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REPORT ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF MOBILE EU CITIZENS: ITALY

AUTHORED BY
GUIDO TINTORI



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Report on Political Participation of Mobile EU Citizens

Italy

*Guido Tintori**

Abstract:

Non-resident Italian citizens have the right to vote and to stand as candidates both in national and European Parliament (EP) elections. Voter registration is active for first generation living abroad, and automatic from second generation for both types of elections. Remote voting is possible. Non-citizen residents from the EU have the right to vote and to stand as candidates in both local and EP elections. Voter registration is not automatic.

The author notices challenges to participation in the domains of registration procedures, access to relevant information, electoral communication, and limited data collection. To address these challenges, the author recommends introducing automatic registration for non-citizens when they take residence; local-level data collection on the turnout and socio-demographic features of mobile EU citizens; timely information in simplified Italian; and the development of electoral information guidelines by the Ministry of the Interior to be adopted consistently across the whole territory.

Sommario:

I cittadini italiani residenti all'estero possiedono il diritto di voto e candidatura sia alle elezioni politiche sia alle elezioni europee. Per entrambe le elezioni, la registrazione nelle liste degli aventi diritto è automatica per gli emigrati dalla seconda generazione in poi, mentre necessita di un atto volontario da parte di chi sposta la propria residenza all'estero per la prima volta. La modalità di voto all'estero include la possibilità di effettuarlo per posta.

I cittadini UE residenti in Italia detengono il diritto di voto e di candidarsi alle elezioni amministrative comunali e alle elezioni europee. La registrazione nelle liste degli aventi diritto non è automatica. Secondo l'autore di questo rapporto, le principali criticità alla partecipazione elettorale da parte dei cittadini UE in Italia risiede nelle procedure di registrazione, nell'accesso alle informazioni utili all'esercizio dei diritti, nelle comunicazioni istituzionali relative ai processi elettorali. Il rapporto evidenzia anche una scarsa disponibilità di dati riguardanti la partecipazione elettorale dei cittadini UE e il loro profilo. Come possibili soluzioni a tali criticità, l'autore suggerisce l'inclusione automatica ai registri elettorali al momento dell'acquisizione di residenza; campagne informative e linee guida standard, possibilmente plurilingue, coordinate dal Ministero dell'Interno e adottate coerentemente senza variazioni in tutto il territorio nazionale; una maggiore raccolta di dati a livello locale sulla partecipazione elettorale e sulle caratteristiche socio-demografiche dei cittadini UE.

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1. Introduction

Non-resident Italian citizens have the right to vote and to stand as candidates both in national and European Parliament (EP) elections (see Table 1). Voter registration is active for first generation living abroad, and automatic from second generation for both types of elections. Remote voting is possible but different conditions apply depending on the type of election: in national elections in-country voting and postal voting is allowed, while in EP elections voters cast their votes in-country, at diplomatic missions, and by post (the latter only for special categories of citizens).

Non-citizen residents from the EU have the right to vote and to stand as candidates in both local and EP elections. However, EU citizens who want to stand as candidates for the EP elections have to submit a written declaration to the Italian Court of Appeal. Voter registration is not automatic. Voters must submit a formal written request to the Mayor of their municipality of residence at least 40 days before local election day and 90 days before the EP elections, in order to be registered on a complementary electoral register.

Table 1. Conditions for electoral rights of non-resident citizens and non-citizen residents in Italy (GLOBALCIT CER 2017)

Type of voter	Election type	Right Voting	Right Candidacy	Automatic registration	Remote voting
Non-resident citizens	National Legislative	YES	YES	NO ¹	YES ²
Non-resident citizens	European Parliament	YES	YES	NO ³	YES ⁴
Non-citizen residents	Local Legislative	YES	YES	NO ⁵	NA
Non-citizen residents	Local Mayoral ⁶	YES	YES	NO ⁷	NA
Non-citizen residents	European Parliament	YES	YES ⁸	NO ⁹	NA

¹ It is an active registration for first generation, and automatic from second generation.

² In-country voting and postal voting.

³ It is an active registration for first generation, and automatic from second generation.

⁴ In-country voting. Personal voting at diplomatic missions and postal voting (the latter only for special categories).

⁵ EU citizens must submit a formal written request to the Mayor of their municipality of residence at least 40 days before election day, in order to be registered on a complementary electoral register ('liste aggiunte').

⁶ Indirect election.

⁷ EU citizens must submit a formal written request to the Mayor of their municipality of residence at least 40 days before election day, in order to be registered on a complementary electoral register ('liste aggiunte').

⁸ EU citizens who want to stand as candidates for the EP elections have to submit a written declaration to the Italian Court of Appeal.

⁹ EU citizens must submit a formal written request to the Mayor of their municipality of residence at least 90 days before election day, in order to be registered on a complementary electoral register ('liste aggiunte').

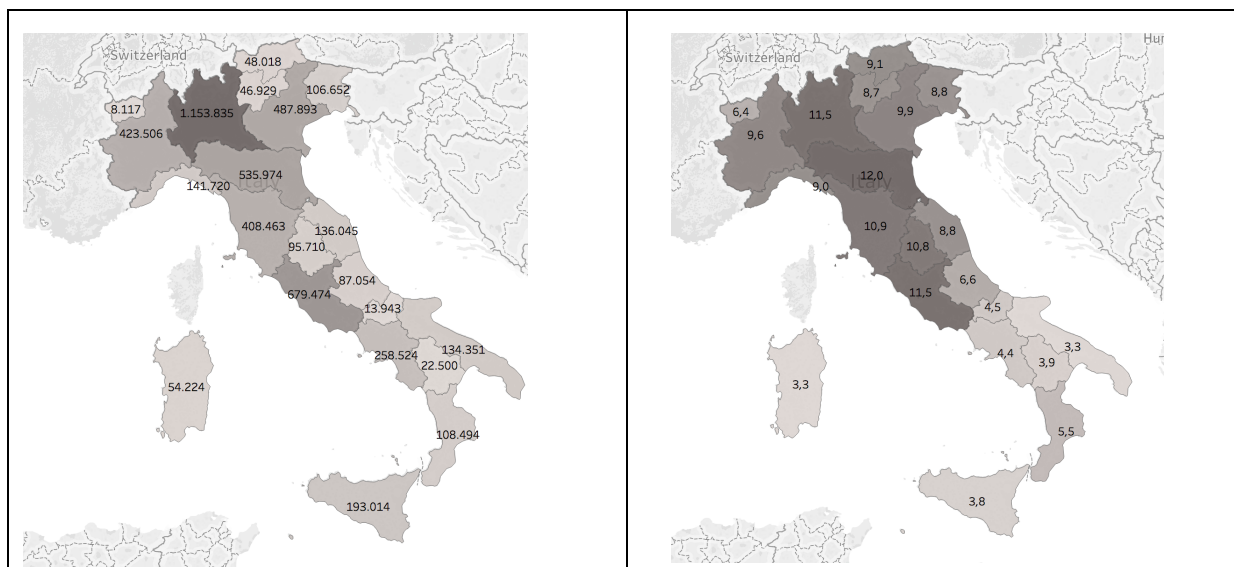
1.1. Demographic Characteristics of Non-citizen Residents and Non-resident Citizens

Non-citizen residents

According to the latest official data from the Italian national institute of statistics (Istat), the non-citizen residents at 1 January 2017 were 5,144,440 (8.6% of the total population). Even though emigration from Italy has been growing between 2007 and 2016, and immigration declining between 2010 and 2014, the net international migration has been solidly positive for the last ten years. In 2017, the population change for non-national citizens was positive both for natural increase and net migration (see Figure 1 in Annex 1 for details).

The maps below show the distribution of non-citizen residents across the Italian regions in absolute numbers (map on the left in Figure 1 below) and as percentage of total regional population (map on the right in Figure 1 below). Non-citizen residents concentrate in the northern and central areas of Italy, which are also the most urbanized and productive of the country. The gender balance was higher for female with 52%.

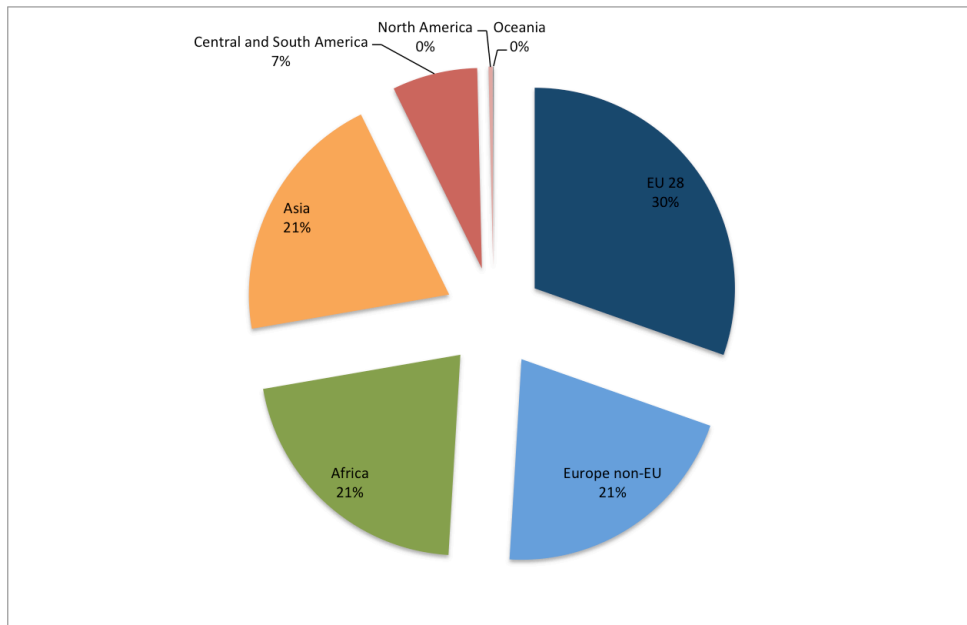
Figure 1. The distribution of non-citizen residents across the Italian regions in absolute numbers (map on the left) and as percentage of total regional population (map on the right) (Source: Istat)



In terms of origin, the largest share of non-citizen residents is from the EU27, followed by Africa, Non-EU Europe and Asia that are all around 21% (Figure 2 below). According to the latest Eurostat data, in the third quarter of 2017 the employment rate of Non-EU citizens residing in Italy was 63%, compared to 68% of EU-27 citizens and 62% of the nationals¹⁰. Given the scope of the report, the rest of this statistical section will focus on the non-citizen residents coming from the EU27.

¹⁰ Source: Eurostat lfsq_ergan, 20-64 y.o.

Figure 2. Percentage of non-citizen residents by region of origin (Source: Istat)



The presence of EU mobile citizens in Italy has been constantly increasing since 2003, with the exception of a visible drop in 2012, which may be explained as a statistical adjustment following the 2011 Census (see Figure 2 in Annex 1).

