the Ministry of the Interior - through the Department of Fire Fighters, Public Rescue and Civil Defence - in conjunction with the University of Rome "Tor Vergata", consisting of a project aimed at training qualified operators, both private and from Public Administration, in the field of CBRN.

---

[1] SCEPYLT - Explosives Control and Protection System to Prevent and Fight against Terrorism - is aimed at facilitating approvals to transfer explosives across borders within the EU through electronically issuing transfer permits, and is based on Commission Decision 2010/347. The information system is currently used by six Member States, namely Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, France and Portugal.

[2] EWS - Early Warning System – has been ready for use by Member States since 2010 and is aimed at exchanging information on immediate cross-border threats related to the theft, loss or misuse of explosives, firearms and CBRN materials. One Member State and Europol are currently connected to it.

[3] EBDS - European Bomb Data System – is currently accessible by 25 Member States as well as Norway (which was granted access to the system after the July 2011 attacks in Oslo) and Europol though with a varied level of activity and contributions. The system is aimed at information and intelligence exchange about technical data concerning explosives and CBRN materials as well as incidents, trends and devices. Since its launch in 2010, Europol has been managing and funding the information system.
Setting-up of the EWS and the EBDS are the first two horizontal actions of the Action Plans on the Security of Explosives.

[4] With a view to a more active implementation of the EU CBRN Action Plan as well as the EU Action Plan on Enhancing the Security of Explosives, the European Commission has invited Member States to sign up as lead countries for actions they deem as a priority and the implementation of which they are ready to coordinate. Such lead country actions should comprise several Member States in the core group and should have an impact on a wide number of EU Member States.

Key policy issue 9:	**Anti-corruption policy - Risks in the area of public procurement, notably at regional/local level**

Italy's public sector manages resources equal to about 55% of Italy's GDP. Infrastructure is, for its size, one of the sectors most prone to corruption, drawing the attention of organised criminal groups. Corruption returns in Italy seem to occur mostly in the post-contract award phase: recent research suggests that only 20% of the Italian public works assigned between 2000 and 2005 were completed. The Court of Auditors often noted that, although the public procurement process is in general correct, the quality of deliverables is intentionally compromised at the execution phase.

Italian authorities are paying increased attention to this issue, having adopted new legislation such as the one on traceability of funds in public procurement, promoting new projects to trace financial transactions and prevent infiltration of mafia groups, and increasing the capacity of the Committee for Coordination of High Surveillance of Large Public Works. Further measures were included in the new anti-corruption bill (i.e. publication online by all administrations of the annual accounts and balance sheets and the broken down costs of public works and services).

Desired outcome:

- Implementation of the new anti-corruption bill provisions on ensuring uniform transparency standards for public procurement, including at regional/local level.

- Increased transparency and more effective checks (pre and post award) on public procurement.

- Adequate training of staff, at both management/leadership and technical level on ethical and integrity aspects, as well as on identification of corruption risks and vulnerable areas.

- Developed whistle-blower protection mechanisms for reporting corrupt practices, including at regional/local level.

- Enhanced cooperation among local administration, external control mechanisms and law enforcement for an effective prevention and detection of corrupt practices.

Comments from the Member State: The Commission desired outcome seems to be in line with the Italian legislation (Act No. 190 of 6 November 2012 "Anti-corruption Act" issued to implement article 6 of the UN Convention against Corruption, as adopted by the UN General Assembly on 31 October 2003 and ratified by Act No. 116 of 3 August 2009, and articles 20 and 21 of the Criminal Convention against Corruption done in Strasbourg on 27 January 1999.

Said Act establishes the national Anti-corruption Authority (Committee for the assessment, transparency and integrity of public departments under section 13 of Legislative Decree No. 150 of 27 October 2009). In particular, said Committee monitors and controls the implementation and effectiveness of the measures adopted by public departments, as well as the respect in their administrative activity of the transparency rules envisaged by the existing provisions. The administrative activity is carried out by requesting information, acts and documents to public departments and through the authority to order the adoption of acts or measures required by the anti-corruption plans and by the transparency rules, i.e. by eliminating behaviours or acts conflicting with the a.m. transparency plans and rules.

