

La nuova emigrazione italiana

Cause, mete e figure sociali

a cura di Iside Gjergji

Young Italians in London and in the UK

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Abstract This paper begins by providing a brief overview of the history of migration from Italy to the UK. It notes that movements between the two countries can be traced back more than 2000 years but that it was only in the last century that Italians began to settle in the UK in larger numbers, transforming what had been a migration of individuals into what could almost be described as a mass migration, at least at certain points of history. The chapter provides information on the recent movements of Italians to the UK, particularly in the period following the onslaught of the economic crisis since 2007. It also looks at the pay and the working conditions that young Italians are likely to experience in the London labour market and, furthermore, at other factors related to their migration, in particular where they live and the extent to which they are more likely today, than in the past, to live in areas of high economic deprivation.

Summary 1. A Brief Overview of Migration from Italy to the UK. – 2. Migration since the Economic Crisis of 2007. – 3. Working in the UK. – 4. Where Italians Live in London. – 5. Conclusion.

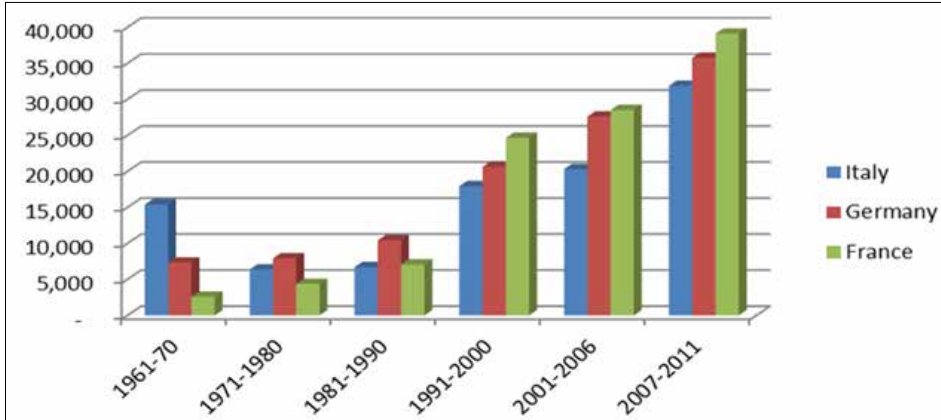
1 A Brief Overview of Migration from Italy to the UK

Almost as long as recorded history there has been migration between Italy and the UK. The Roman Empire had extended as far as the border with Scotland, building Hadrian's wall as the most Northerly output of the Empire. *Londinium*, established by the Empire in AD 50, became the site of the now global city of London. Even after the collapse of the Roman Empire migration continued at various points. In the 15th century bankers, humanists and religious community members from the city states of Italy were drawn to migrate to London. Italy provided the artists who transformed the architecture, design and music of the British ruling class. However, the migration of groups, rather than individuals, can be located in the 19th century, in the period immediately before and after the unification of Italy, with around 4,000 Italians, recorded as living in Great Britain, half of whom were based in London. Italians came from many different regions of Italy, but in particular from the areas around Naples and Parma and by the beginning of the Second World War there were reasonably sizeable Italian communities in many cities, including London, Manchester, Cardiff, Glasgow and Belfast. Generally they owned small businesses and although

identifying strongly with their national origins, were relatively well integrated into British society. However the war caused enormous difficulty to the communities of Italians, with Italy entering the war as an ally of Germany. The consequences for Italians living in the UK were severe as members of the community were arrested and interned for the duration of the war, including those who had strongly identified themselves as anti-fascist. A particular moment in the history of Italian migration to the UK was in the sinking of the *Arandora Star*, a ship carrying internees to Canada, the majority of whom were Italian. More than half of the internees on the ship died.