In terms of nationalities, Romanians are by far the largest group, followed by Poles, Bulgarians and Germans (see Figure 3 and 4 below).

Figure 3. Ranking of EU citizens residing in Italy and trend 2003-2017 (Source: Istat)

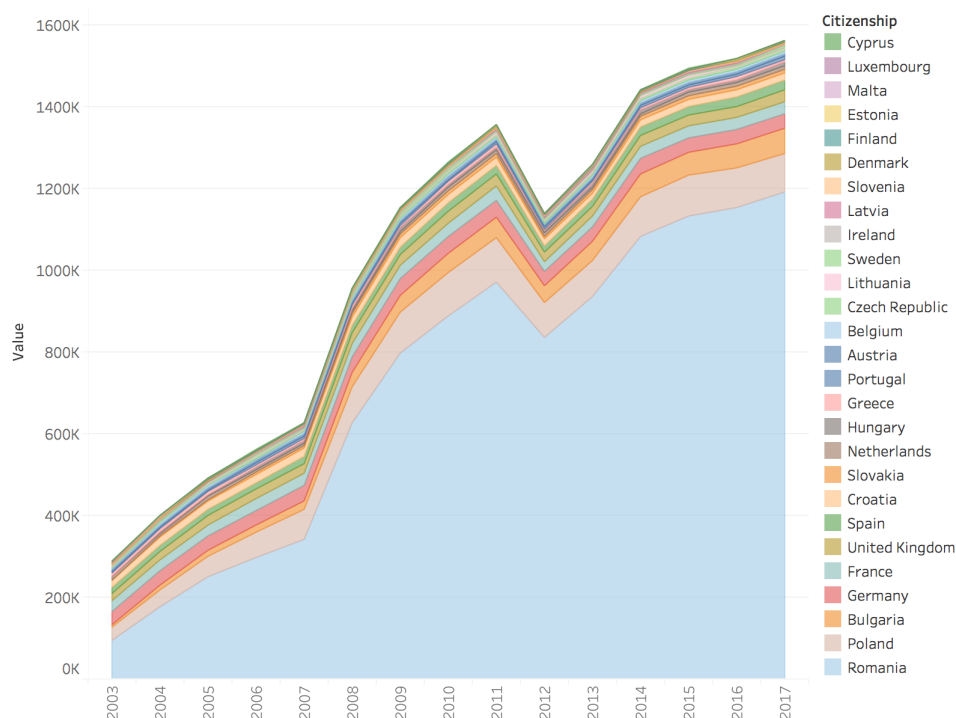
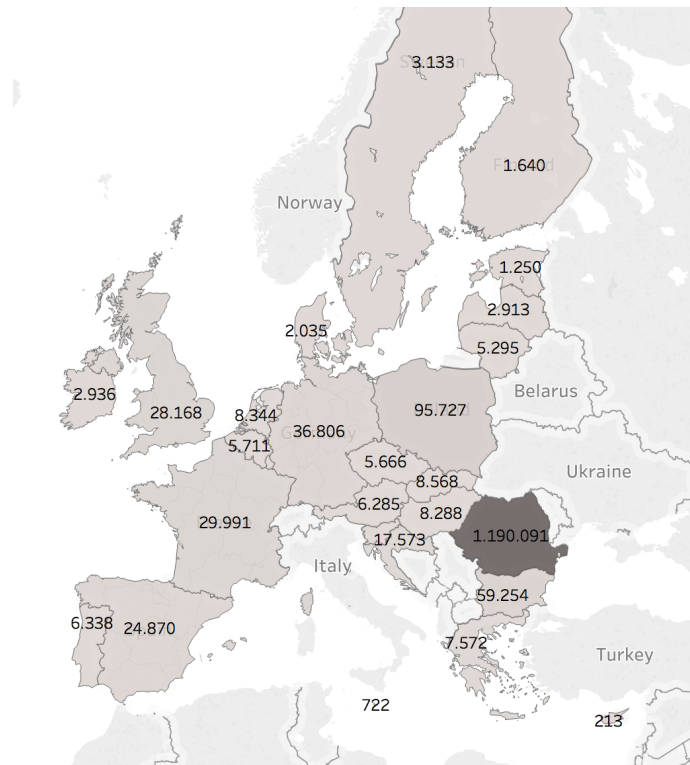
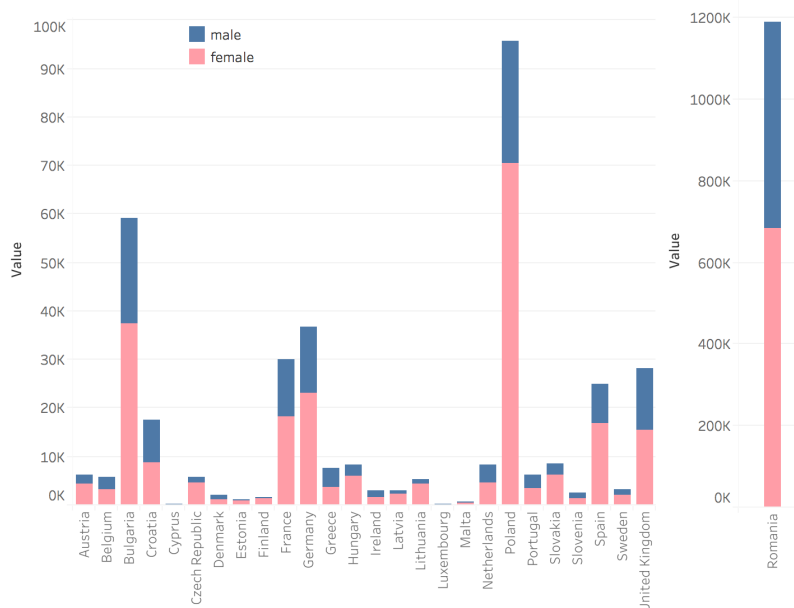


Figure 4. EU citizens in Italy, absolute values – 2017 (Source: Istat)



When boiled down to non-citizen residents from EU-27 only, the gender balance differs from the one of the total foreign population (52% females, 48% males), in that the share of females is appreciably higher and counts for 59.4%. Figure 5 (below) shows the gender distribution for each of the EU-27 populations residing in Italy.

Figure 5. Gender balance of EU citizens in Italy, 2017 (Source: Istat)



The available Italian statistics do not allow for more detailed descriptions of the socio-demographic profile of the non-citizen residents. However, in 2012 an *ad hoc* survey was carried out on the *Social Condition and Integration of Foreign Citizens* (SCIF)¹¹. While not optimally up to date, the SCIF survey can be used to provide information for a better understanding of resident foreign population. The sampling unit was the household with at least one component with foreign citizenship resident in Italy.

At the time of the survey, 73.5% of non-citizen residents from EU-27 had been living in Italy for more than five years, compared to 68.1% of Non-EU citizens, a figure that reflects well the EU legislative framework that facilitates for its citizens the right to live in another Member State (MS) (see Table 2 below). The age composition of the EU-27 was not particularly dissimilar from Non-EU citizens, but there is a notably higher percentage of individuals between 25 and 44 years of age (see Table 3 below). The average percentage of foreign citizens with tertiary education was 11.2% of the total foreign population aged six years and over; 38.4% had obtained an upper secondary diploma (see details in Table 1 in Annex 1). Overall, women were more educated than men. This feature was confirmed also among immigrants residing in the South of the country. In fact, the overall share of tertiary educated was 7.9%, but women almost equalled the national average value reaching 10.9%.

Table 2. Length of stay in Italy by origin, percent – 2012 (Source: Istat-SCIF)

Length of stay	World	Extra EU-27	EU-27
From birth	14.1	16.9	7.3
For up to 4 years	16.3	15	19.3
From 5 to 10 years	37.7	33.3	48.4
For 11 years or more	32	34.8	25.1
Total	100	100	100

Table 3. Foreign citizens in Italy by age, percent – 2012 (Source: Istat-SCIF)

Age	World	Extra EU-27	EU-27
0-13 years	19.4	21.7	13.9
14-17 years	4	4.3	3.1
18-24 years	9.6	9.7	9.5
25-34 years	23.2	21.9	26.4
35-44 years	22.7	21.2	26.1
45-54 years	13.5	13.6	13.3
55 years and over	7.6	7.6	7.7
Total	100	100	100

¹¹ Source: Istat <https://www.istat.it/en/archivio/191097> and <http://siqua.istat.it/SIQual/visualizza.do?id=8888950>

Non-resident citizens

Italy's past has been characterized by a long history of emigration mainly directed towards other European countries and overseas destinations in the American continent and Australia (Hatton and Williamson 1998: 753, Tintori 2013). As shown in Graph 1 significant numbers of people left the country even more recently, especially from 2012 on. However, Italian laws do not require that citizens who expatriate register at the consulates and communicate to their Italian municipality of residence in order to cancel their presence there, unless they have the intention of staying abroad for at least one year. Since failure to comply with the law is not sanctioned, most people typically register only when they are in need of a service from the consulate. Furthermore, many nationals residing in countries not far away from Italy, typically in one of the EU member states, deliberately avoid cancelling their Italian residency, often coinciding with their parents' or some relatives' abode, so that they can choose between the best available options in terms of healthcare and taxation.

In addition to this continuing history of emigration, Italy is one of the most generous countries in the European Union in terms of offering citizenship by descent. In fact, the Circular k.28.1 issued by the Ministry of Interior in 1991 provided the legal interpretation of the Nationality Law then in force (Act n. 555, 13 June 1912). According to the directive, in order to claim Italian origin and thereby citizenship it is sufficient to prove that an Italian male ancestor – or also female if born after 1948 – never renounced Italian nationality, so that Italian authorities can recognize them automatically as nationals by *jus sanguinis*. The Nationality Law currently in force (Act n. 91, 5 February 1992) did not modify these provisions and even further liberalized the access to nationality by descent. The number of people that retain this sort of Italian 'spare nationality' throughout the world is unknown, but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1998 estimated that it could be as many as 60,000,000 individuals.

This premise was necessary to put in perspective the data regarding the population of citizens non-residing in Italy. In fact, on the one hand, the data underestimates the actual number of Italian citizens abroad but, on the other hand, it contains a sizeable number of citizens by descent.

To complicate the matter even further, until recently the collection of data on the external population was independently carried out through three distinct data sets: one managed by the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs, through its network of consulates, one by the Ministry of the Interior with the so-called AIRE (Registry of the Italian citizens residing abroad) and one by the Municipalities. A harmonization process had started already in 2005, but it is only since 2012 that the National Register of Resident Population (ANPR) was established as the single reference database system for the entire country¹². Since the procedure has not been concluded yet, the data presented here still relies upon the best available and most up to date source: AIRE data at 31 December 2016. When possible, comparisons are drawn with data referring to previous years.