The political body within each public department identifies the person responsible for preventing corruption usually among the permanent first level senior officials, who:

- Checks the effective implementation of the anti-corruption plan and its adequacy and proposes its

amendment when significant violations of the relevant rules are ascertained or changes occur in the department organization or activity;

- Checks, in concert with the competent senior official, the concrete job rotation in the offices in charge of the activities with a higher corruption risk;

- Identifies the personnel to be included in training programmes.

In this connection, the <u>Italian Ministry of the Interior intends</u> to pursue the Commission desired outcome through its own countering strategy aimed, inter alia, at realizing a <u>European anti-mafia operational network to prevent and combat infiltration of mafia-like organized crime in public contracts and in the legal economy</u>.

This initiative is in line of continuity with the projects already started in this framework (Project CAPACI – Creation of Automated Procedures against Criminal Infiltration in Public Contracts), also in order to standardize the relevant rules in member States' legislation, and implement initiatives in the sector of public works and contracts for the monitoring of all phases of the procurement procedure and works execution.

Key policy issue 10:	**Develop financial investigation in all serious and organised crime cases to dismantle criminal networks, provide prosecutable evidence before the judge, develop monitoring and detection tools and trace criminal assets**

Italy needs to implement the new Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards. Most particularly, given penetration of the licit economy by organised crime, there is a general need to enhance financial investigation as a mean to support criminal investigation, in view of better detection and dismantlement of criminal networks beyond the sole front line offenders, in compliance with the interpretative note to FATF recommendation 30 and 5th cycle of mutual evaluation on financial crime and financial investigation final report recommendations, as well as the recommendations specifically made in the country report.

Furthermore, as all MS will be assessed within the FATF or MONEYVAL on their compliance with the new standards, there is a need to promote relevant actions. In 7 years from now, IT should have improved detection, investigation and prosecution capabilities so as to develop, as far as possible, a systematic financial investigation in all serious and organised crime cases.

Desired outcome:
- Ensure the opening of a financial investigation, as far as possible, in parallel to criminal investigations in all serious and organised crime cases, also by exploiting innovative investigation techniques and means.
- Significant rise in the number of financial investigations developed and increased results.

Comments from the Member State: Italy, notwithstanding the progress already achieved in this field, shares the need to further improve conformity between national standards and those envisaged by the International Financial Action Task Force. In particular, it should be highlighted that the desired outcome of 'ensuring the opening of a financial investigation, as far as possible, in parallel to criminal investigations…' appears to be limited only to criminal investigations, although 'in all serious and organised crime cases, also by exploiting innovative investigation techniques and means.'
To this regard, stress is laid on extending the scope of counteraction through a non-conviction based attack to the mafia-like organized crime illicit assets and, more in general, on considering the whole picture of the Italian anti-mafia prevention measures as an effective and consolidated administrative approach in the fight against mafias.
Therefore, the desired innovative investigation techniques should be seen in the framework of the Italian anti-mafia architecture (non-conviction based seizure and confiscation) and acquire a greater importance in light of

the European Parliament Resolution No. 2010/2309 that points out the need to improve throughout the EU territory aggression to criminal assets representing the real power of mafia-like organizations.

As an example the following operational goals are listed below:

- Strengthening of the Asset Recovery Offices (ARO) by improving communications with member countries;
- Development of the activities linked to the management of confiscated assets in order to reach priority institutional and social goals
- Setting up of an expert group, with the involvement of international organizations, for the study and subsequent development of a common international legal instrument allowing for the identification, localization, seizure, confiscation and management of criminal organizations' illicit proceeds.