The end of the Second World War also instituted a new period of migration from Italy. Devastated by war, poverty and lack of work, many young Italians left their country to seek work in the UK and to join the communities already there. Work was available in the brickyards of Peterborough and Bedford and in the woollen industry in the North of England. It was estimated that the Italian born population of Bedford was 7,500 and of Peterborough was 3,000. Today, according to the 2011 UK census, there are an estimated 350,000 direct descendants of Italians in the UK. In the years of the expansion of the Italian economy in the 1960s and 1970s Italian migration to the UK reduced but there has been a continuing upwards growth in new migration from the 1990s onwards and in particular since the economic crisis of 2007. The UK labour market was associated with a greater openness, in contrast to the Italian and young Italians seeking work increasingly were drawn to the UK but to London in particular. Migration from all of the EU-15 Member States has been growing since 2003, in particular from the crisis countries of Spain, Portugal and Italy but it is from Italy that the numbers are most on the increase. Graphic 1 shows migration to the UK from the three largest Member State economies of Germany, France and Italy. This shows that Italy was the highest country of migration in the 1960s but that it fell back from the 1970s, as migration from Germany and France increased and indeed Italian migration generally (not just to the UK) had been declining prior to the crisis (OECD, 2011). An OECD report, based on the statistics for 2009, shows that 'there was a higher net gain from EU-15 nationals than from the Central and Eastern European countries which joined the European Union in 2004 (EU-8), in particular due to the increase in inflows from EU-15 and the decrease in inflows from EU-8' (OECD, 2011:330). However, since 2007 the rate of increase from Italy is higher than from the two other countries.

Graphic 1. Migration from Germany, France and Italy to the UK 1961-2011



Source: 2011 national census data

The 2001 census records 107,244 Italian-born residents, with an estimate of around 39,000 in London, around 25,000 in Manchester, 20,000 in Bedford, 35,000 in Glasgow, 6,000 in Liverpool and 6,000 in Bristol. The 2011 census records an increase in the number to around 130,000, suggesting a more than 20 per cent increase over the period. But the data itself is open to question. The census depends on individual compliance and it is well-established that more recent migrants are under-represented in the census data for several reasons. First, they may not intend to stay and therefore feel less inclined to record their presence; second they may not be registered at a specific address and therefore not be recorded as present for census gathering; third recent migrants are more likely to be mobile and this in itself makes it less likely that their presence is recorded. It may be for these, or additional reasons, that the Istat data from Italy suggests higher numbers of Italians living in the UK.

2 Migration since the Economic Crisis of 2007

It is clear that the economic crisis led to a rise in the number of Italians migrating generally, but in particular, was the cause of their migration to the UK. As an article in the influential magazine, *The Economist*, has noted:

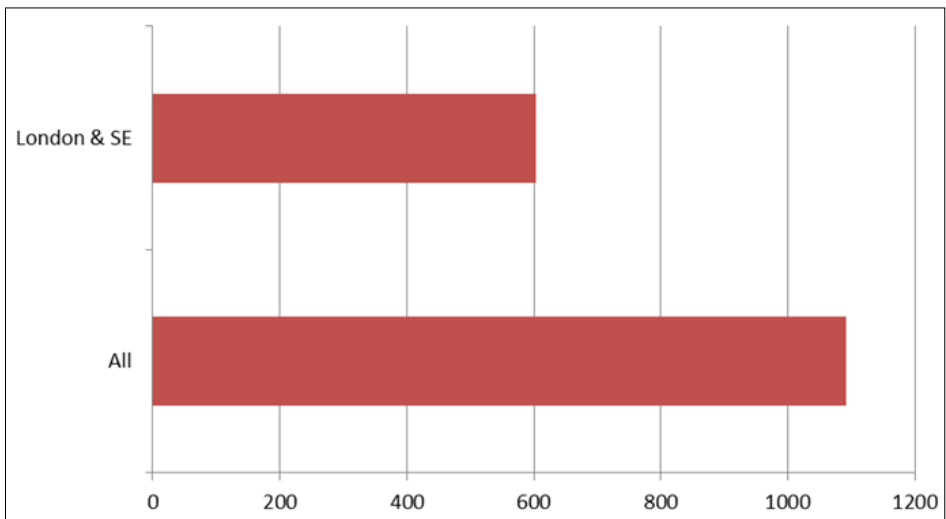
Until recently, migrants from countries such as Italy were few in number and affluent, most came with jobs in hand, in London’s banks, hedge funds and consultancies; others came to study at Britain’s most celebrated universities. The 2011 census showed that, like the French, Italian and Spanish migrants were most concentrated in Westminster

and Kensington and Chelsea, London’s wealthiest boroughs. Many others lived in Oxford and Cambridge. The new wave is different. Southern Europeans are moving in partly because of the opportunities London offers, but largely because of the ones that home does not.