At the end of 2016, circa five million (4,973,940) Italian citizens officially resided out of the country, showing a notable increase from the numbers registered in 2003 and 2012 (Figure 6 below). As already explained, these figures include a significant share of people born to Italian parents abroad and of people who obtained Italian citizenship abroad by descent. I demonstrated elsewhere that more than one million of the newly registered AIRE members between 1998 and 2011 were mostly third generation descendants of former

¹² Decree n. 82/2005; Decree n. 179/2012, Law n.221/2012; Law n. 228/2012; Regulations n.109/2013 and n. 194/2014; Decree n. 78/2015; Law n. 125/2015.

emigrants¹³. In addition, Italian authorities had calculated that, already in 2003, 58% of the Italians officially registered as resident abroad were also born abroad¹⁴.

Figure 6. Non-resident citizens 2003-2016 (Source: AIRE)

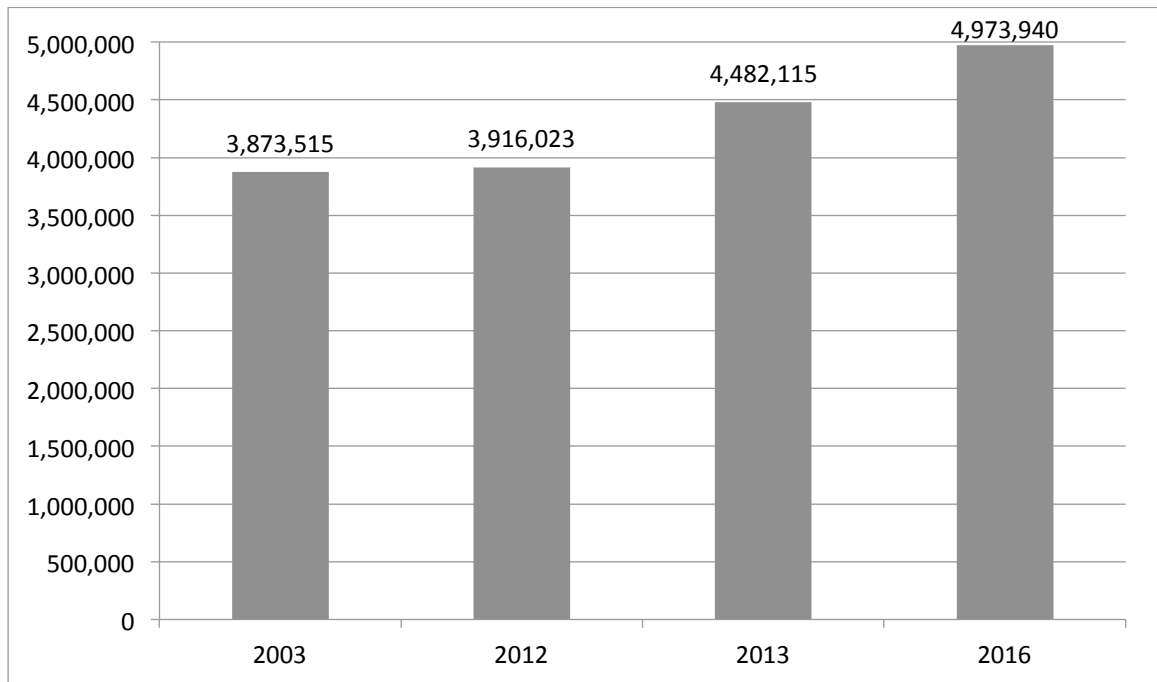


Table 4. Non-resident citizens: Ranking by country (threshold at 100k), 2016 (Source: AIRE)

Country	Absolute Value	% of Total
Argentina	804,261	16.2
Germany	723,691	14.5
Switzerland	606,949	12.2
France	403,537	8.1
Brazil	395,012	7.9
United Kingdom	283,151	5.7
Belgium	266,526	5.4
United States	257,374	5.2
Spain	152,483	3.1
Australia	143,788	2.9
Canada	141,203	2.8
Venezuela	122,483	2.5
Total	4,973,940	100

¹³ Tintori, G. 2012. 'More than one million individuals got Italian citizenship abroad in twelve years (1998-2010)', *EUDO Citizenship News*, 21 November.

¹⁴ ISTAT *Indagine sugli italiani residenti all'estero – 13 June 2012 - Allegato statistico*, page 7 <http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/64737>, last access 25 July 2018

Non-resident citizens are mainly concentrated in Europe and the Americas. Argentina, Germany, Switzerland, France and Brazil are the primary countries where they live (Table 4 above and Figure 3 in Annex 1). The data confirms once more the linkage with the mass migrations from the past and the consequences of the nationality laws. Males (52%) are slightly more than females (48%). As for the distribution by age, 15% are minors, 38% are between 19 and 44, 27% between 45 and 64, 20% over 65.

Table 5. Non-resident citizens by age brackets and gender, 2016 (Source: AIRE)

Age brackets	Males	Females	Total	% Males	% Females
0-18	384,590	364,339	748,929	51.3	48.6
19-24	203,274	192,202	395,476	51.4	48.6
25-34	375,459	338,596	714,055	52.6	47.4
35-44	427,750	359,582	787,332	54.3	45.7
45-54	402,880	324,423	727,303	55.4	44.6
55-64	306,754	289,480	596,234	51.4	48.5
65-74	233,459	240,611	474,070	49.2	50.7
over 74	248,557	281,984	530,541	46.8	53.1
Total	2,582,723	2,391,217	4,973,940	51.9	48.1

Figure 7. Non-resident citizens by age brackets – percentage, 2016 (Source: AIRE)

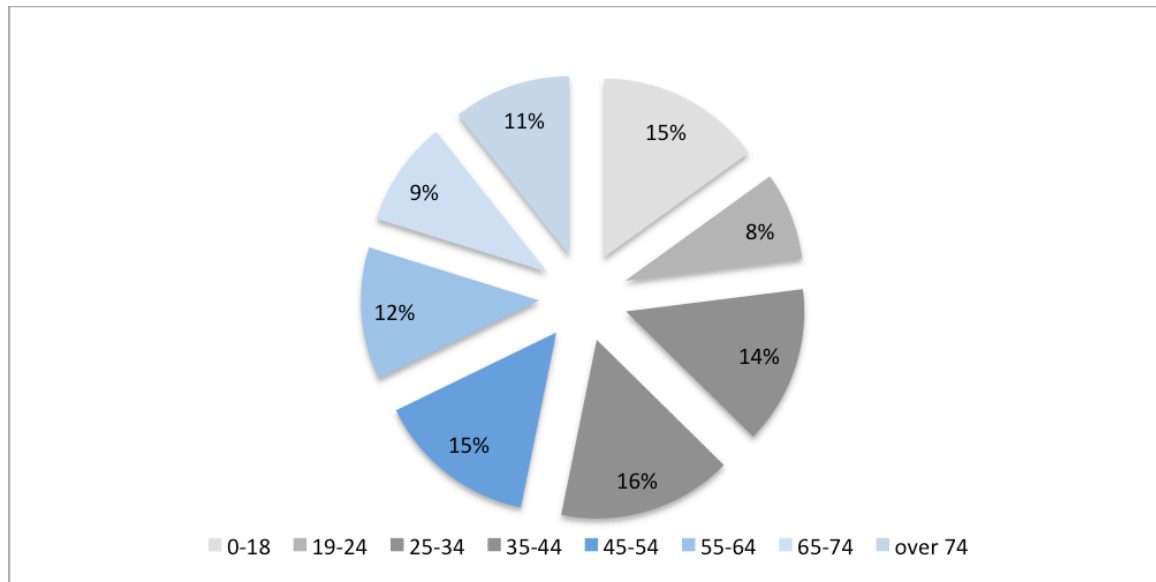


Figure 8 (below) shows the distribution of non-resident citizens by Italian region that was indicated as their or their ancestors' origin, whereas Map 5 illustrates the percentage rate of external citizens of the total local population. In absolute values, the Italian regions with the highest number of registered non-resident citizens are Sicily (744,035), Campania (486,249), Lombardy (449,503) and Lazio (441,741). When considered in relation to the local population, there are six regions whose non-resident citizens exceed 10%: Molise (28%),

Basilicata (22.2%), Calabria (20.4%), Sicily (14.7%), Friuli Venezia Giulia (14.5%) and Abruzzo (13.8%). At the moment, the available statistics do not provide additional socio-demographic indicators, such as the level of education, length of stay, family composition etc.

Figure 8. Non-resident citizens by Italian region of origin, absolute values 2016 (Source: AIRE)



Figure 9. Registered non-resident citizens as percentage of local population by region 2016 (Source: AIRE and Istat)



1.1. Summary of the Electoral Rights of Non-citizen Residents and Non-resident Citizens

Non-citizen residents

When it comes to foreign residents' electoral rights a distinction should be made between Third country nationals (TCNs) and EU citizens. In 1994 Italy ratified the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (CoE Treaty 144, 5 February 1992), with the exception of Chapter C on the right to vote in local authority elections. Consequently, TCNs do not enjoy any electoral rights in any elections regulated by Italian national and local laws. A few local administrations established advisory bodies where elected representatives of TCNs are granted a voice, but the function and legal status of these bodies are merely symbolic. Initiatives by local administrations to extend electoral rights to TCNs at local elections were ruled out between 2003 and 2005 by decisions of the Council of State and Constitutional Court that judged them unconstitutional and a matter of central state competence¹⁵.

On the contrary, EU citizens enjoy full electoral rights, both active and passive, for municipal and EP elections, by means of Act n. 52 of 6 February 1996 and the Decree Act n. 197 of 12 April 1996¹⁶. Section 2 deals more in detail with aspects regarding electoral participation and regulations, including voter registration, which is not automatic.

Non-resident citizens

The Republican Constitution of 1948 extended the right to vote for all levels of national elections for the first time to Italian citizens residing abroad, provided that they returned to Italy to cast their ballots. Absentee voting for national elections was introduced later by Constitutional Law no. 1 of 17 January 2000, no. 1 of 23 January 2001, and Act no. 459 of 27 December 2001.

In the case of EP elections, Act n. 18 of 24 January 1979 regulated the procedures for external citizens' participation, depending on bilateral agreements between the Italian state and the other MS to provide polling stations and voting facilities for Italian nationals. The transposition of EU Council Directives 93/109/EC into Italy's legislation took place by means of Law Decree n. 408 of 24 June 1994, converted into Act n. 483 of August 1994¹⁷. This legislation has further expanded the possibility of electoral participation for Italian nationals, by allowing them to vote from abroad and run as candidates, but only if residing in another Member State. Italian nationals residing outside of the EU need to return to Italy to cast their ballots. The act did not modify the voting methods. (See Table 2 in Annex 1 for a summary of the electoral rights of non-resident citizens across the various types of elections). Section 3 will deal more in detail with aspects regarding voter registration, electoral participation and regulations.