Key policy issue 11:	**Weak implementation of information exchange mechanisms**

The exchange of information is the core mechanism of law enforcement cooperation in the EU. The so-called 'Swedish Initiative' and the 'Prüm Decision' are two key instruments in this area. Although the deadline for their implementation was 19 December 2008 and 26 August 2011 respectively, Italy has not yet fully implemented these legal acts. The Swedish Initiative has not yet been transposed into national law and, regarding the Prüm Decision, in spite of some recent progresses, Italian authorities are not yet operational in the areas of automated exchange of DNA, fingerprints and vehicle registration data.

Desired outcome:

- Full implementation of the Prüm Decision (2008/615/JHA) by stepping-up investments in technical equipment and training, as well as the administrative, legal and organisational requirements for the exchange of data.
- Transposition of the Swedish Initiative (2006/960/JHA) into national law and integration of its provisions into the workflow processes of relevant Italian authorities.
- Assessment of possibilities to establish a comprehensive and integrated national SPOC (Single Point of Contact) for international information exchange in line with EIXM[5] recommendations.

Comments from the Member State: Italy agrees on the lines of intervention identified, also considering that the detected criticalities originate mainly from financial problems which could be solved through ad hoc EU interventions.

In particular, the need is stressed to:

- Adapt the national AFIS system to the exchange of fingerprint data, as envisaged by the Prüm Decisions;
- Realize an independent disaster recovery website to protect the whole bulk of national information, and upgrade the APFIS infrastructure for the acquisition and storage of palm prints.

Border management and Schengen governance

Key policy issue 12:	**Border surveillance at sea / Development of EUROSUR**

---

[5] European Information Exchange Model, Communication COM(2012) 735 published in December 2012.

Italian maritime external borders (especially in Southern Italy) are particularly exposed to the risk of migratory flow and irregular migration. After the 2011 crisis following the Arab spring (62.682 cases of irregular migrants), the number of irregular crossings decreased dramatically in 2012 (13.261 cases) and stayed so far very limited in 2013 (1.500 cases of irregular crossing in the first quarter of 2013). However, the migratory pressure and the risk of irregular migration can be very volatile depending on the development of the international scenario, in particular on the political, social and economic situation of the Northern African countries. It is therefore essential to develop an investment plan which ensures an adequate capacity of surveillance of the external maritime borders, also considering the most advanced technology available (e.g. use of equipment to detect small boats).

The draft Regulation establishing EUROSUR (COM(2011) 873, as modified by Council and EP) foresees surveillance of the land and sea external borders, with possibility to include also air borders and checks at border crossing points. Development of EUROSUR is of particular relevance for Italy, considering the geographical position of the country. A National Coordination Centre (NCC) has been established in 2011 in the Ministry of Interior and considerably upgraded in 2012 by secondment of liaison officers from State Police, *Carabinieri*, *Guardia di Finanza*, Coast Guard and Navy. Negotiations with the Customs service are on-going.

Desired outcome:
- Setting up medium/long term strategy for the management of the maritime borders.
- Structural actions to ensure the control of the sea borders and enhance the capacity to cope with possible increase in the migratory flows/crisis situation.
- Possible deployment of adequate technology to improve border management capacities.
- Further enhancing real-time exchange and cooperation of NCC with authorities not yet fully cooperating with NCC (in particular Customs), e.g. by seconding liaison officers to NCC.
- Establishment of analysis layer of national situational picture (NSP).
- Possibility to make NCC also responsible for border checks and air border surveillance.
- Streamlining and better integrating information from the existing national surveillance systems.

Comments from the Member State: The planning general objectives in this specific field concern mainly the following:

- Consolidation of the border surveillance systems;

- Enhancement of technological infrastructures;

- Implementation of the interventions necessary for the use of the automated controls required by the European common integrated border management system;

- Launching of bilateral cooperation initiatives with third countries in order to prevent emergency situations.

In particular, as far as sea border management is concerned, the ABC (Automatic Border Control) for paper and electronic document checking is expected to be extended, including at ports, as well as the BCS (Border Control System) for persons' checking.

