

Citizens without rights. Naga Report 2009. A cumbersome non-existence

Pressenza Milano, 2009-11-02 The report, in its second edition, analyses data collected between 2000 and 2008. More than 47,500 Naga users who were asked about the origin, gender, age, civil status and children, length of stay, education, employment and dwelling, with a special focus devoted to work in the country of origin and in Italy.

“The analysis of the data collected by Naga between 2000 and 2008 explodes some of the “myths” in the collective imagination regarding irregular immigration and sheds light on some trends in the evolution of the population of foreigners without documents which would be difficult to identify through other sources,” said the researchers, Carlo Devillanova (Bocconi University), Francesco Fasani (University College London) and Tommaso Frattini (Milan University), who edited the research in collaboration with Naga. “On the whole, Naga’s users are young, educated and employed, but relegated to work that is often occasional and always requiring little skill, and they suffer from notable hardship in housing,” the researchers went on. “The level of education and the rate of employment of irregular foreign citizens is comparable – and in some cases superior – to Italian levels. On the contrary, however, their social and housing conditions are extremely problematic and very far from Italian standards. Over the years, moreover, a remarkable extension was found in the age of elderly migrants among Naga users, a sign of the difficulties in finding ways out of their clandestine status,” the researchers concluded.

The following data was particularly interesting:

The average time of stay in Italy has substantially increased in recent years: in 2003, 53% of foreign citizens encountered by Naga had been in Italy for less than a year, while in 2008, it was only 25%, and 30% had been in Italy for four or more years.

As concerns education, around 10% of irregular immigrants were university educated and more than 50% had at least attended high school, while less than 15% had only received a few years’ schooling or stated they were illiterate.

62% of the sample were in employment. The rate of employment among migrants three years after their arrival in Italy was 76%: greater than that of the Italian population (59%) and that of Lombardy (71%). Moreover, the quantitative and qualitative data reveal professional de-skilling as a constant fundamental factor in the work relationship in Italy.

Finally, as far as housing conditions are concerned, for those who live in rented accommodation, the average number of persons per room is 2.2: conditions of residential crowding more than three times higher than for Italian citizens.

“The data in the report undermines the rhetoric on irregular immigration, in which the basic equation of foreigners > immigrants > irregular > illegal > criminal is central has by now become the received wisdom,” attests Pietro Massarotto, President of Naga. “Naga, in addition to the activities of assistance which it carries out every day, through instruments such as the report presented today, sets itself the objective of deconstructing the false representations that dominate the debate on immigration and contribute to shedding light on the life stories of foreign citizens, full of disappointments but also plans for the future; the stories of lives too often consigned to a cumbersome non-existence that for us is unacceptable,” concluded the Naga President.

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