



THE MOLDOVAN COMMUNITY IN ITALY

Migrant population annual report
Executive summary



20
22

Curated by the General Directorate for Immigration and Integration Policies of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Annual Reports on the main foreign communities in Italy — investigate and analyse the presence in Italy of the largest populations of non-EU migrants: Moroccan, Albanian, Chinese, Ukrainian, Indian, Filipino, Bangladeshi, Egyptian, Pakistani, Moldovan, Sri Lankan, Senegalese, Tunisian, Nigerian, Peruvian and Ecuadorian.

A key factor also in the 2022 edition is the contribution of the Institutions and Bodies that provided the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies with the necessary information, subsequently processed by the ANPAL Servizi Integration Services Area. Sincere thanks for consolidated and practical collaboration are due to ISTAT - National Institute of Statistics, INPS – General Statistical Actuarial Coordination, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of University and Research, the Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture; CeSPI, the CGIL, CISL, UIL, UGL trade union confederations and the Data Science Applications Operating Unit – ANPAL Servizi Studies and Research Division. The financial inclusion section was curated by Daniele Frigeri, Director of the National Observatory on Financial Inclusion of Migrants.

The unabridged volumes of the 2012 – 2022 editions of the Reports on the Main Foreign Communities in Italy are available, in Italian and in the main foreign languages, in the “Documents and Research – Reports by the Immigration and Integration Policies DG” area of the portal www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it and in the 'Studies and Statistics' area of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies website – www.lavoro.gov.it. A statistical annex is also available at the same addresses, containing additional information with respect to the reports, or with insights on the existing analysis, with a comparison between the main nationalities.

The 2022 edition of the National Reports on the Main Foreign Communities, the translation of the overviews into the main vehicular languages and the Monitoring Report were produced by the “Services for Integration Policies” Area of ANPAL Servizi, in the framework of the project “START-Support to Integrated Multiannual Programming on Employment, Integration and Inclusion”.

The Moldovan community in Italy

Moldovan immigrants are a relatively recent phenomenon in Italy, the first inflows being linked to the economic and political crisis that followed independence from the Soviet Union after dissolution, which prompted the population to seek livelihood opportunities abroad due to rising levels of unemployment and poverty. Migration to Italy was facilitated by several factors: first and foremost, geographical proximity and the relative ease of reaching the Italian borders; the high level of wealth and better quality of life in Italy; the Neo-Latin origin shared by the two languages as well as the proximity to Romanian culture, with Italy hosting a large number of Romanian immigrants¹ It is precisely the presence of a strong Romanian community that continues to make it difficult to estimate the real size of the Moldovan community in Italy, due to the widespread dual citizenship phenomenon: it is estimated that around 300,000 Moldovan citizens acquired Romanian citizenship before 2001, also due to the advantages for movement within the European Union.

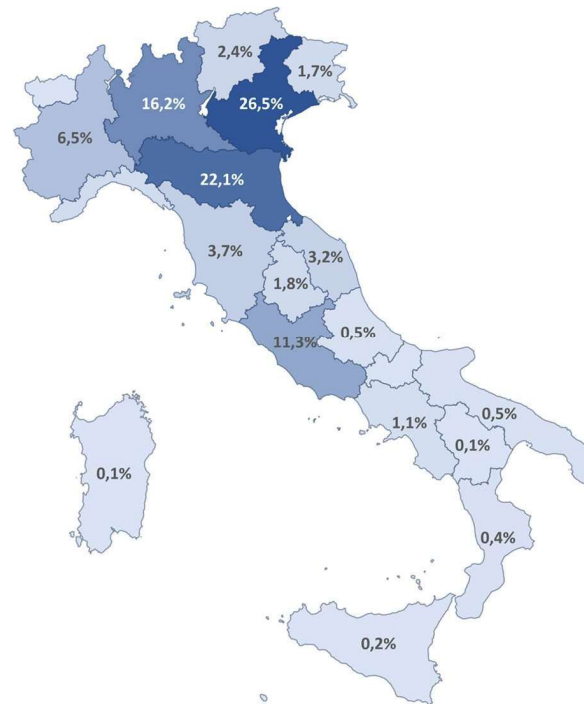
The Moldovan community ranks tenth in terms of numbers among the main non-EU nations, with 113,579 Moldovans legally residing² in Italy as of 1 January 2022, a slightly lower number compared to the previous year (-0.5%), in opposition to the general trend of non-EU residents (+5.6%)³.

