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borderline-europe, Sizilien

SCIROCCO

News from Italy



Scirocco [ʃiˈrɔkko-Schirokko] is a hot, strong south-easterly wind that carries dust and sand across the Mediterranean to Sicily and northern Italy, often for just a few hours. This briefing note has been published every two weeks since March 2021.

Political and social situation

On June 2nd, Republic Day, Italian politician [Claudio Borghi \(Lega\)](#) commented on **Italy's Claudio Borghi (Lega) integration into the European Union** and called for the resignation of the President of the Republic: "It is June 2nd, the day of the Italian Republic. Today the sovereignty of our nation is being consecrated. If the President really believes that sovereignty belongs to the European Union and not to Italy, he should resign, because then his office would no longer make sense." Various [politicians](#) reacted indignantly to this, including Antonio Tajani, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who defended the head of state, President Sergio Mattarella. The question of the extent to which individual states should be integrated into the European Union and relinquish their sovereignty in decision-making is not only being discussed in Italy. Particularly when it comes to issues surrounding migration and asylum policy, politicians from various political groups regularly call for a separation from European regulations and for actions in the interests of their "own" nation state.



Foto: Pixabay

EU elections in Italy

Meloni's post-fascist Fratelli d'Italia won the EU elections in Italy with [28.7%](#), which was an expected result considering the overall shift to the right in the EU and the policies of recent times. We

have reported on Meloni's migration policy in more detail in [recent issues of Scirocco](#). The outcome of the election also strengthens Meloni's [position of power](#) in Europe and she now claims a top position in the European Commission for her party. The PD (Democratic Party) came second with [24.11%](#) and [positioned itself in the election campaign](#) against bilateral migration agreements and in favour of a European rescue mission in the Mediterranean as well as safe entry options and humanitarian corridors. The election results and the rise of the right are not surprising, especially in light of the numerous fake news stories that circulated during the election campaign: In addition to [our article](#), there is also a database research that collected reports about migrants before the EU elections and **checked** them with the [European fact checker EFE Verify](#): they concluded that [one fifth of the reports are false](#) and criminalise migrants and stir up hatred. This illustrates how misinformation about migrants is used to portray them as a threat to the security of European societies.

Campania: Many applications for work visas for seasonal workers

The President of the Italian Government, [Giorgia Meloni](#), wants to penalise migrants who have entered the country on **"illegal" work visas**. There is organised crime, particularly in the Campania region, where the grey areas of the regulation for seasonal work visas are exploited. It is no news that seasonal workers are being exploited. However, it is a misclassification to penalise them for falling into the hands of a system that the Italian state itself cannot control. **Italy initially increased the number of work visas issued in order to** create more legal routes of entry and meet the demand for labour. However, a [report by the Council of Ministers](#) found that there was a "significant discrepancy between the number of entries into Italy for professional reasons and the actual labour contracts concluded", which was particularly noticeable in the [Campania region](#). This also means that workers in search of economic security in Italy easily fall into the hands of organised crime such as the "Camorra". If there was a way to enter Italy legally (not tied to a work visa), this problem would not exist.

One particularly shocking case of exploitative labour in Italy is **the death of Satnam Singh**, who worked on a farm in central Italy. The owner, Renzo Lovato, has been under investigation for years for what is known as "caporalato", the exploitative recruitment and employment of migrants. The workers had to work full days or more for 200 euros a month. Singh had an accident at work last week and lost an arm. But instead of taking him to hospital immediately, he was dumped on his doorstep without comment, where he bled to death. On June 22, **over 5,000 people demonstrated** in Latina against the exploitation of workers, without whom we would have neither vegetables nor olives or wine on our tables.



Foto: From Tripoli to Rome, Refugees in Libya

Refugees in Libya and Front-LEX: Crimes against humanity

The **"From Tripoli to Rome" conference**, organised by Refugees in Libya and the Alliance for Refugees in Libya, took place at the end of May. The **search for legal and safe access routes for people fleeing imprisonment and inhumane treatment from Libyan detention centres to Europe remains an important concern**. In addition, "the pain that these people are suffering" must be recognised, says **David Yambio**, co-founder of Refugees in Libya.