The majority of those migrating from Italy in the years since the economic crisis are young and some of them will be students. In 2011 the records showed that there were 7,100 Italians studying in the UK, most of them in London. Italy is now the 7th highest EU Member State with young people studying in the UK. Students come not just to study but also to work. As universities in the UK now charge a fees of £9,000 a year (€10,350) for an undergraduate degree which generally takes three years (thus costing more than €30,000 for fees alone, without taking account of living costs) there is an imperative for most young people to work while studying, unless they are part of a very rich minority.

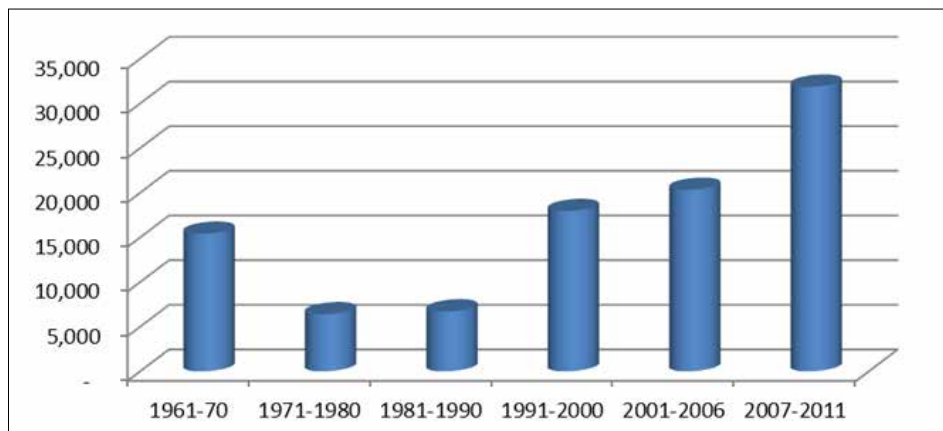
For many young Italians, whether they come to the UK as students or simply to work, the conditions of work are harsh. Many will find that they are earning just the national minimum wage which is almost standard for those working in fast food outlets, in restaurants and bars and in the other types of activities where jobs are relatively easy to find. A majority will gravitate to jobs in London and in the South East of England and while the London labour market appears very open and easy to penetrate, with jobs advertised as immediately available, the wages paid are very low. As Graphic 2 shows, London and the South East are the primary destinations of EU-15 nationals with more than half locating in this part of the country.

Graphic 2. Where EU-15 nationals are based



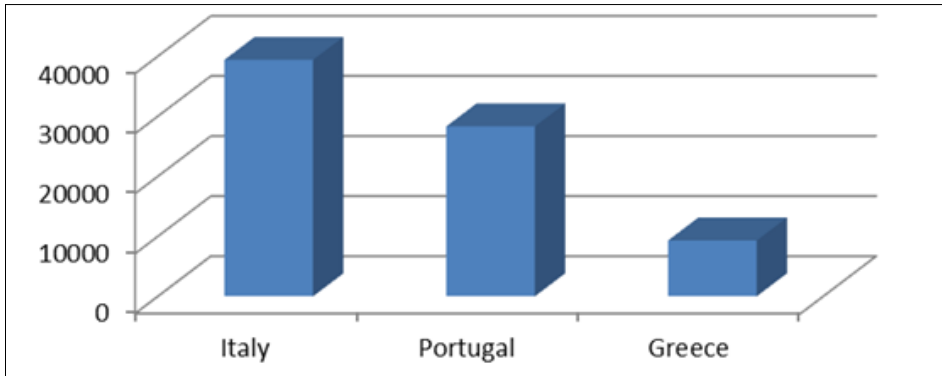
Graphic 3 separates out the data in Graphic 1, to show Italian migration to the UK, demonstrating more clearly the changes in the numbers of Italian migrants, in particular, the differences between the low points in 1971 to 1990 and the higher levels since 1991. In the 30 years between 1961 and 1990 the census records show that there were 28,483 new arrivals from Italy. In the 30 years between 1991 and 2011 the number recorded was 70,115, an increase of more than 140 per cent. Italians were nearly three times as likely to migrate to the UK in the last three decades, than in the previous three. Importantly, more Italians (31,864) were recorded in the census as having migrated to the UK between 2007 and 2011 than in the whole of the 30 years, 1961-1990.