The Moldovan population is highly concentrated in the north of Italy, where 77% of the community is located, in particular in Veneto, the first region, which accommodates 26.5% (considering non-EU citizens overall this share drops to 10%); Veneto is followed by Emilia-Romagna, where 22% of Moldovan nationals reside, and Lombardy, with its share of 16.2%. One fifth of the community is located in central Italy, with a significant presence in the Lazio region (11.3%). Conversely, around 3% of the Moldovan population reside in the south of Italy.

The Moldovan population in Italy is very unbalanced in terms of gender: women are more than 67% while men make up the remaining 33%. This clear majority of women most likely highlights the absence of family-based migration projects in favour of a circular model: those who have opted to migrate retain strong ties with their country of origin, where the family unit has remained and is supported by means of remittances sent by emigrant family members.

With an average age of 39 and 14% in the over-60 bracket, the Moldovan community is significantly more mature than the overall non-EU population in the country (average age 36, over 60: 10.2%). In particular, there is a significant concentration in the older age group: about 39% are over 45 (compared to about 32% among non-EU citizens overall). At below average levels for non-EU citizens, the presence of minors, who

Distribution of the Moldovan population legally resident in Italy. Data as at 1 January 2022



Source: Anpal Servizi SpINT Area analysis of ISTAT data

¹ Notes on the history of Moldovan immigration in Italy, Vitali G., Filippi M., Miron D., *Foreign entrepreneurs in Italy: the case of Moldova*, Migrație, Diaspora, Dezvoltare, 2016.

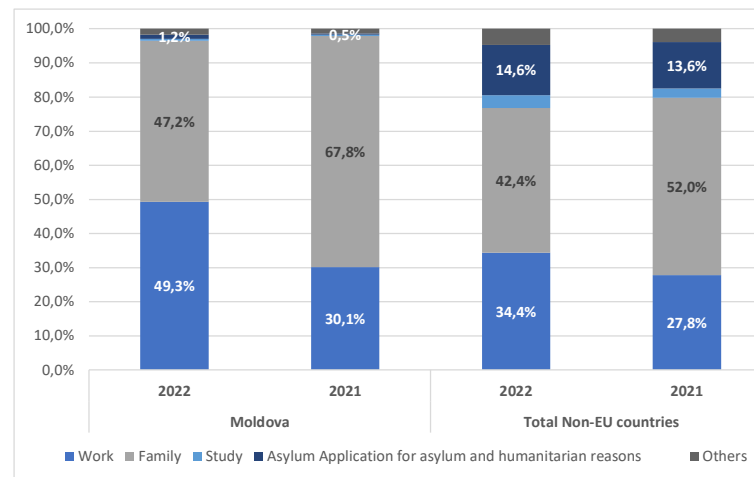
² Statistics on regularly residing non-EU citizens include all foreigners from non-EU countries who are in possession of a valid residence document (residence permit or long-term EU residence permit). Not all legally resident foreign citizens are including in the total count of Italian residents: the statistical source employed therefore also includes foreign nationals who for whatever reason have yet to be awarded official residence in Italy.

³ The figure is most likely linked to the acquisitions of Italian citizenship, which notoriously leads to a reduction in the statistics, since anyone who acquires Italian citizenship is no longer counted among foreigners.

– despite representing the main age group in the community – account for 16.8%, compared to 20.9% for the wider community of non-EU nationals, a difference that is explained by modest number of family units in the Moldovan community. Imbalance towards the female gender, the low proportion of minors and the low birth rate (7.2 per thousand compared to 12 for the non-EU population overall) are linked to the characteristics assumed by Moldovan migration to Italy, in which women have generally been the main protagonists in family and personal care services, a sector that makes reunification or the creation of new family units extremely challenging.

In 2021, after the drastic drop recorded in 2020 due to the movement restrictions introduced globally to counter the spread of the SARS-COV 2 virus, there was a general increase in the issue of new permits, also due to the illegal labour emergence provision (legislative decree 34 of 2020) that allowed for the regularisation of non-EU citizens already present in Italy: new residence permits issued during 2021 to Moldovan citizens totalled 3,729, almost triple those of the prior year. The main motivation for Moldovan citizens entering the country in 2021 was family reunification (49%), up 73.5% over the prior year. Compared to the previous year, the exponential growth of new work-related permits is striking: +2,310.8%; in 2020, only 65 Moldovan citizens had entered Italy for work purposes, whereas there were 1,567 in 2021.

Short-term residence permits by type and citizenship (v%). Data as at 1 January 2022 and 1 January 2021



Source: SPINT Area analysis of Anpal Servizi on ISTAT-Ministry of the Interior data

Analysis of the type of residence permits⁴ reveals a high level of stabilisation: the Moldovan community ranks first among the main non-EU communities in terms of the incidence of long-term residents at 85.9%, the proportion is higher than that of the non-EU community as a whole by more than 20 percentage points. Among fixed term permits, work permits prevailed, with an incidence of 49.3% compared to 30.1% in the prior year, likely due to the above-mentioned regularisation measure.