Moreover, Italy's particular geographic position imposes an increased effort in combating illegal immigration. In this connection, based on the experience acquired in managing emergency situations linked to the unprecedented migration flows following the serious political instability affecting North African countries in 2011, and which continues to affect some areas of this region, it is possible to infer that the prevention activity carried out by Italy through the conclusion of bilateral cooperation agreements with third countries contributed

to strengthening the external border control strategy.

Italy believes that, in order to curb this phenomenon and avoid unchecked departures, it is indispensable to adopt prevention strategies through targeted forms of cooperation with third countries aimed at combating criminal organizations profiting from migrants' smuggling. Indeed, the more effective are prevention activities, the lesser is the need to intervene on the high seas which, as is known, implies human live related high risks. This should be the goal of the projects favouring interventions of cooperation in third countries, and in particular in the Northern African countries, aimed at stimulating technical-operational capacities to counter illegal immigration, promoting conditions of development on the ground, as well as reducing migration push factors. Said interventions will concern the following:

- Temporary secondment to Italy of officials from the signatory countries' law enforcement agencies to be destined to ports, airports and the other local operational structures of the border police in order to cooperate with the Italian authorities;

- Supply of technologies and means to enhance operational capacities of the police services responsible for border controls;

- Carrying out of joint operational activities to counter migratory phenomena;

- Organization of ad hoc professional training courses for border operators of said countries.

Of priority will also be the maintenance and keeping efficiency of systems, vehicles, aircrafts and vessels, together with the acquisition of advanced technologies, also in order to improve the modalities of information exchange and processing, to make the border police offices and immigration offices' activities more effective, as well as to intensify operational cooperation with the EU countries.

The Immigration and Border Police Central Directorate entrusted with the management of the National Coordination Centre (NCC) has already established contacts with the Customs authorities to allow for information sharing and ensure a real time cooperation with the a.m. centre.

Currently, the National Coordination Centre receives all the sea border control related data. In compliance with the provisions of the specific Eurosur Regulation, in the future information on air border surveillance will also be acquired.

2. General issues

Internal security

Key policy issue 13:	**EU policy cycle on serious and organised crime - participation of Italy**

Italy has been active in the implementation of the policy cycle 2011-2013: it is a driver of 2 EMPACT[6] projects, Western Balkans (leading 1 action) and Illegal Immigration (leading 2 actions), and is also participating in 3 other EMPACT projects, respectively West Africa, Trafficking in Human Beings and Cybercrime.

Italy is concerned by all crime priorities[7] based on SOCTA recommendations (Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment by Europol) for the new policy cycle 2013-2017, most particularly: illegal immigration - where IT is a destination country -, trafficking in human beings - where IT is a destination country -, MTIC fraud, counterfeit goods - where IT is a country of distribution-, poly-drug trafficking, cybercrime and money laundering.

Desired outcome:

- Continued engagement in the policy cycle 2013 -2017, especially considering that all the priorities for this policy cycle are relevant for Italy.

- Reinforcement of national infrastructures for data collection and analysis concerning international organised crime, as well as their transmission to Europol, which are precondition for EU Member States' participation in policy cycle.

- Participation in relevant policy cycle EMPACT projects.

Comments from the Member State: Italy shares the Commission's analysis which is in line with the commitments already undertaken by our country.

Great emphasis should be placed on the activity to combat mafia-like criminal organizations and on their infiltration in the legal economy, which represents an increasing threat not only to Italy but also to many other EU countries. To this regard, of strategic importance is also the information exchange with Europol which Italy undertakes to strengthen and consolidate.

Key policy issue 14:	**Improve capabilities in the fight against cybercrime at national level and contribute to improvement at EU level**

The Commission and the High Representative have adopted a joint European Strategy for Cyber-security aiming at a safe and resilient digital environment and effective prevention and response to cybercrime, in full respect of fundamental rights and European values. The European Cyber-security Centre (EC3) has prioritised the lack of capacity to mitigate the risks of cybercrime as the main issue of

---

[6] EMPACT: European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Crime Threats. There are 8 EMPACTs overall.