¹⁵ Constitutional Court judgments 196/2003, 2/2004, 372/2004, 379/2004; Council of State decisions: sec. 1 and 2, 6 July 2005, no. 11074/04; sec. z, 16 March 2005, no. 9771.

¹⁶ Act 52/1996: *Disposizioni per l'adempimento di obblighi derivanti dall'appartenenza dell'Italia alle Comunità europee*; Decree Act 197/1996: *Attuazione della direttiva 94/80CE concernente le modalità di esercizio del diritto di voto e di eleggibilità alle elezioni comunali per i cittadini dell'Unione Europea che risiedono in uno Stato membro di cui non hanno la cittadinanza*.

¹⁷ As amended by Act n. 128 of 24 April 1998.

2. Non-national EU Citizens' Franchise in EP and Local Elections

2.1. Overview of Relevant Administrative Regulations Including Candidacy Rights

EP elections

Act n. 18 of 24 January 1979 and Law Decree n. 408 of 24 June 1994, converted into Act n. 483 of August 1994¹⁸, provide the procedures regulating the participation of EU citizens residing in Italy at EP elections. Art. 40 of Act n. 18 of 1979¹⁹ granted already to EU citizens in Italy the right to vote for the candidates of their original MS on a principle of reciprocity, based on bilateral agreements, by which the Italian state and the other MS agreed to provide polling stations and voting facilities for the residing EU citizens. In addition, after the approval of the 1994 Acts, EU citizens residing in Italy are entitled to vote for the election of the members of the EP attributed to Italy. Similarly, an amendment to Art. 4 of Act n. 18 of 1979, introduced by Act n. 9 of 18 January 1989, granted quite early EU citizens the right to run for candidates as members of the EP attributed to Italy, provided they fulfil the requirements established by both the Italian and their national legislation.

The current procedures to run as a candidate are set by art. 2 (6) of Law Decree n. 408 of 1994. Additional conditions apply to EU citizens compared to national citizens, as the former must submit a formal declaration to the Court of Appeal, in which they must clearly state all the relevant biographic information (full name, nationality, abode in Italy), that they enjoy full electoral capacity in the MS of origin and that no Court judgment has deprived them of the right to vote in their MS of origin, the electoral constituency where they are enrolled as electors in their home MS, and that they will not submit another candidacy in any other MS. Since 1998, it is no longer necessary that the authorities of the Member State of origin certify the declaration²⁰.

Local Elections

Italy granted to EU citizens residing in Italy the right to vote and run as a candidate for the municipal elections (*Elezioni comunali*) by means of Act n. 52 of 6 February 1996 and the Decree Act n. 197 of 12 April 1996²¹. EU citizens can run for and be appointed to any elected office of the municipality, such as member of the City Council (*consigliere comunale*) or District Council (*consigliere di circoscrizione*), with the exception of the positions of Mayor and deputy Mayor, which are reserved exclusively to Italian nationals. The procedures to run as candidate are identical to those enforced in the case of the EP elections, described in the previous paragraph.

The adoption of the legislation for the voting rights at the municipal elections was possible without introducing any change into the Constitution, because the Italian legislator has maintained that Art. 11 of the Constitution can work as a sort of “European clause” that allows national legislation to integrate EU laws and directives. As a consequence, there is no

¹⁸ As amended by Act n. 128 of 24 April 1998.

¹⁹ Amended by Art. 14 of Act n. 61 of 9 April 1984 and Art. 2 of Act n. 78 of 27 March 2004.

²⁰ As amended by art. 15 Act 128 of 24 April 1998.

²¹ Act 52/1996: *Disposizioni per l'adempimento di obblighi derivanti dall'appartenenza dell'Italia alle Comunità europee*; Decree Act 197/1996: *Attuazione della direttiva 94/80CE concernente le modalità di esercizio del diritto di voto e di eleggibilità alle elezioni comunali per i cittadini dell'Unione Europea che risiedono in uno Stato membro di cui non hanno la cittadinanza*.

franchise for EU citizens that goes beyond the municipal and EP electoral rights required under EU law.

2.2. Voter Registration

Both for EP and municipal elections, registration of EU citizens as voters is not automatic. They are required to mobilize actively and request to enlist into a register of electors distinct from the nationals' (*Liste Aggiunte*)²². This is a one-off requirement and there is no need to renew the registration at each election. Enlisted EU voters are kept in the registry until they communicate their desire to withdraw from them or the Italian authorities certify that they are no longer officially residing in the related administrative district.

Modes of registration vary from municipality to municipality. However, the cited relevant Acts set up a minimum standard, by which applicants can deliver their application in person at the municipality's offices, by registered mail or fax, and even by a proxy person if in possession of a copy of the applicant's ID document. There have been a few cases where municipalities have offered the chance to apply online. This opportunity though was so far an initiative of only a few big cities, adopted for a limited amount of time close to the registration deadline before the elections.

It is important to remark that EU citizens who wish to be included in the additional registries need to have registered their residence as a prior condition. In addition, they need a specific and separate application for each of the two lists. In fact, the additional lists for EP and municipal elections are distinct and inclusion in one of the two does not imply an automatic registration for the other. Special rules apply in the case that EU non-nationals exceed 800 voters registered in a single polling station. In such cases, they are proportionally redistributed around the neighbouring polling stations.

EP elections

EU citizens must submit to the Mayor of the Italian municipality of residence a formal request to be included in the dedicated additional electoral list at least 90 days before the European elections. In their request EU citizens must clearly state their will to exercise the right to vote exclusively in Italy. They must provide all the relevant biographic information (full name, nationality, abode in Italy). They must demonstrate that they enjoy full electoral capacity in the MS of origin and that no Court judgment has deprived them of the right to vote in their MS of origin²³.

The municipality, after carrying out the appropriate inquiries to verify the absence of impeditive causes according to the national legislation, includes the applicants in the additional electoral list, which is submitted for the control and approval of the appropriate electoral commission. Applicants are duly informed about the acceptance of their application and then receive a personal electoral card. The Italian Ministry of the Interior then communicates the decision, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to the relevant authorities of the applicants' Member State. These authorities will proceed to remove them from their electoral lists. In case the application is rejected, the Italian authorities notify the

²² Decree Act 197/1996.

²³ Art. 2 (2) Act n. 408 of 1994 as amended by art. 15 Act n. 128 of 1998.

applicants with the explicit notice that they can make use of the right of appeal under the same rules provided to Italian citizens.

Local elections

EU citizens must submit to the Mayor of the Italian municipality of residence a formal request to be included in the specific additional electoral list at least 40 days before the municipal elections are held. The procedures followed by the Italian authorities to verify the application, communicate the outcome to the applicants and include them in the list are identical to those enforced in the case of the EP elections, described in the previous paragraph²⁴.

With respect to voter registration of EU citizens, Italian authorities have gathered statistics systematically, every six months, since 31 December 2008.²⁵ At the end of 2017, the number of registered EU voters was 190,860, representing 12.1% of the total EU resident population*. In absolute terms, the figure is slightly higher than the 182,337 voters registered at the end of 2014, when they however counted for 12.6% of the total EU resident population*. The gender balance within the registered voters is in favour of females – 60.1% – over males – 39.9% (in 2014, the balance was similar – 60.4% vs 39.6%). This is consistent with the figure relative to the overall population of EU residents, where women count for 59.4%. Romanians, Poles and Bulgarians, despite being the largest EU communities in Italy, all register below the total average. EU citizens that are more prone to enrol are from Luxembourg (89.7%), Belgium (60.8%), Germany (37.8%) and France (32.1%). Sardinia, Calabria and Sicily stand out as the regions with more registered EU residents. In Sardinia, from a total of 8,245 registered voters, Romanians lead in absolute numbers (2,268), followed by Germans (1,783), French (1,271) and British (1,044). In Calabria, from a total of 14,967 registered voters, the ranking is Romanians (6,418), Germans (2,456), French (1,675), and Belgians (1,279). Finally, in Sicily the data shows that from a total of 16,333 registered voters, Romanians are on top (10,479), followed by Germans (1,831), Belgians (1,053), and Poles (1,003). (See Tables 3 and 4 in Annex 1 for further details).

The available data does not allow for more than the descriptive review offered here. A more granular database would be necessary to advance any interpretive analysis. To start with, there is no detailed information concerning the socio-demographic features of the registered voters, e.g. age composition, level of education, length of residence, employment status, and main sectors of work. In addition, there are no statistics or nationwide estimates about the actual turnout of non-national EU citizens in local and EP elections.

There have been studies that have examined the political participation of EU nationals in Italy combining descriptive statistic research with qualitative research. However, their interpretive contribution is restrained to some extent by the fact that they focused on a restricted number of nationalities, their geographic coverage was limited to a relatively small portion of the territory and the sampled population was not surveyed longitudinally (see e.g. Recchi 2012). For example, the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) conducted a survey in 12 mid-sized Italian towns and cities²⁶ to monitor the electoral participation in the municipal and European elections of EU citizens in 2010. The survey

²⁴ Art. 1 and 3, Law Decree n. 197 of 12 April 1996; Art. 1, Law Decree n. 3 of 27 January 2009 as amended by Law n. 26 of 25 March 2009.

²⁵ The Department of Internal and territorial affairs of the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for the collection and publication of such data, which are limited to the municipal elections only. The dataset is accessible at https://dait.interno.gov.it/elezioni/rileseme/index_ricerca.php

²⁶ Alessandria, Asti, Bologna, Firenze, Forlì, Genoa, Padua, Parma, Reggio Emilia, Turin, Varese and Verona.

showed that only 8% of the eligible EU residents actually registered to vote either for the municipal or the European elections (or both) in the additional lists. Among the registered EU electors, over 70% were enrolled for the municipal elections, while just over 40% were enrolled for the EP elections (ANCI 2012).

All studies correctly remark that Romanians, in absolute numbers, systematically rank first as registered electors across all surveyed datasets and territories. This is obviously due to the fact that the Romanian community is ten times larger than the second and third combined together (Poles and Bulgarians). Thus, even though 10.4% of them register, that is sufficient to put them on top. However, as the maps in Figure 4 in Annex 1 showcase, the provinces with the highest shares of registered voters do not coincide with the provinces where Romanian residents concentrate.

Once again, more granular data and more refined fieldwork are needed to understand why some EU nationals enrol in greater numbers than others and why they do so in some particular provinces and not others. For example, surveys, media reports and interviews with the respective consular authorities suggest that Romanians, Poles and Bulgarians tend to register below the average in Italy, because of a general disaffection towards politics, manifested not only towards its local Italian dimension, but also in relation to their country of origin's elections and their own national candidates for the European elections (COSPE 2014; Recchi 2012)²⁷. Still, much remains to be examined, including some anomalies such as the fact that EU residents that join the additional electoral lists seem to be concentrated in some provinces of the South and, particularly, in the regions of Sardinia, Calabria and Sicily, where the electoral participation of Italian nationals is traditionally lower than in the rest of the country. In fact, the turnout at national elections for these three regions is usually between 7 and 12 points below the national average.