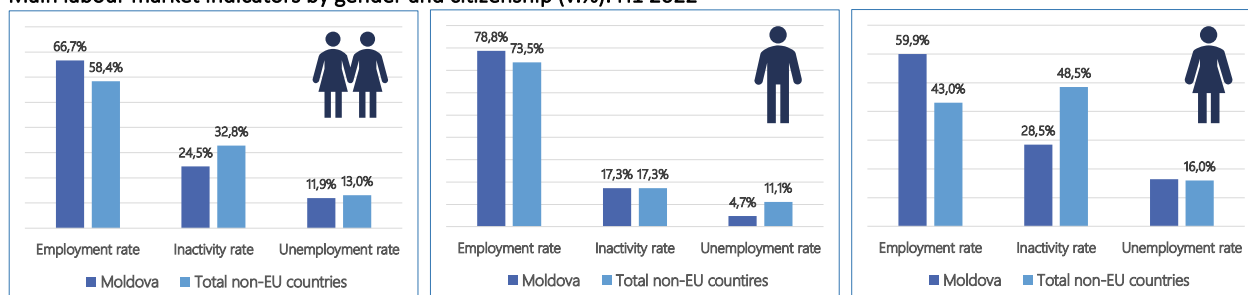
Family reasons are the second most important motive for residence in Italy (47.2%), with an incidence that is around 5 percentage points higher than that recorded for non-EU citizens overall (family reasons being the main motivation for this latter group). A peculiar configuration of Moldovan migration in Italy emerges: while on the one hand, the immigrant population has developed a good level of stabilisation, holding long-term residence permits in the vast majority of cases; on the other hand, this stability has not always allowed reunification of family units, making explicit the difficulties preventing the achievement of this result, resulting in the retention of close ties with the country of origin and the family members who continue to reside there. The main - though not exclusive - profile of Moldovan employees is that of clerical duties, sales, and personal service workers employed in the sphere of Personal Services.

An analysis of the main labour market indicators reveals better employment performance than that recorded for the non-EU population overall: the employment rate is 66.7% (compared to 58.8% recorded for the wider non-EU population), the inactivity rate is 24.5% (around 33% for the non-EU population), while the unemployment rate stands at 11.9%, compared to 13% for the non-EU population. The figure is also linked to large number of women in the workforce: the community is in fact among those the highest female employment rate (59.9% compared to 43% overall), although there is still a significant gap between male (78.8%) and female (59.9%) employment rates.

⁴ The report shows the stock figure for the total number of third-country nationals authorised to reside in Italy in the reference year.

The distribution of employed persons of Moldovan origin across sectors of economic activity highlights the aforementioned channelling of the community into the *Public, Social and Personal Services* sector, which is prevalent, accounting for a total of two-fifths of Moldovans employed in Italy. An analysis by gender shows, however, that this specialisation by sector is primarily a characteristic of women workers (the share reaches 65% in the case of women compared to an entirely residual value of 5.9% for men), while men in the community work primarily in industry (52.3% overall) and in *transport and business services* (31.6%).

Main labour market indicators by gender and citizenship (v.%). H1 2022



Source: SpINT Area analysis of Anpal Servizi on RCFL - ISTAT microdata

There were 7,079 sole proprietorship owners born in Moldova as of 31 December 2021, or 1.8% of the non-EU entrepreneurs in Italy. Although the community is made up of a predominance of women, there is a clear majority of men (70%) among the owners of sole proprietorships. Significant channelling is visible of Moldovan entrepreneurs towards construction, which, with a 48.4% share, is absolutely prevalent: Moldovan construction companies account for 3.9% of non-EU sole proprietorships operating in the sector.

In contrast to the non-EU population as a whole, the community draws a high level of old-age pensions: confirming higher age demographics than the non-EU population overall, 5.9% of non-EU recipients are Moldovan nationals. A sign of the community's good level of integration into the Italian economic and social fabric is also the high take-up of family assistance measures: 6.8% of non-EU *maternity benefit*⁵ recipients are of Moldovan nationality. This value is all the more remarkable given the low proportion of minors and the low number of births in the community: the high take-up of this measure is in fact linked to the inclusion of women in the labour market, as this allowance is addressed exclusively to working mothers.

⁵ Otherwise known as 'compulsory abstention allowance', this is a form of income support in lieu of salary and is paid to female workers for maternity leave and childbirth for a total of 5 months.

