

borderline-europe, Sizilien

SCIROCCO

News from Italy



Scirocco [ʃiˈrɔkko-Schirokko] is a southeastern, hot strong wind that carries dust and sand across the Mediterranean to Sicily and up to Italy's north often for a few hours only. This newflash has been published on an approximately bi-weekly basis since March 2021

Political and social situation

Bilateral agreements on migration defense

Following the summit of EU interior ministers in the Canary Islands, Italian Interior Minister [Matteo Piantedosi](#) turned his attention to the issue of migration. In view of the **upcoming European elections**, both Piantedosi and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni are once again emphasizing their anti-migration policies. Due to the improved weather conditions, arrivals at the Italian coasts (mainly from Tunisia, but also from Libya) are currently increasing, but also at the northern borders, so Piantedosi announced **the strengthening of border controls with Slovenia**. The aim is to work together with Slovenia and Croatia to close **the EU's so-called "external border" with Bosnia**.

Piantedosi also met with the Italian Deputy Foreign Minister Edmondo Cirielli and the Interior Ministers of [Algeria, Libya and Tunisia](#) to negotiate further [bilateral agreements](#) on migration control. Piantedosi thanked his interlocutors for their "excellent and constant cooperation" and emphasized that securing national borders should always be a priority. He located the relevant border for Italy and Europe in the Sahel region on the African continent - border security must begin there. This strategy is understood as the **externalization of the border**, a **neo-colonial practice** that is based, among other things, on the militarization of entire regions and disregards regular labour migration within the countries of the Sahel. In this way, border violence, poverty and exploitation are caused and financed by European states.

Restriction of press freedom

The Italian writer [Antonio Scurati](#) was scheduled to give an anti-fascist monologue on Italian state television (RAI) on **April 25** - the "[Day of Liberation](#)", on which Italy celebrates the partisan uprising and the final defeat of the German Nazi occupiers and their fascist accomplices in 1945. As Scurati wanted

to criticize the post-fascist policies of the Meloni government and point out that it was trying to **"rewrite history" in order to remain true to "its neo-fascist culture of origin"**, he was unceremoniously disinvented. The reason given for the disinvitation was that RAI and Scurati had been unable to agree on a fee - but this justification has been refuted. In addition, the program planner of the relevant RAI political program, Paolo Corsini, has attracted attention as a sympathizer of the Prime Minister in past programs with Meloni. There have been repeated attempts to censor the press in Italy in the past, particularly under the Berlusconi government. However, the Scurati case is of a different quality, as [the fascism of the Italian government](#) can no longer be denied. In response to the censorship, numerous websites posted a transcript of Scurati's speech. It was also read out on television on various channels.



Foto: Etienne Girardet, Unsplash

Following the [European Media Freedom Act \(EMFA\)](#), attacks on journalists and restrictions on press freedom in Italy are on the rise. "Journalists are increasingly under threat and, in fact, gagging actions [against journalists and the press] continue, including by government officials. We see a general impatience with freedom of information," summarizes [Vittorio Di Trapani](#), President of the Italian National Press Federation (Fnsi).

Political situation in Tunisia

The situation for refugees in Tunisia, particularly in the coastal town of Sfax, is becoming increasingly dangerous. Around **3,000 people** were waiting there for their crossing to Lampedusa and were

chased away by the Tunisian police. This "hunt for displaced persons", as journalist Mirco Keilberth describes the Tunisian government's behavior in [this detailed report](#), is being co-financed by the EU as part of economic aid worth up to one billion euros. In return, the Tunisian security forces are stopping the departure of more boats than ever before.



Improvised camps in Tunisia 2024

"Combating digital smuggling"

The European police authority [EUROPOL and the EU Commission](#) want to combat "digital smuggling". The aim of a new measure is the exchange between different authorities and countries in order **to prosecute the digital component of smuggling**. It remains to be seen what impact this new cooperation, which was launched at an initial meeting at the end of April this year, will have.

Situation of refugees

Unaccompanied minor refugees

In Europe, unaccompanied refugee minors keep disappearing from state reception centers. According to a Europe-wide data survey conducted by the [Lost in Europe](#) group, at least 51,439 unaccompanied refugee children and young people went missing across Europe **between 2021 and 2023. Around 23,000 of them went missing in Italy alone**. This means that, on average, around twenty young people a day simply disappear and can no longer be found. Italian child protection officer [Carla Garlatti](#) warns that without care, these children and young people become **"easy prey for the underworld"**. According to [Francesca Toscano](#)

from Save the Children Europe, national governments and the EU have constantly restricted the possibility for minors to apply for asylum. They are also excluded from access to social policies and support, "often to prevent others from coming to Europe".