[7] The new 9 priorities for the policy cycle 2013-2017 (illegal immigration, THB, cybercrime, Missing Trader Intra Community (MTIC), excise fraud, firearms, property crime, counterfeit goods, synthetic drugs production and trafficking as well as cocaine & heroin trafficking), were agreed by COSI on 17 April 2013. They are contained in the Policy Advisory Document drafted jointly by the Presidency and the Commission. They have been endorsed with the Council Conclusions by the JHA Council on 6-7 June.

concern for EU cyber-security[8].

Italy, while disposing of a quite sophisticated law enforcement authority dealing with cybercrime, suffers from a lack of general resilience and weak network and information security. On cybercrime specifically, it should foster exchange of information and cooperation between the different communities involved (including the public sector, private companies, CERTs, law enforcement and academia). Furthermore, according to the most recent Cybersecurity Eurobarometer, its citizens feel poorly informed about the dangers of cybercrime.

Desired outcome:

In line with the EU Cyber-Security Strategy:

- Enhance its network and information security and improve its resilience.

- Identify gaps and further strengthen its capability to investigate and combat cybercrime.

- Use funding to support bodies that make the link between research/academia, CERTs, law enforcement practitioners and the private sector.

- Support programmes that allow for active participation and contribution of Italy to the European Cybercrime Centre at Europol (EC3).

- Foster awareness-raising and information campaigns on cybercrime.

Comments from the Member State: Italy shares the content of the Commission's analysis. However, based on the experience acquired and in view of the future technical and social development of the network use, Italy deems it necessary to focus attention not only on the issues highlighted by the Commission, but also on the fight against all forms of on line pornography and minors' sexual exploitation – a strategy which has to be continuously updated due to the threat rapid evolution.

Key policy issue 15:   **Implementation of the EU Law Enforcement Training Scheme (LETS)**

Although it participates regularly in training activities organised by CEPOL and EUROPOL, Italy still has to develop a curriculum on basic knowledge on EU policing issues to be implemented at national level.

LETS is a new policy area. Italy should assess to what extent police officers are trained in strand 1 and 2, respectively: 1) basic knowledge on the EU policing context and 2) in depth knowledge on bilateral cooperation/instruments.

Desired outcome:

- Improve cross-border law enforcement cooperation. Improve a cross-border minded culture of law enforcement officers.

Comments from the Member State: Training of the Italian Police Forces has included for years a knowledge of the community institutions and the main EU legal rules, even if police cooperation and the opportunities by which the EU supports the collaboration between law enforcement authorities could be improved and enhanced .

In this context Italy intends to implement the European Training Scheme as a European training system aimed at improving the knowledge, abilities and values of the police personnel operating in the sector of prevention and countering of transnational criminal phenomena, thus providing them with consistent expertise and improving

---

[8]   Virtual Global Taskforce Environmental Scan 2012

their specialization and professionalism.

In this connection it seems advisable to proceed by following the four guidelines which should be at the basis of the European training system in order to build a police culture that is open and oriented to the international and European cooperation.

| Key policy issue 16: | **Radicalisation towards terrorism and violent extremism** |

Italy faces a general threat from terrorism. During 2008-2010, the number of terrorist incidents in the country numbered 18, which represents an average share (3.6%) of the total incidents in the EU during that period. Between 1990 and 2010, Italy had 96 victims of major extremist incidents. The vast majority of terrorist activity is linked to left-wing/anarchist groups (14 arrests and 5 completed/attempted attacks) and Al-Qaeda-inspired (13 arrests) terrorism. Italy is an active member of the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network (co-leading the RAN Working Group – Voice of Victims of Terrorism) and the Policy-Planners Network.

Desired outcome:

- Enhanced awareness of the phenomenon of radicalisation among frontline practitioners.

- Increased know-how to prevent, recognise and tackle the phenomenon.

- Encourage partnerships and platforms for knowledge and exchange of experience between practitioners, based on the experience of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN).