Generally speaking, all sources – EU delegations, associations of EU nationals, consular authorities and NGOs – tend to agree about the most important practical obstacles for registration experienced by EU citizens. The principal difficulty is the need to actively submit an *ad hoc* application to the local authorities and the deadlines in relation to the electoral dates. In this respect, the practice is described as cumbersome and complicated. Application forms are generally not provided in all EU languages, but in Italian, with English, French and Romanian as the more recurrent alternative options. They are rarely available online and only in a minority of cases can the applications be submitted by email. In addition, EU nationals are typically informed or seek information about the registration mostly in close proximity to the elections' dates. Yet, local bureaucracies might take a while to process the applications, possibly more than 40 or 90 days. Furthermore, some EU residents perceive the procedure and the existence of additional lists as discriminating between them and the other – i.e. national – local residents in terms of access to electoral rights. In fact, the latter receive their electoral cards automatically at home by mail, soon after they become residents in the municipality or when they come of age. Another aspect that plays a role in discouraging the participation of EU non-nationals is the Italian electoral system, which is complex and varies depending on the type of election.

Another issue that was indicated as crucial concerns the communication and the quality of information that is offered to the EU residents in Italy. The EU portal *Your Europe* hosts all the information concerning the lives of mobile European citizens, including their electoral rights, in all EU languages. Occasional awareness-raising activities are also carried out in collaboration with agencies of a specific Member State, close to the elections' dates or

²⁷ M. Cinar, *Comunitari Alle Urne - Intervista con il Viceconsole polacco di Milano*, 25 February 2014; M. Cinar, *Comunitari Alle Urne - Risponde l'Ambasciata della Romania*, 5 March 2014.

during cultural events. However, EU residents are more likely to interact with the Italian authorities and local administrations and, in this case, the main complaint that some associations of EU nationals especially underscored is that the information is not easily accessible and not always clear. The Ministry of the interior dedicates a section of its website to the electoral rights and participation of EU residents, but the webpage is exclusively in Italian and the information is sparse²⁸. According to the mentioned sources, there is no common standard adopted by local municipalities, in terms of how they inform the EU residents about their voting rights. In principle, when registering as residents, EU citizens are always informed about the option of enrolling in the additional electoral lists, but the methods by which such an option is communicated vary from the mere presence of a multilingual poster in the municipal office, to a verbal reminder from the clerk processing the practice, to a written document accompanying the documentation attesting the residence registration.

Moreover, the presence of a dedicated section on the municipality's webpage is not systematic. For example, when reviewing the municipality's websites of the largest cities (Rome and Milan) or a city with a high share of EU residents (Turin), the information concerning the voting rights, the relative forms and application procedures are difficult to find even for a native speaker. The information and documentations related to the voting rights are decoupled from the section concerning the residency status and, in many cases, the ways in which the hierarchy of site pages is organized are not clear and consistent, making it particularly difficult to find them.

Figure 5 in Annex 1 shows the example of the municipality of Milan and the sequence of passages necessary to reach the relevant page. The information and documentations concerning the voting rights for EU residents are available only in the Italian version at a third level subsection of the home page. Since there is no direct link to there from the section regarding residency, registered EU residents interested in their voting rights should browse the website, guessing that the sought for section might be under the label *Partecipa* – literally, Participate – of the navigation bar (step 1). They should then choose the option *Come votare* – literally, How to vote (step 2) and finally click on the banner *Cittadini UE residenti in Italia* – literally, EU citizens residing in Italy – to reach the pertinent information and forms (step 3).

2.3. Information during Election Campaigns and Attitude of Political Parties

European authorities, Italian local administrations and non-governmental organisations, such as associations of EU residents, proactively inform EU citizens about their electoral rights through campaigns that take place both online and offline²⁹. For example, the EC and EP delegations in Italy, located in Rome and Milan, actively promote the *Your Europe* portal online, by phone or in person when contacted.

The Italian NGO COSPE has been coordinating two EU funded projects aiming to promote the participation of EU citizens in public and political life. With a view to raise awareness among mobile EU citizens about their voting rights at EP and local elections, COSPE led two international projects: *Operation vote - Enhancing participation of EU citizens in European Parliament and local elections*, that ran between 2012 and 2014, in cooperation with partners from Italy, Austria, Portugal, Spain, Sweden; and *Participation matters*, which took place in 2016-2017 with partners from Italy, Austria and Spain. The latter

²⁸ <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/temi/elezioni-e-referendum/cittadini-comunitari-urne>

²⁹ Source: Questionnaires handed out to civil servants in the relevant public administration, EU delegations, and members of civil society organisations.

further developed the previous effort to enhance awareness and promote active engagement of European mobile citizens and their associations on the political rights, as well as to improve the knowledge and expertise of local authorities on the matter³⁰. Both projects were implemented in close collaboration with organizations working with migrants from European countries.

The actions of *Participation matters* in particular included activities such as participatory meetings with local authorities, awareness raising events, training courses of political engagement, handbooks with practical information on how to register and how to vote addressed to EU mobile citizens, innovative information campaigns that made use of digital storytelling videos and social media targeted to EU movers³¹. By the same token, the project dedicated similar efforts to actions of awareness raising and advocacy with local institutions, national authorities and political parties, to disseminate best practices carried out by municipalities and EU movers associations in fostering political participation. To this end, the project issued a *European Handbook on Good Practices* and three *Guidelines for local authorities*, one for each participating country, available online through open access³².

In the case of Italy, COSPE could count, among others, on the cooperation of the Tuscany Region, the Tuscan and Emilia-Romagna Chapters of ANCI, the associations *Associazione Spirit Românesc* and *Europaeus*. The informative materials were published in Italian and English, with the exception of the publication *Voting in Italy, instructions manual* that is available in Romanian and Polish too.

EP elections

The EU delegations are currently engaged in the campaign *This Time I'm Voting*, designed to incentivize EU citizens' participation in the upcoming EP elections of 2019, including those living in another MS³³. The initiative is pan-European and implemented in all the official languages of the EU-28.

Local elections

Italian authorities carry out informational activities sporadically and almost exclusively as the time of elections approaches. In addition, these campaigns tend to target specific nationalities – typically the most numerous, such as the Romanian and Polish ones – and not the resident European citizens at large; this aspect is reflected also in the choice of additional languages, if any, adopted next to Italian in the communication; they are not coordinated at national level, but organised locally, often through a collaboration between local authorities and the association of EU nationals that has been able to credit itself as the one representing the largest community in the territory. It should also be noted that there are more than 8,000 municipalities in Italy and their electoral schedules are not synchronized at national level, thus rendering the information campaigns and their timing even more scattered. In this respect, the engagement of EU residents is not structural and it is often left to the political sensitivity of local authorities that consider the involvement of community leaders as the main instrument to carry out an effective communication work.

³⁰ See: <http://participationmatters.eu/> ; <https://www.cospe.org/news/operation-vote/>

³¹ See <https://www.facebook.com/LaPartecipazioneConta/>; <http://participationmatters.eu/2016/09/09/voting-in-italy-three-guides-for-european-mobile-citizens/>

³² See <http://participationmatters.eu/download/>

³³ <https://www.thisimeinvoting.eu/>

2.4 Political Parties and Candidacy Rights

Concerning the relationship between Italian parties and the EU mobile citizens, there are no obstacles in the Italian legislation concerning the membership, participation and candidacy of the latter. However, since parties in Italy are private associations, their statutes regulate the functioning of their membership. As a matter of fact, only two of the current main parties preclude the affiliation of non-nationals: Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* (translated to "Forward Italy") and the governing *Movimento Cinque Stelle* (Five Star Movement), which both limit the possibility to join the party to Italian citizens.

No data is available on the number of EU citizens who are members of Italian parties or standing as candidates. According to COSPE's report (2014), such data is not even collected by the Italian parties and the representatives they interviewed as sources showed inadequate knowledge of the different legal status between EU and non-EU citizens, in terms of electoral rights.

EP elections

With regard to EP elections, data about EU residents running as candidates is not available. Quite strikingly, though, the first – and so far only – case in which an EU citizen became a MEP in representation of Italy occurred back in 1989. In that year's elections, in fact, the French politician Maurice Duverger was elected at the EP as a member of the Italian Communist Party.

Local elections

The COSPE's report (2014) underlines a growth of Romanian candidates at local elections since 2009, when Romanian citizens were recorded as running not only in small towns, but also in medium-large cities, where a few were successfully elected as councillors. Yet, despite a higher number of candidates, the number of elected representatives has not increased proportionally. Quoting the blog www.iromeni.com by Romanian activist Miruna Cajvaneanu as a source, COSPE reports that of about 150 Romanian candidates between 2011 and 2013 only two were elected.

As far as local elections are concerned, the Ministry of the Interior supplies a *Registry of local and regional administrators*, a database that lists all elected officials at local and regional offices, constantly updated following each election³⁴. Unfortunately, the elected officials are registered not by citizenship but by country of birth, thus making any calculation of elected EU-nationals extremely speculative, if not impossible.

³⁴ <https://dait.interno.gov.it/elezioni/anagrafe-amministratori>

3. Non-resident Citizens' Franchise in National and EP Elections when Residing in Other EU Member States

3.1. Overview of Relevant Administrative Regulations Including Voter Registration and Candidacy Rights

EP Elections

Electoral rights for external citizens participating in EP elections are not the same as for participation in national elections. Act n. 18 of 24 January 1979 and Law Decree n. 408 of 24 June 1994, converted into Act n. 483 of August 1994³⁵ have regulated the procedures for external citizens' participation in EP elections.

A law of 1979 (Art. 26-40) granted Italian citizens permanently or temporarily residing in another MS the right to vote for members of the EP attributed to Italy, depending on bilateral agreements between the Italian state and the other MS to provide polling stations and voting facilities for Italian nationals. The procedure was in-person voting at consulates and other designated polling stations for assimilated representation into local voting districts, based on the last place of residence.

The transposition of EU Council Directives 93/109/EC into Italy's legislation, by means of Law Decree n. 408 of 24 June 1994, converted into Act n. 483 of August 1994³⁶, has further expanded the possibility of electoral participation for Italian nationals residing in other MSs, but has not modified the voting methods. Those eligible to be electors are all Italian nationals: legally adult (18 years old.); residing in a MS and registered with the AIRE. Italian citizens who are temporarily in another MS for work or studies can vote abroad too, provided they notify their presence and intention to vote to the competent consulate, 80 days before elections. The Italian authorities then inform the mayor of the municipality where the citizen normally resides in Italy. Should the citizen return to Italy before the elections, they are allowed to vote at their usual polling station if they notify the electoral office of their municipality at least one day before the elections. Since the 2009 EP elections, a few categories of citizens residing in third countries were also allowed to vote (Art. 2 of Act n. 26 of 25 March 2009). These categories of citizens were: members of the army, police corps officially serving overseas, civil servants and diplomats, professors and researchers temporarily employed by universities or research centres abroad.