One positive development in this context is the opening of a [day center in Ventimiglia for refugee children and young people, families and women](#), which was designed as a "child-friendly shelter". The center is a joint initiative of Save the Children, the municipality of Ventimiglia and Caritas Intemelina. "It is a place to play, socialize and find protection," explains Giovanna Di Benedetto from Save The Children, "run by a multidisciplinary team made up of a legal expert, social worker, educator, two linguistic-cultural mediators, a psychologist and a street worker". The center will be divided into three areas in order to meet the specific needs of children and mothers, unaccompanied adolescents and girls and women.

Update from the detention centers

According to [Altreconomia](#), **only 33 inspections were carried out by the responsible prefectures** (local representation of the Italian Ministry of the Interior) **in Italian detention centers** (Centri di permanenza per i rimpatri, CPR) between the beginning of 2019 and March 2024. In some facilities, such as Brindisi, Gradisca d'Isonzo and Trapani, there was only a single inspection visit by prefectural officials. In others, such as Milan and Palazzo San Gervasio, six and 12 inspections were carried out respectively - but without the hoped-for effects: Both facilities are now being investigated by the relevant public prosecutors' offices for promises not kept by the governing bodies. In the Italian CPR, there are repeated protests by detained migrants to denounce the **inhumane detention conditions and violent assaults by officials** (we reported on this in previous issues of this newsletter).

Chronic lack of space in initial reception centers

Around 60 residents of the city of Trieste in northern Italy [have collected signatures](#) to protest against the accommodation of refugees in local silos. The **lack of places in the so-called "exceptional accommodation centers" (Centro di accoglienza**

straordinaria, CAS), which house more than 74% of refugees arriving in Italy, is unfortunately not new, but has been a chronic problem throughout Italy for years. However, this has been ignored by governments despite the effects such as homelessness and the makeshift construction of makeshift camps (see, for example, the Scirocchi from 2023).



Report on the accomodation in Udine

In Udine (also near the Slovenian border), around 150 people also had to find emergency accommodation in very poor conditions in the disused Cavarzerani barracks, as none of the 550 reception places were available in the official CAS.

At the reception center for asylum seekers (centro di accoglienza per richiedenti asilo, CARA) in Isola Capo Rizzuto in Calabria, migrants protested against the delays in the procedures for the recognition of international protection, the long stay in the centers, the quality of the food provided and the impossibility of using their pocket money outside the center - to buy a bus ticket, for example. Together, around 100 protesters blocked the access road for the catering for several hours until the police cleared the blockade.

Precarious situation on the labor market

According to a survey conducted between May 2023 and February 2024, numerous migrants from CAS Piombino (Tuscany) were recruited for illegal and exploitative work in agriculture ("caporalato"). They worked there "in a serious state of distress": for a pittance of 97ct up to €7 an hour, without protective equipment, without insurance, without breaks and food, 10 hours a day. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case - in many parts of Italy, migrants are recruited for precarious and dangerous work in the agricultural sector, as the state makes integration into the regular labor market difficult due to long waiting times, high hurdles and a lack of support.



Camp of migrant harvest workers in Sicily

In an interview with the daily newspaper Avvenire, Natale Forlani, former Cisl (Workers' Trade Union Confederation) member and newly appointed President of the Institute for Public Policy Analysis (Inapp), explains the link between the needs of the Italian labor market and the support migrants receive along the way. "The current approach to migration is completely inadequate. It suffers from a backward-looking view of the phenomenon, the need for labor for low-skilled jobs (...) and the need to receive people from poor countries," Forlani said. He continued: "35% of people living in poverty in Italy are of foreign origin and two thirds of legal immigrants work in sectors with a high proportion of undeclared work. The aim of the new immigration policy should be to counteract these two phenomena, to increase the level of regular employment of migrants already living in Italy and

to plan the entry of new needs with selection and training paths (...). This is the only way to try to close the demographic gap in the workforce that will characterize the coming decades".

Recommended reading

We recommend reading the [annual report of the Centro Astalli](#), which traces the major [problems](#) in the reception of migrants. The migration policy of the current Italian government has contributed to an increase in discrimination against migrants and increased the bureaucratic hurdles for those seeking protection - at the expense of the mental health of migrants, some of whom are detained in the camps without support and without hope.

Further information on the situation in Italy can be found under "Projects" on our [homepage](#), in previous issues of [Scirocco](#) and in our [spotlight "Cosmos Palermo"](#).

Contact

[borderline-europe](#)
Menschenrechte ohne Grenzen e.V.
<https://www.borderline-europe.de/>
italia@borderline-europe.de

The Scirocco is published in 2023/4 with the kind support of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland (EKIR)

Coverphoto: Wolfgang Hasselmann, unsplash

Translation: Luisa Mohr