- Support initiatives challenging terrorist propaganda, including initiatives by victims of terrorism.

- Support initiatives to prevent terrorist travels.

Comments from the Member State: Italy approves, in its general lines, the analysis proposed by the Commission. The Italian strategy to prevent and fight against international terrorism is focussed, mainly, on an integrated approach of the operational response and endorses the synergic cooperation between investigative and intelligence services. From this viewpoint, international cooperation on the issue and a fruitful dialogue between the security authorities are the most effective methods to counter the transnational dimension of terrorism.

Compliance with the principles of international law and protection of human rights while combating terrorism is another fundamental principle for our country.

Italy deems the following factors to be crucial: information sharing, development of a common research and analysis, exchange of the experiences and operational methods to prevent radicalization, as well as spurring the ongoing dialogue on the development of international law to counter terrorism threat.

In this context, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of member States to prevent and combat terrorism and violent extremism by improving the exchange of information and best practices, as well as the access to the relevant data, through public-private partnerships.

In the light of this strategic framework the following lines of intervention could be followed:

- realization of projects to promote network activities, trust, mutual understanding and learning, as well as identification, exchange and spreading of know-how, experiences and good practices, information sharing, development of a common capacity to analyse terrorism and, above all, the threat posed by it;

- acquisition, use, transfer, checking and validation of new operational methodologies or technologies to support the fight against terrorism, radicalization, recruitment and violent extremism also in the penitentiary institutions, including the development of shared operational procedures which allow to detect, in the bud, the radicalization or isolation of small groups/individuals, with particular attention to the contacts with radicalised individuals of other EU countries or Third Countries;

- support to the inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue in order to increase the information flow and standardize the approach to the communities; define the pivotal principles for the identification of the most representative subjects with whom a dialogue aimed at preventing and/or countering radicalization and recruitment could be established; and train the police members responsible for the dialogue with the above mentioned representatives;

- planning of training and specialization courses on the prevention and investigation techniques in the terrorism sector for all police operators engaged in this specific sector, in Italy and abroad.

Border management and Schengen governance

Key policy issue 17: **Use of modern technology at the border**

Italy does not seem to have any Automated Border Control (ABC) systems in place or planned. In view of facilitating travel of EU citizens and in the future also of Registered Travellers, Italy is encouraged to implement ABC systems at its busiest airports and test ABC also at the busiest sea border crossing points.

Desired outcome:

- Investment leading to use of interoperable modern technologies in line with European standards where they exist. For example ABC gates for EU citizens should also be able to be used for the future Registered Traveller Programme (RTP) component of the smart borders initiative, by implementing fingerprint readers.

- Italy is encouraged to use ABC not only at airports but also at the sea borders.

Comments from the Member State: Italy substantially agrees with the analysis carried out by the Commission.

In this connection, of mention is that the launch of the ABC testing phase to verify the document checks was envisaged by the EBF 2012 and 2013 Annual Programmes at Rome Fiumicino and Milan Malpensa airports. Subsequently, the testing necessary to extend the mentioned automated systems to electronic documents will be carried out.

In a first phase, the ABC stations will be located at the main Italian airports and later also at the ports registering a considerable travellers' flow.

In this context, with a view to strengthening checks at sea border crossing points the automated control system (Border Control System – BCS) will be extended to travellers embarked on sea carriers.

Information Systems

Key policy Issue 18:	**Implementation of Visa Information System (VIS) and increasing the 'consular coverage' in Schengen visa issuance**

VIS has been in operation since 11/10/2011; however it is necessary to ensure its full roll-out. In this context, the Commission highlights the need to ensure adequate funding for these purposes, either under relevant EU instrument or national budget.

Due to the fact that "first time applicants" shall have to appear in person either at the consulate or external service provider (ESP) in order to provide their fingerprints, Italy - even though it has a rather wide consular network in comparison to several other EU Member States - could still consider concluding representation arrangements with other MS, making more use of the various forms of consular cooperation and/or step up the cooperation with ESPs.