Graphic 3. Italian migration to the UK



The most recent data on migration from Italy to the UK comes from the UK Office of National Statistics, in a report for November 2013 which looks at migration in 2012. It shows that for the first time the number of migrants arriving from Italy surpassed that for Portugal and Greece and by significant numbers. The numbers from Italy increased by 52 per cent; compared to 45 per cent from Portugal; 40 per cent from Spain; and 31 per cent from Greece.

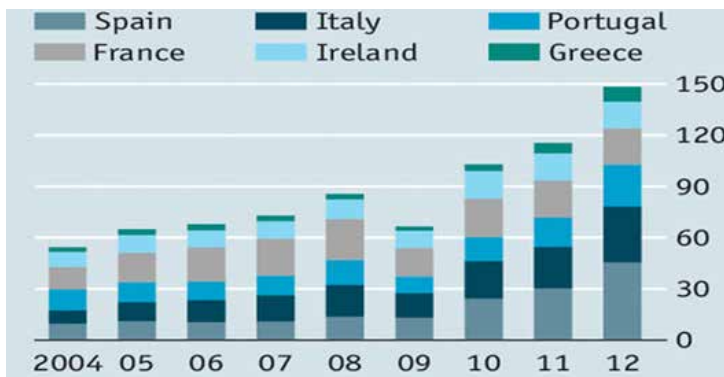
Graphic 4. Italian migration in 2012



3 Working in the UK

The most accurate data that exists on the number of recent arrivals for work can be obtained from the statistics on national insurance number registrations, as a number is needed to work legally in the UK. As the table below, published by *The Economist* journal, indicates, there has been a recent and large-scale growth in the number of requests for NI (National Insurance) numbers from citizens of EU Member States affected by the austerity measures imposed as a consequence of the economic crisis. Spain and Italy are the two countries with the highest number of registrations and with particular increases since 2007.

Figure 1. The Italian's jobs: National Insurance number registration by nationality entering Britain, '000



Source: National Insurance Recording and Pay as you Earn System (*The Economist*, 21 November 2013)

The current national minimum wage (which is the same for London as for the rest of the country) is just £6.50 an hour (€8.30) for those aged 22 or over. For younger workers it is even lower at £4.98 (€5.70). A worker aged over 22 who works an average 35 hour week therefore has earnings of around £990 a month (€1,235) before tax and around £830 (€950) after tax. Rents in London are particularly high and to rent a very modest room in a non-central location in London will cost at least £100 a week, or £435 a month (€500). Thus just to rent a room will take more than half of the monthly earnings of a person on the minimum wage. Newly arrived migrants, such as those from Italy, are also more likely to be offered temporary jobs and jobs where the hours of work are part-time. Nearly four in ten young people in the UK (of all nationalities) is working part-time and the rate of part-time work is nearly twice as high for the young as for older workers. Young people are also more than twice as likely as older people to be in temporary work. Many young people coming to London will have been lured by the promises of jobs that are easy to find and available. There are now a large number of agencies and websites that target young Italians who are thinking about migrating. *L'ItaloEuropeo*, an independent magazine based in London which is aimed at new Italian communities in London, reported on the large number of private agencies focusing on young Italians. It notes:

Well, the list of agencies for Italian immigrants in London is enormous: lavorarelondra.com; Sognandolondra.com; Lavorarealondra.com; Roomsinlondon.it; Lavorolondra.it; Londonworkexperience.it; Londra-facile.com; Uklondra.com; Anna Mundus; Katiaservices.eu; EasyLondon; and many more. Visiting their websites is like entering a dream world. (Antuono 2014)

One of the agencies which *L'ItaloEuropeo* cites, is Sognandolondra which describes how it assists young Italians to find work:

Solo nell'anno 2010 abbiamo aiutato oltre 2.300 ragazzi e ragazze a trovare lavoro a Londra. Le professioni più richieste sono quelle di barman, camerieri, chef, runner, lavapiatti e receptionist e non è indispensabile conoscere l'inglese od avere esperienza nel settore alberghiero. Il nostro servizio è infatti rivolto a chiunque, sia a chi vuole lavorare in un ristorante 3 stelle Michelin e sia chi invece è alle prime armi e cerca un lavoro per coprire le spese. (<http://www.sognandolondra.com/it/lavorare-a-londra/>)

It makes it clear that the jobs that young Italians are likely to be found are in the low paid sectors, as dishwashers, receptionists, waiters and barmen, all national minimum pay jobs. Runner jobs are often not even that, they

are the sort of unpaid jobs which young people find themselves doing, in the hope that they will lead to paid work. Unfortunately that is rarely the case. Sognandolondra makes grand assertions that it can find all kinds of jobs and makes reference to being able to place those who 'want to work in a three star Michelin restaurant' a remarkable claim given that there are only two three star Michelin restaurants in the whole of London (and indeed only four in the UK). It is unlikely that the 40,000 plus Italians who have arrived in the last year will have much success in locating that 'dream' job in a Michelin three star restaurant.

Young Italians arriving in London will also find that there are other aspects of the labour market that are less appealing. For example, under UK employment law there is no right to complain of unfair (unjust) dismissal unless the worker has worked for the same employer for more than two years. Few young migrants in London will have that type of work record given that they are more likely to be working for short periods for different employers or working through employment agencies. With regard to the latter, the UK government was obliged to introduce a measure of protection to those working through agencies, as this was required under the EU Directive on Temporary Agency Work (2008/104/EC). However, the right to no less favourable treatment does not apply from the first day of work (as it does in most other EU Member States) but only after an individual has worked for the same employer for 12 weeks. In most cases, however, contracts through agencies will be shorter than 12 weeks.

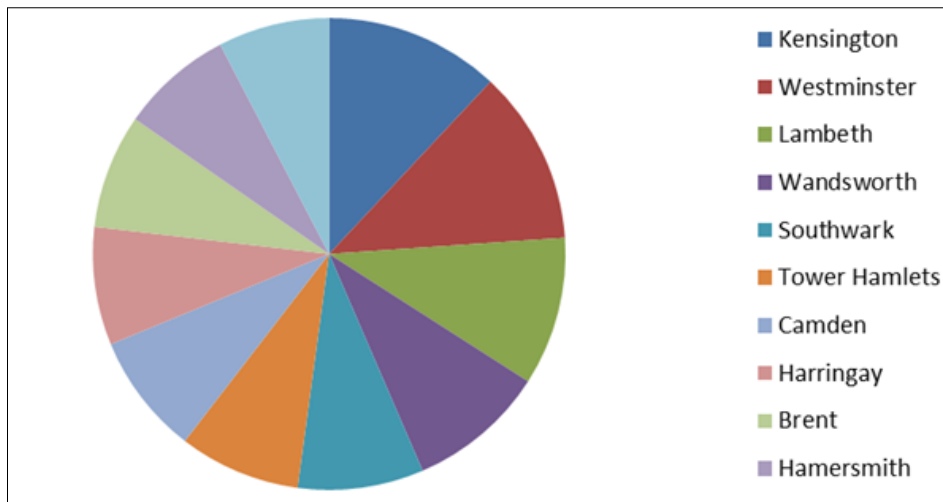
Working hours are regulated by law; however, here too young Italians will find that the conditions of entitlement are limited. While by law there is a maximum limit of 48 hours a week – as required of all Member States under the Working Time Directive (2003/88/EC) – UK workers can opt out of the maximum and for many the choice is to agree to work additional hours or not be offered employment. As a result, workers in the UK work longer hours in the week than do workers in most other EU Member States. These are not the only entitlements that are less favourable. Time off for maternity is very poorly protected, with workers having an entitlement to just six weeks' of pay at the rate of 90 per cent of their weekly earnings. After that, while there is a relatively long period of maternity leave, the payment attached to it (unless the employer offers more than the law requires) is very low, at under €150 a week. Holiday entitlement is also relatively low. UK workers do not have the same number of days of national holiday as apply in Italy, and there are just eight national holidays in the UK and generally another 20 days (four weeks) of holiday in the year. It should also be made clear that these are the legal entitlements but there is evidence that many workers, particularly those who are vulnerable because they are new to the labour market and to the country and need to work, because they have no other means of support, are working below the minimum conditions that the law requires. With very low levels of state inspection it is acknowledged that many employers fail