At the conference, witnesses reported on the (over)living situation of refugees in Libya and entered into a dialogue with representatives of the Community of Sant'Egidio, the Federation of Protestant Churches, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the organisations Arci and Roma Capitale. A documentation of the conference can be viewed [here](#) in extracts (text and audio contributions).

How the European Union behaves towards refugees from Libya can be seen here: Between 2021 and 2023, Frontex passed on 2,200 emails with the exact geolocation data of refugee boats to Libyan authorities to enable their **unlawful interception and forcible return to Libya**. This is the result of a **complaint** that Refugees in Libya and Front-LEX have jointly filed with the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) to accuse **Frontex of complicity in crimes against humanity**. In it, they also call on the Executive Director of Frontex, Hans Leijten, to partially suspend the agency's air surveillance activities in the "pre-frontier area" in the central Mediterranean.

Tunisia: Situation in the country comes to a head

The Italian daily newspaper AVVENIRE spoke to a person who wishes to remain anonymous as she works within the system of protection and support for migrants and asylum seekers in Tunis and also wants to report on the current situation in Tunisia. **"The situation here is getting worse,"** she says. Following **mass expulsions and deportations** of people seeking protection and **arrests** of opposition members, lawyers and activists, Tunisian citizens who have rented out their flats to asylum seekers are now also being arrested.

On May 7, security forces arrested the chairman and deputy chairman of the Tunisian Council for Refugees (Ctr), an important local partner of the UN agency UNHCR, for which the Council carries out almost all of the support and initial assessment of asylum applications. The charge is "forming a criminal organisation with the aim of facilitating the unauthorised entry of persons into Tunisia". On May 8, the director of Terre d'Asile and his predecessor were arrested, another of the few non-governmental organisations working to protect migrants and refugees in Tunisia. Only the repatriation programmes of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) still seem to be working - and, **according to the IOM**, have increased by 200% compared to the previous year - after all NGO aid projects were discontinued. But repatriation programmes are not support for people seeking protection who have not left their homeland without good reason. At best, such programmes should only serve people who want to return home. But here, too, the question arises as to

why they did not receive protection in their country of refuge. These IOM programmes should therefore be viewed critically.

"The European Union should urgently review its cooperation agreements with Tunisia to ensure that it is not complicit in human rights violations against migrants and refugees," said Heba Morayef, Regional Director of Amnesty International. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) called for the release of arbitrary detainees in Tunisia. [Lawyers from ASGI](#), an Italian lawyers' association, also appealed to **the United Nations Human Rights Committee** with an **urgent appeal to draw** attention to the life-threatening situation of refugees who have been abandoned by the Tunisian police in the [desert near the Algerian border](#), far from any town, without food or water. Despite these appeals, the Italian state continues to cooperate with Tunisia. Tunisia is still considered a so-called "safe country of origin" for people seeking protection. However, this cooperation could now be in jeopardy: on June 20, the Italian Council of State decided that [no more ships will be given](#) to Tunisia for the time being. More on this and the topic of Tunisia in our next Central Med Info June!

Situation of refugees

Refugees who are legally entitled to accommodation are still having to **camp out in the run-down "Silos" building complex in Trieste** (we reported on this in [previous edition](#) of this newsletter) because they have not been allocated a place to sleep. Instead of improving the reception system or creating more accommodation options, the [mayor Roberto Dipiazza](#) has **now had those affected evicted by the police and taken out of the city**. This violent - and hopeless - measure took place shortly before Pope Francis' visit on July 7. Massive protests by local refugee organisations have been going on for months, but the mayor declared that he could not take care of these people who had seized the site without permission and were camping there.