Desired outcome:

- Full implementation of VIS including VISMAIL available and in operation.

- VIS roll-out in consulates from the third and last set of regions.

- Preparation for the introduction of fingerprint verifications at the border.

- Efficient operations and customer-friendly service to visa applicants through increased consular cooperation by establishing Common Visa Centres (i.e. representation by/from other MS, or resource pooling with other MS, or joint cooperation with external service providers involving several MS).

Comments from the MS: The implementation of the visa information system (VIS) and the increase in "consular coverage" to issue Schengen visas involves responsibilities falling within the competence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The latter intends to:
a) improve the hardware platform and system software of the central server;
b) enhance the performance of servers located in consular offices;
c) improve front-office workstations in all consular offices;
d) purchase hardware devices in order to improve the processing time of visa requests.
In the context of new global challenges, Italy is thoroughly evaluating the opportunity to open new consular offices to provide services to citizens in order to meet the demands of foreign nationals requiring a visa for our country.
In this perspective, the equipment of new visa offices in new locations, especially in Asian regions, is a real need that lies ahead in the next seven years.
Among the services to assist the activities of visa application, the creation of a portal in various languages is to be considered in order to allow a foreign national also to pre-load his/her data (and a passport-size photograph) in the web system.
Given the growing number of visa applications, it is a prerogative of the Member State to speed up the procedures, provide users with general and specific information related to " Schengen Visa / Visa for Italy " and give the applicant foreigner a feedback on his/her application as well as information on the date of delivery of the visa.
Among the planning objectives, there is also the connection of Border Offices with the world visa network (RMV) and the Extra Schengen system to for a more efficient monitoring of and enforcement at the borders.

Key policy issue 19:	**Implementation of Schengen Information System II**

SIS II has been in operation since 9 April 2013. As the SIS II is fundamental for the functioning of the Schengen Area, maintaining it fully operational should present a core priority for all Member States, in particular by ensuring the necessary infrastructure for the system and for its operation, and allowing the evolution of the national components in line with the evolutions agreed for the central system. Equally important, the running of the SIRENE offices should also be treated as a high priority, both in terms of adequate staffing and appropriate technical support.

As a mission critical system for the security of the Schengen area and the management of migration, SIS II is a high availability system, requiring 24/7 access for users. Therefore, it is essential that it has a full disaster recovery/business continuity plan. As of today, SIS II contains almost 48 million sensitive records, out of which more than 1 million are on identity (and related) information on persons, including witnesses in criminal procedures or persons subject to discreet checks due to the threat they represent to public or national security. Accordingly, the protection of both the persons concerned, as well as the security within the Schengen area must be adequately ensured at the national level too, including via up-to-date cyber security measures.

Desired outcome:
- SIS II available and in operation.

- SIS II national system is resilient to cyber-attacks in terms of physical, computer and data security.

Comments from the MS: The development of the system is in line with the steps set at EU level. The operation and maintenance of SIS II will strengthen the systems in terms of security. In particular, Italy has arranged to comply with the recommendations made on the subject at EU level and appointed a Security Officer to supervise all activities related to the improvement of security.

Development of communication strategy aiming at raising general awareness on EU Home Affairs policies

In view of strengthening EU policies in the area of Home Affairs, each EU Member State is invited to develop communication strategies that would allow to raise the awareness of the population in general and target groups in particular on the measures being taken at EU level.

Comments from the MS: This cross-cutting issue appears acceptable and in line with the actions of already undertaken by the Ministry of the Interior. As regards the Department of Public Security, it should be noted that external communication is taken care of by means of all the instruments provided by the legislation and internal regulations and entrusted to the offices of the Police Forces and the Ministry of the Interior which are institutionally responsible for information activities and communications and make use also of websites. Nonetheless, it is Italy's intention to work on the communication strategy, both internal and external, in order to strengthen the awareness of citizens of the European Union support to security policy.