to provide the terms that the law states they should. Of course some jobs in London are well-rewarded and remunerated and a minority of young Italians will come to work in the banks, insurance companies, and universities and in professional jobs in legal and associated fields. Here the rewards are sometimes very generous and it is the lure or reportage of these kinds of jobs that is part of the magnet that directs Italian workers towards London. But the reality is that most will never work in these types of jobs.

4 Where Italians Live in London

An indication of the change in the composition of Italian migration to London can be observed by looking at the areas of London that Italians now live in. Whilst earlier generations of Italian migrants, from the 1980s and 1990s, were more likely to live in the central London and least deprived boroughs of Kensington and Westminster, Italians are now dispersed throughout London and, in particular are now to be found in substantial numbers, in the significantly poorer London boroughs.

Graphic 5. Where six in ten Italians in London now live



Source: 2011 national census of population

Five of the ten boroughs with the highest populations of Italians are also in the category of most deprived, with deprivation scores as shown in Table 1 (the lower the score the more deprived the borough is). Fourteen boroughs have score of more than 100 but only two of them have a significant presence of Italian nationals. The five London boroughs with the

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lowest deprivation scores Richmond (288), Kingston (255), Merton (208), Bromley (203) and Sutton (196) register no significant Italian presence.

Table 1. Deprivation scores and Italian nationals' residency

Borough	Deprivation score	Number of Italian nationals living there
Tower Hamlets	7	3316
Haringey	13	3226
Lambeth	29	4061
Brent	35	3128
Southwark	43	3436
Hammersmith	55	3070
Camden	74	3314
Westminster	87	4759
Kensington & Chelsea	103	4774
Wandsworth	121	3770

Source: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2012/06/london-figures-interactive-guide>

The contrast with nationals from Germany is stark, as Table 2 shows. Although nationals from Germany live in three deprived boroughs (measured by scores of less than 50) they also live in the three boroughs with the lowest levels of economic deprivation (with score of 100 or more).

Table 2. Deprivation scores and German nationals' residency

Borough	Deprivation score	Number of German nationals living there
Tower Hamlets	7	1891
Lambeth	29	1760
Southwark	43	1911
Camden	74	2386
Westminster	87	2529
Kensington & Chelsea	103	2402
Wandsworth	121	2929
Merton	208	1783
Kingston	255	1673
Richmond	288	1804

Source: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2012/06/london-figures-interactive-guide>

5 Conclusion

One difference between migration patterns of the past and those since 2007 is in the extent to which the migration of young Italians today can be seen as a migration for settlement, as it would have been in the earlier waves of migration. While there is insufficient data yet and little published research specifically on the new Italian communities of London, anecdotal evidence suggests that those who are currently migrating from Italy to London in search of work may not see their migration in the same way as did previous generations. In particular, the ease and low cost of travel between Italy and the UK, means that it is possible for young Italians to maintain close links with family and friends in Italy, in a way that was not possible in the past. Added to this those who are migrating today are more likely to be relatively highly qualified on arrival but at the same time the jobs that are easily available are not commensurate with their levels of qualification. This may persuade them that their migration is temporary, rather than permanent, and that it is Italy that will eventually provide opportunities for sustained careers. Whether this turns out to be true cannot be ascertained at the moment but it is at least plausible that many young migrants see their movement to the UK in this light. It perhaps explains why they are 'willing' to take up jobs that are lower skilled than the work that their qualifications would suggest and it may be that it is the very concept of their migration as being a temporary phase that encourages the selection of jobs that otherwise would be seen as not appropriate to their skills and qualifications.

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