Too few reception places for unaccompanied minor refugees



Foto: Silvia Di Meo, jugendliche Geflüchtete

According to the Italian platform [openpolis](#), the **Sai reception network for unaccompanied refugee minors** had different capacities depending on the municipality in 2022. While Milan and Bologna were able to accommodate a comparatively large number of people with 410 and 350 places respectively, Catania had 267 places and Palermo only 200. No other municipality reached the threshold of 200 available places, in the following order: Genoa (183), Florence (150), Turin (148), Marsala (145), Bari (117), Padula in the Salerno region (114 places) and Cremona (113). These **reception capacities are very low when** you consider that [21,261 unaccompanied minors](#) arrived in Italy by sea in 2023 and 2024 up to the end of May.

The [Reception System for Integration \(Sai\)](#) is a network of local authorities supported by the National Fund for Asylum Policy and Asylum Services within the framework of "integrated reception projects".

Queer refugees in Italy

In an [interview](#) with Gabriella Friso from "[Certi diritti](#)", Katya Parente explains the **situation of queer refugees in Italy**, who often come from so-called "safe countries of origin" where there are no wars, they are not officially persecuted and are therefore subject to accelerated asylum procedures. However, they are still people seeking protection, even if the Italian state sees it differently and they can be rejected by the commissions without giving reasons because their country of origin is

considered "safe". In many of the so-called "safe third countries", queer people are criminalised by law, persecuted and imprisoned or experience violence on the basis of religious or cultural norms. Even after arriving in the EU, many are afraid to talk about their sexuality because they cannot overcome the shame or **fear of persecution or judgement** by their families. This is made more difficult if their rights are not recognised here either. They are also at risk of violence from officials or other refugees in reception centres. This makes it all the more important "to be aware of these situations and to **use all democratic means to oppose the restriction of the right to asylum**, of which LGBTQIA+ people are also victims", says [Friso](#) and continues, "this government is seriously jeopardising every civil liberty: just think of the rights of women, of prisoners for whom even "passive resistance" has become a crime, of minors, of children of same-sex couples ... to name just a few examples". to name just a few examples".

borderline-europe: The dangers of artificial intelligence at the borders

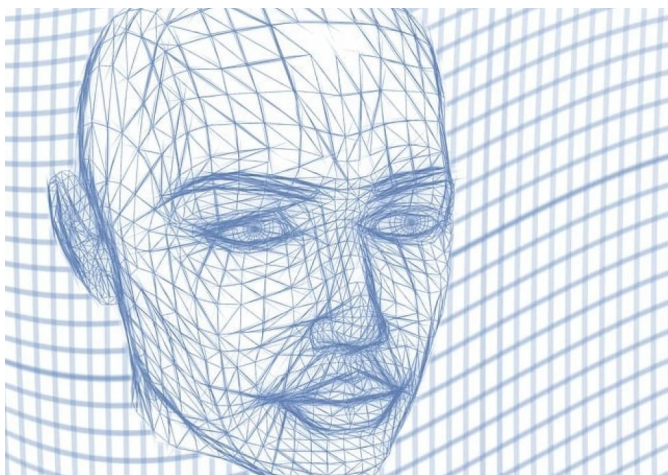


Foto: Pixabay

The EU wants to make greater use of artificial intelligence to "secure external borders". Although this new type of border security is still in the development phase, it is clear that the negative impact on the human rights of migrants is devastating. In order to place the topic in the discourse on migration and human rights, our Italy office has taken up research by [ZDF Magazin Royal](#) and [Algorithm Watch](#) and combined it with its own research. You can read our article [here](#).

The value of words

This time, the new article by our **partner Arci Porco Rosso** "**the value of words**" is about the important right to correct translation in (asylum) proceedings, but also about the right to be paid appropriately for this. Trained interpreters are increasingly turning down assignments from courts because they are not paid properly. This often leads to the use of underpaid and untrained interpreters who are usually unable to translate into the native language of the person concerned. The Italian Constitutional Court has now been asked by a judge in Florence to examine the economic situation of language interpreters in Italy. The request is both new and important, as it does not focus on the violation of the economic rights of the translators themselves, but on the violation of the rights to an equal and adequate defence of the persons whose words are translated in court.

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"](#).



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Contact

[borderline-europe](#)
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<https://www.borderline-europe.de/>
italia@borderline-europe.de

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