While, for the categories of citizens included in the 2009 Act, postal voting is the method used to cast their ballot, the general method used for the 'regular' external electors is in-person voting at consulates and other designated polling stations. All votes converge through assimilated representation into local voting districts based on the last place of residence. The electoral system is proportional and voters can choose individual candidates representing five territorial constituencies. Before the elections, Italian nationals residing in a MS can choose if they prefer to vote for the members of the EP attributed to Italy or to the MS in which they live. The candidacy rights of Italians residing in a MS are equal to those of the citizens residing in Italy.

³⁵ As amended by Act n. 128 of 24 April 1998.

³⁶ As amended by Act n. 128 of 24 April 1998.

National elections

Italian citizens permanently residing abroad can vote for Italy's parliamentary elections and national referenda by mail. As far as national elections are concerned, the system establishes a special representation with discrete seats for external voters. Italian non-residents elect six senators and twelve deputies to the national parliament, in representation of one constituency (*Circoscrizione Estero*) divided into four geographic districts (*Ripartizioni*) – Europe, South America, North and Central America, and Asia-Africa-Oceania. The electoral system is proportional and voters can choose individual candidates.

Previous or future residence in the country is not a condition for the franchise. To exercise their rights, external citizens must register with the AIRE of the consulate in the country where they reside. Electoral regulations are such that the many descendants of Italian emigrants who get their citizenship by descent abroad are more likely to be enrolled in the electoral lists than Italians temporarily residing or traveling out of the country, because the former are automatically registered with the AIRE when they receive their passport and their electoral cards are delivered to their residence³⁷. Italians temporarily residing or travelling abroad, in order to vote, must instead actively register at the consulate by 31 December of the year preceding the elections and provide a permanent address abroad³⁸. Those officially serving overseas who are members of the army, police corps, civil service and diplomatic representations; and professors, researchers and students temporarily employed by universities or research centres out of the country, are allowed, since 2006, to vote by mail from abroad with a special late enrolment³⁹.

The right to run as a candidate for the external constituency is reserved exclusively to Italian nationals listed in the AIRE. Permanent non-resident citizens can also opt between personal in-country voting or postal voting from abroad⁴⁰. If they are dual nationals and are elected to the Italian parliament, they are not required to renounce their other nationality. As far as local elections are concerned (municipal, provincial, regional and local referenda), non-residents, both permanent and temporary, must return to the country when elections are held. Non-resident citizens can run as candidates.

3.2. Turnout and Political Debates

The Ministry of the Interior provides statistics about the turnout of non-resident citizens in EP and national elections. Table 6 summarizes the data concerning the EP elections of 2014 and 2009. Overall, the number of registered electors grew from 1.2 million in 2009 to 1.4 million in 2014. The MS with the highest number of Italian residents registered to vote are Germany, France, Belgium and the UK. On the other hand, the turnout decreased from an already low 7.4% to an even lower 5.9%. This trend is consistent with a similar drop in the turnout

³⁷ On this issue, see my note on the EUDO Citizenship website: [More than one million individuals got Italian citizenship abroad in twelve years \(1998-2010\)](#)

³⁸ Art. 16 and 17 of the Regulations of the Law on external voting (DPR n. 104 of 2 April 2003) seem to open the opportunity for late registration of nationals who are temporarily out of the country, provided they make a request to vote from abroad at an Italian consulate eleven days before the elections are held and are able to demonstrate that their registration to the AIRE is still being processed or that they were mistakenly excluded from the electoral lists.

³⁹ Act n. 22 of 27 January 2006.

⁴⁰ If they opt for personal in-country voting, they must communicate their decision to the Consulate by December 31 of the year before the elections are held or, in case of snap elections, ten days after the new elections are officially called (art. 4 Law N. 459 of 2001).

recorded in Italy, possibly a sign of a slight disaffection by Italians towards politics and, in this specific case, the European institutions.⁴¹

Table 6. EP elections: Italian Electors and Turnout by Member State of residence, 2014 and 2009 (Source: Ministry of the Interior)

Country	2014		2009	
	Electors	Turnout %	Electors	Turnout %
Austria	16,279	15.7	11,059	14.5
Belgium	203,904	4.8	180,195	5.6
Bulgaria	877	12.6	659	69.6
Croatia	12,202	6.1	N.A.	N.A.
Cyprus	642	23.5	577	62.2
Czech Rep.	2,701	17.8	1,729	44.2
Denmark	4,089	12.8	2,778	14.3
Estonia	208	20.2	127	35.4
Finland	1,892	11.1	1,218	20.4
France	298,211	6.8	272,674	7.6
Germany	513,125	4.9	456,806	6.9
Greece	8,882	14.5	7,761	14
Hungary	1,918	12.5	1,268	15.9
Ireland	7,232	13.1	5,455	9.9
Latvia	105	0	96	31.2
Lithuania	117	0	124	33.9
Luxembourg	16,912	14.3	17,000	12.9
Malta	1,811	19.9	982	24.3
Netherlands	26,692	7.8	22,446	9.2
Poland	2,753	13.9	1,738	16
Portugal	3,823	12.7	2,953	27.5
Romania	3,525	8	2,072	20.4
Slovakia	787	14.3	371	26.9
Slovenia	3,016	9.3	2,274	13.9
Spain	80,780	5.5	59,209	7.8
Sweden	8,261	7.6	5,368	15.2
United Kingdom	185,547	5.1	150,134	6.4
Total	1,406,291	5.9	1,207,073	7.4
Italy	49,256,169	58.7	49,135,080	66.5

Table 7 (below) shows similar data concerning the national elections of 2018 and 2013. In this case, the figures refer to the registered electors and turnout for the external citizens residing in a MS, but it should be noted that the Europe electoral district includes also Non-EU states. In the whole district, electors grew from 1.88 million in 2013 to 2.26 million in 2018. In 2018, the MS with the highest number of Italian residents registered to vote are still Germany, France, Belgium and the UK. The turnout decreased but less decisively than in the case of EP elections, from 30.6% to 29.9%. This might be due to a higher stake that

⁴¹ See e.g. Eurobarometer 2018 89.2, D72.

external electors retain towards domestic politics, even though a more likely explanation lies in the fact that non-resident citizens vote by mail for national elections.

Table 7. National elections (Chamber): Italian Electors and Turnout by MS of residence, 2018 and 2013 (Source: Ministry of the Interior)

Country	2018		2013	
	Electors	Turnout %	Electors	Turnout %
Austria	24,358	42.6	15,561	43.3
Belgium	230,549	21.3	210,572	22.6
Bulgaria	1,848	41.2	703	45.7
Croatia	13,848	38.3	11,285	48.8
Cyprus	865	47.8	550	54.7
Czech Republic	4,335	47.3	2,388	48.8
Denmark	6,821	39.4	3,993	40.9
Estonia	423	57.7	160	57.5
Finland	2,810	41.9	1,965	48.6
France	336,808	26.7	306,554	26.9
Germany	606,613	26.8	509,951	27.9
Greece	9,971	35.8	8,869	44.8
Hungary	2,743	45.1	1,680	46.4
Ireland	13,179	34.9	6,401	41
Latvia	368	71.2	90	45.5
Lithuania	260	53.5	100	50
Luxembourg	23,200	39.8	19,010	40.1
Malta	4,743	48.7	1,362	52.5
Netherlands	36,854	32	28,175	34.2
Poland	4,420	49.8	2,341	47
Portugal	7,797	41.3	3,767	37.4
Romania	5,821	38.9	3,035	40.1
Slovakia	1,143	48.5	657	50.5
Slovenia	3,842	45.1	2,830	46.5
Spain	131,634	23.5	95,731	24.3
Sweden	10,943	37.7	7,778	41.3
United Kingdom	255,245	31.1	172,908	31.6
Total Europe (incl. Non-EU)	2,261,416	29.9	1,886,645	30.6
Italy	46,505,350	72.9	46,905,154	75.2

Both in the media and political debate, the current legislation on external voting for national elections has received numerous criticisms. To begin with, since many irregularities emerged in voting operations and candidacy procedures, many argue that the whole system and postal voting do not comply with article 48 of the Constitution that states that voting should be ‘personal and equal, free and secret’. Secondly, a large portion of the external

electorate is formed of individuals who obtained citizenship through their heritage, whose interests in and connections to the political life of the country are limited, but were automatically enlisted in the AIRE when their passport was issued. Italians temporarily living or residing abroad protested that their enrolment is much more problematic and demands an active request. A positive discrimination in favour of external citizens was highlighted also regarding the passive electorate, since they can stand as candidate both for the external and the national constituency, whereas the former is reserved exclusively to those residing abroad. Lastly, parliamentary members elected abroad can have a decisive effect in the event of razor-thin majorities. This happened during the XV legislature of the Italian Parliament (April 28, 2006 – April 28th, 2009), when some senators elected abroad were able to assume a crucial role in the Prodi government. However, the weight of external voters largely depends on the type of electoral law used for political elections and whether or not majority prizes are granted in both Chambers and has remained relatively low and scarcely able to influence decision-making processes (Tintori 2012).

4. Conclusion

This report analysed the Italian case in respect to the voting rights and political participation of mobile EU citizens – both non-national residents and national non-residents. Overall, the legal framework implemented by the Italian State does not encompass significant deterrents or patent discriminations concerning the exercise of political rights of these categories of citizens. In principle, they enjoy electoral rights under the same conditions as national residents, both in the EP and local elections. By the same token, there are no particular obstacles in relation to the right to join or found political parties and to take part in the Italian political life, including by means of non-electoral political initiatives. More specifically, there is no evidence of complications related to citizens with disabilities or belonging to minorities, women's political engagement and gender equality.

On the other hand, a series of problematic issues emerged from a deeper examination of the ways in which the legislation is implemented. In particular, the need for improvements that could enhance political participation by EU citizens was indicated in the domains of registration procedures, communication strategy and access to the relevant information, as well as data collection.

Voter registration

In the case of non-resident citizens, registration for Italians temporarily residing or being abroad (i.e. less than one year) is more demanding compared to long-standing external citizens or citizens by ancestry, who are automatically registered and who receive their electoral cards at home by postal mail. A possible remedy would be to ask all citizens abroad, regardless of their residence status and length of stay, to register at consulates before each national and EP elections as a majority of states, including many Member States, already do.

As far as EU non-national residents are concerned, they are not registered automatically when they take residence but must proactively request to join separate electoral rolls, both for EP and municipal elections. Even though this is a one-off requirement and there is no need to renew the registration at each election, this mechanism was described as potentially discouraging, bureaucratically cumbersome and, to some extent, perceived as discriminatory, since active registration is seen as an additional burden on mobile EU citizens.

Registration must be carried out again every time the place of residence is changed. In addition, bureaucratic issues might arise and there is a risk that voters might not enter on the electoral roll sufficiently in advance of polling day, considering EU citizens need to register on the lists at least 90 days before the EP elections and 40 days before the administrative elections.

The introduction of an automatic registration at the moment of taking residence would solve many of the criticalities in this realm. Italian authorities have already addressed the matter and bills reforming the registration procedures aimed at adopting an automatic mechanism have been introduced and discussed in the Italian parliament, so far to no avail. In the meantime, a possible remedy could consist in improving the communications on electoral rights and voting procedure targeted to EU residents.

Communication and access to relevant information/documents

In principle, albeit by different means, national and local authorities carry out activities to inform mobile EU citizens of their electoral rights. Communications range from information on official websites to campaigns specifically targeting EU nationals, to individual letters sent before the election date. However, much could be done to ensure that the relevant information is provided in good time and in an appropriate manner.

First of all authorities' communication channels should be accessible also to people who have imperfect abilities in the local language. Secondly, municipalities show a great degree of autonomy in the modes they employ to inform local EU residents on how to register their residence and enrol in the additional lists, resulting in a puzzling mixture of tools and messages. Finally, communication campaigns tend to concentrate exclusively at election times.

A viable solution could be if the Ministry of the Interior set up clear and exhaustive guidelines to be adopted consistently across the whole territory, recommending that information and application forms concerning residence and electoral rights were handed out jointly in a systematic manner all year round. This coordination should include online portals, such as the websites of the Ministry itself and of the municipalities. In this respect, the Ministry could add a section entirely dedicated to EU mobile citizens, visible in the homepage, with all registration forms on offer. This webpage could also be proposed as a template for the homepage of the local administrations. This would help to solve the highlighted issues of navigational clarity and guarantee access to the relevant information and forms even during non-election times.

Data collection and analysis

As pointed out in several places of this report, the kind of data that is available on mobile EU citizens makes it difficult to draw further considerations and conclusions. Better local-level data collection appears necessary on mobile EU citizens' socio-demographic features and exercise of political rights. This kind of granular and nuanced evidence is key to support targeted EU and Member State policymaking, to understand and address the causes of low turnout, and to enhance the political participation of EU citizens across all elections.

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Annex 1. Detailed overviews of demographics of voters, electoral rights and voter registration in Italy

Figure 1: Immigration to and emigration from Italy, 2007-2017 (Source: Istat)

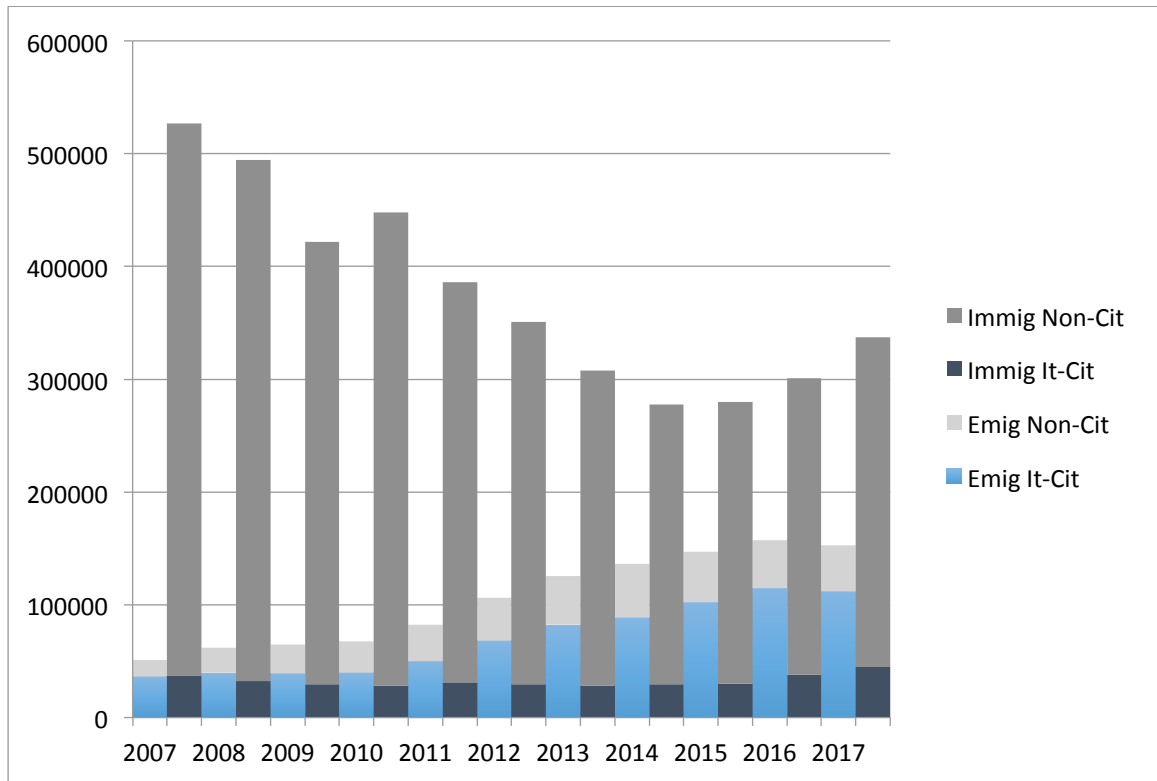


Figure 2. EU27 residents in Italy 2003-17 – (Source: Istat)

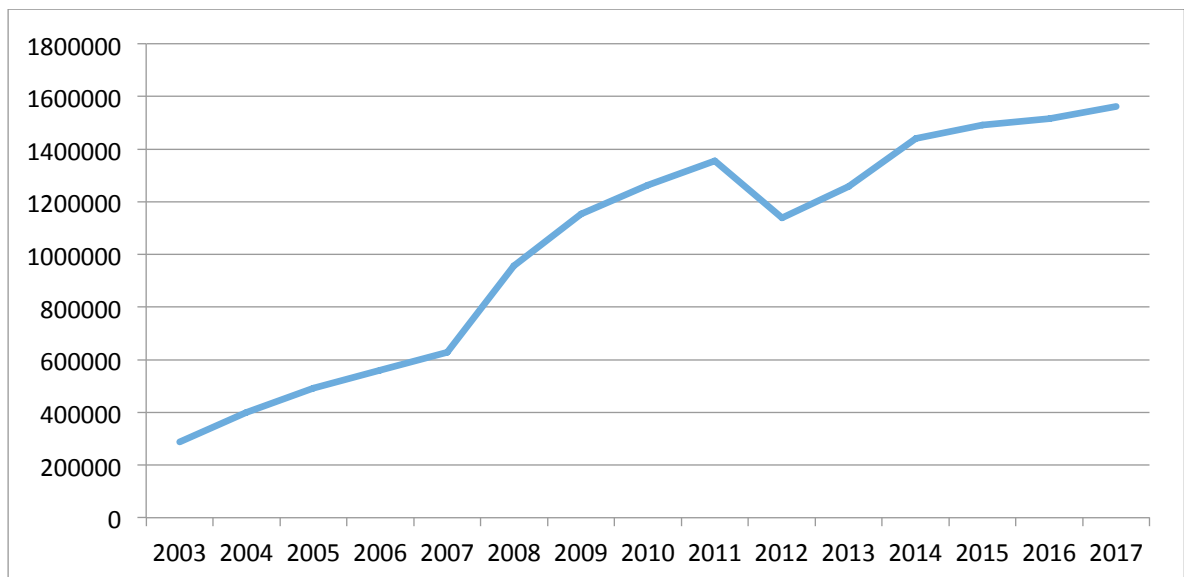


Figure 3. Percentage of non-resident citizens by Continent, 2016 (Source: AIRE)

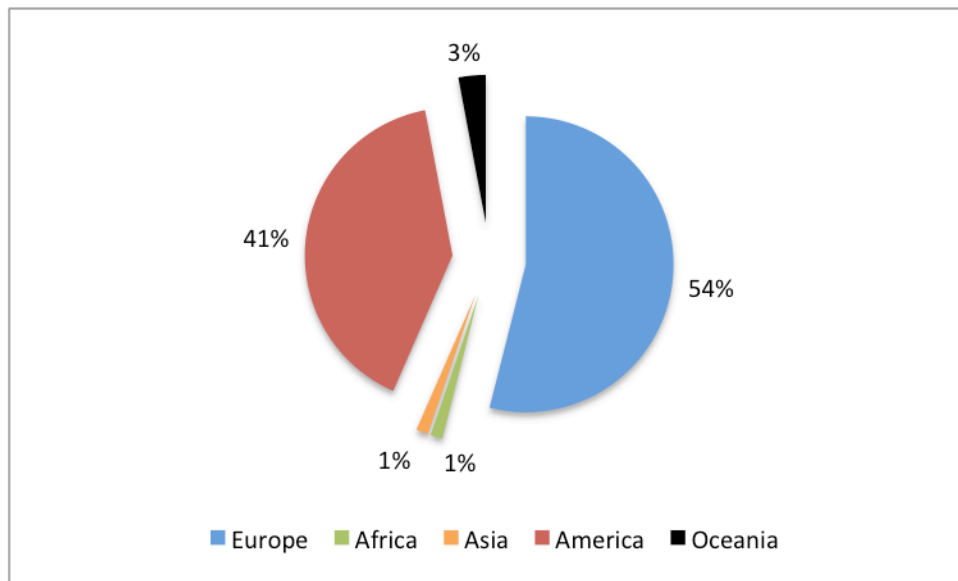


Table 1. Foreign citizens aged six years and over by level of education (percentage) – 2012 (Source: Istat-SCIF)

Level of education			no education	primary	lower secondary	upper secondary	tertiary	total
Territory	Gender							
Italy	males		16	9.9	29.9	35.7	8.5	100
	females		13	8.1	24.6	40.7	13.5	100
	total		14.4	9	27.1	38.4	11.2	100
North-West	males		16.4	9.8	29.5	34.4	9.9	100
	females		14.1	8.8	24.8	39	13.4	100
	total		15.1	9.3	27	36.8	11.8	100
North-East	males		16.5	9.6	28	37.5	8.5	100
	females		14.2	7.4	25.1	38.4	14.9	100
	total		15.3	8.4	26.4	38	11.9	100
Centre	males		13.6	9	30.4	38.2	8.9	100
	females		10.8	7.7	22	45.8	13.7	100
	total		12.1	8.3	25.8	42.3	11.5	100
South	males		18.1	12.7	34.4	30.8	4	100
	females		12.2	8.7	27.8	40.4	10.9	100
	total		14.8	10.5	30.7	36.2	7.9	100

Table 2. Electoral rights of non-resident citizens in Italy by type of election

Election type	Right Voting	Right Candidacy	Automatic registration
European Parliament	YES (in-country voting; citizens residing in another MS can vote at consulates or opt to vote for candidates of the MS where they reside)	YES	NO (at first registration; then automatic)
National Presidential	N.A. (indirect election)	YES	N.A.
National Legislative	YES (choice between postal voting or in-country voting)	YES	YES (for second generation or newly recognized citizens) NO (for expatriates at first registration; then automatic)
National Referendum	YES	N.A.	YES (for second generation or newly recognized citizens) NO (for expatriates at first registration; then automatic)
Regional Presidential	YES (in-country voting only)	YES	YES (for second generation or newly recognized citizens) NO (for expatriates at first registration; then automatic)
Regional Legislative	YES (in-country voting only)	YES	YES (for second generation or newly recognized citizens) NO (for expatriates at first registration; then automatic)
Regional Referendum	YES (in-country voting only)	YES	YES (for second generation or newly recognized citizens) NO (for expatriates at first registration; then automatic)
Local Municipality	YES (in-country voting only)	YES	YES (for second generation or newly recognized citizens) NO (for expatriates at first registration; then automatic)
Local Legislative	YES (in-country voting only)	YES	YES (for second generation or newly recognized citizens) NO (for expatriates at first registration; then automatic)
Local Referendum	YES (in-country voting only)	YES	YES (for second generation or newly recognized citizens) NO (for expatriates at first registration; then automatic)

Table 3. Registered EU voters for Municipal elections - absolute values and as percentage of each EU resident population* by country, 1 January 2018 (Source: Ministry of the Interior, Istat)

	Country - in (...) ranking by population	Registered electors	% of total population*
	Romania (1)	123,820	10.4
	Germany (4)	13,906	37.8
	Poland (2)	10,643	11.1
	France (5)	9,621	32.1
	United Kingdom (6)	6,765	24.0
	Bulgaria (3)	6,096	10.3
	Spain (7)	4,558	18.3
	Belgium (15)	3,473	60.8
	Netherlands (10)	2,154	25.8
0	Austria (14)	1,880	29.9
1	Greece (12)	1,146	15.1
2	Czech Republic (16)	875	15.4
3	Portugal (13)	726	11.5
4	Ireland (19)	647	22.0
5	Slovakia (9)	641	7.5
6	Sweden (18)	582	18.6
7	Hungary (11)	576	6.9
8	Denmark (22)	513	25.2
9	Croatia (8)	491	2.8
0	Lithuania (17)	437	8.3
1	Finland (23)	320	19.5
2	Slovenia (21)	226	9.0
3	Latvia (20)	214	7.3
4	Luxembourg (26)	209	89.7
5	Malta (25)	198	27.4
6	Estonia (24)	108	8.6
7	Cyprus (27)	35	16.4

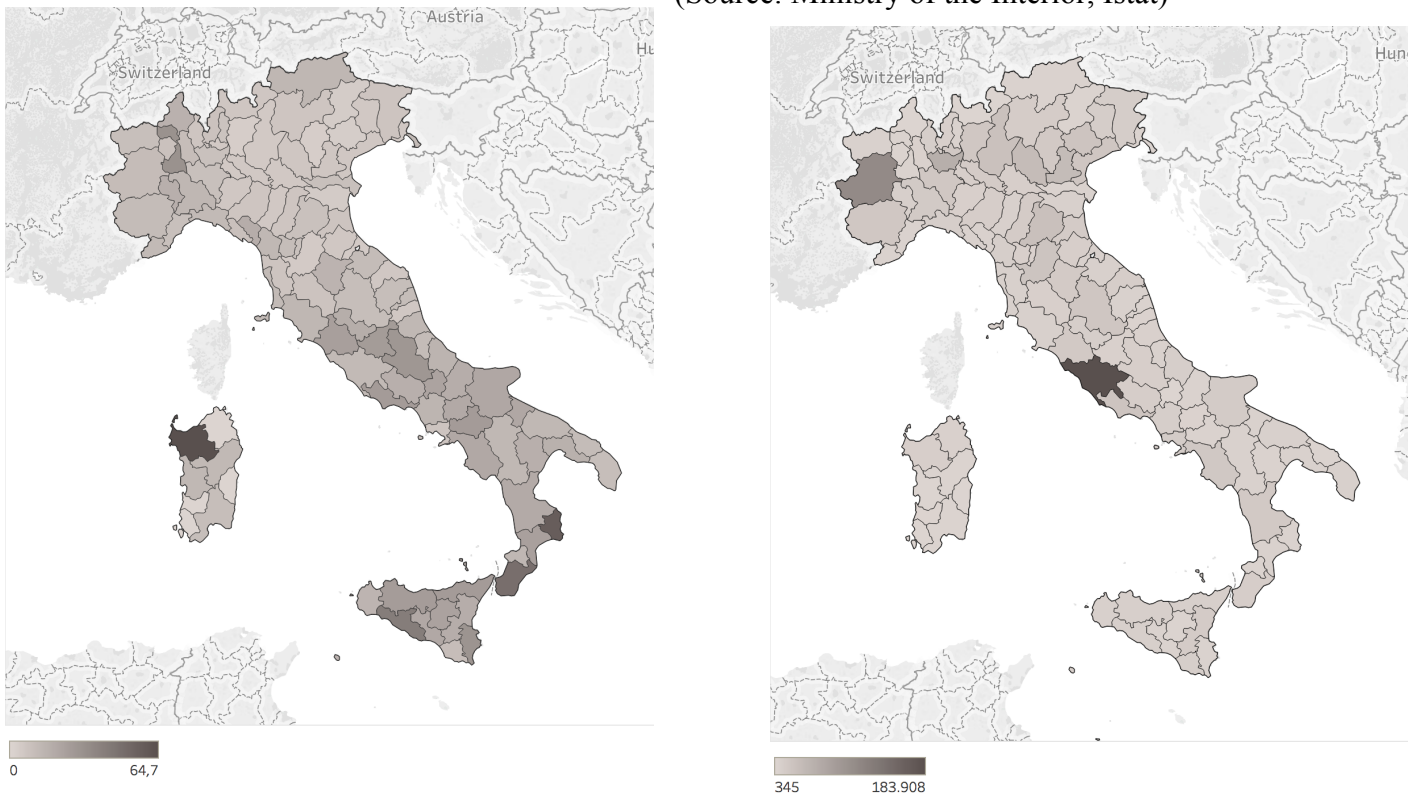
*The original data do not provide a breakdown by age for single citizenship. Therefore, the percentage is calculated on the total population by country, including individuals <18 y.o.

Table 4. Registered EU voters for Municipal elections by Italian region of residence – absolute values and as percentage of total resident EU population*, 1 January 2018 (Source: Ministry of the Interior, Istat)

	Region - in () ranking by population	Registered EU electors	% of total population*
	Lazio (1)	42,341	14.5
	Piemonte (3)	20,412	12.1
	Sicilia (7)	16,333	23.1
	Lombardia (2)	15,862	6.8
	Calabria (10)	14,967	30.9
	Toscana (6)	11,765	10.1
	Campania (8)	10,086	15.4
	Emilia-Romagna (5)	8,337	6.7
	Sardegna (17)	8,245	39.6
0	Veneto (4)	7,993	5.4
1	Puglia (9)	7,949	16.3
2	Abruzzo (13)	6,315	17.9
3	Umbria (14)	4,347	12.7
4	Liguria (15)	3,561	11.3
5	Marche (11)	3,233	8.6
6	Trentino-Alto Adige (16)	3,141	10.4
7	Friuli-Venezia Giulia (12)	2,671	7.3
8	Basilicata (18)	1,618	15.0
9	Molise (19)	1,041	19.2
0	Valle d'Aosta (20)	643	19.6

*The original data does not provide a breakdown by age for single citizenship. Therefore, the percentage is calculated on the total population by country, including individuals <18 y.o.

Figure 4. On the left map: Distribution of registered EU voters for Municipal elections by Province as percentage of total resident EU population*, 31 December 2017. On the right map: Distribution of Romanian residents by Province, absolute numbers, 1 January 2018 (Source: Ministry of the Interior, Istat)



*The original data does not provide a breakdown by age for single citizenship. Therefore, the percentage is calculated on the total population by country, including individuals <18 y.o.

Figure 5. Municipality of Milan's website

Step 1



Step 2

Comune di Milano

Lingua Aiuto ContattaMi Entra

CERCA

Segui l'Amministrazione Utilizza i Servizi Vivi la Città **Partecipa** Sfoglia le News Esplora

Partecipa

> Partecipa > Come votare > Come votare

Come votare

- Cittadini UE residenti in Italia
- Cittadini extra UE residenti a Milano
- Elettori residenti all'estero
- Facilitazioni per elettori con infermità
- Tessera Elettorale

Diritti

- Forum e iniziative
- Iscrizione agli albi
- Milano Partecipa
- Referendum e iniziative popolari
- Volontariato

Referendum e iniziative popolari

- Cittadini UE residenti in Italia
- Cittadini extra UE residenti a Milano
- Elettori residenti all'estero
- Facilitazioni per elettori con infermità
- Tessera Elettorale

Visualizza sulla Mappa

Comune di Milano

Albavilla
Lipomo
Casnate con Albavilla
Bernate
Cadorago
Lomazzo
Lazarte

OpenStreetMap contributors

Eventi del giorno

Seleziona il giorno per visualizzare gli eventi

Settembre 2018

Lu	Ma	Me	Gi	Ve	Sa	Do
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Aggiornato il: 15 gennaio 2018 Aggiungi ai miei preferiti Stampa

Step 3

Comune di Milano

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Partecipa

> Partecipa > Come votare > Cittadini dell'Unione Europea residenti in Italia: come votare

Cittadini dell'Unione Europea residenti in Italia: come votare

I cittadini appartenenti all'Unione Europea e **residenti a Milano** possono esercitare in Italia il diritto di voto, in occasione di:

- elezioni europee, per votare i rappresentanti italiani all'elezione del Parlamento Europeo, o per votare i rappresentanti del proprio paese d'origine (contattare il Consolato)
- elezioni di Sindaco, Consiglio Comunale e Consigli Circozionali.

Per votare è necessario essere iscritti nelle liste elettorali del Comune.

L'iscrizione alle liste è gratuita e rimane valida fino alla richiesta di cancellazione, oppure fino a quando l'interessato non perde i requisiti d'iscrizione (ad esempio, per emigrazione in altro Comune o all'estero).

Come iscriversi alle liste

Come presentare la domanda

Allegati

ContattaMi

Visualizza sulla Mappa

Via Messina, 52, MILANO

Collegamenti Esterni

Ministero dell'Interno

