Some key elements may help us to introduce the reading of this new *Statistical Dossier on Immigration 2013*: the slow but steady increase of immigrants in Italy, in spite of the crisis; the strong tendency to permanent settlement; the growing need for integration and interaction.

The **European Union**, together with North America, confirms itself as the continental area with the largest number of international migrants. At the beginning of 2012, foreign-born residents were 49,957,682 whereas foreign citizens were 34,360,456, equal to 6.8% of the total population (of whom 20,699,798 were non-EU citizens). In 2011, there were 1.7 million new entries; in the same year, according to the Federal Statistics Office, workers who entered Germany from the Mediterranean Member States – including Italy – were 361,000.

**Italy** confirmed its role as a country of arrival for international migration, especially since the beginning of the 21st century. Even during the crisis period there has been an increase in immigration: the 3.4 million foreign citizens residing in Italy in 2007 have become 4,387,721 in 2012, equal to 7.4% of the total Italian population. In the same period, non-EU residents increased from 2.6 million to 3,764,236; according to estimates of the *Dossier*, the total amount of regular immigrants increased from 3,982,000 to 5,186,000 people.

As regards the continental origin of foreign citizens regularly residing in Italy, according to estimates by the Dossier, Europe prevails with 50.3% of the total, followed by Africa (22.2%), Asia (19.4%), America (8.0%) and Oceania (0.1%).

Among the areas of residence, the most preferred ones are in the Northern (61.8%) and Central (24.2%) Italy, whereas the provinces of Milan and Rome hold one-sixth of the total residents (16.9%).

In 2012, and in the immediately preceding years, entry quotas for non-seasonal work were reduced. As a result, work-related immigration flows decreased as well. Between 2011 and 2012, visas for employment decreased from 90,843 to 52,328 (in both cases less than during the pre-crisis years). Also worthy of notice was the regularization of non-EU irregular workers which was carried out in 2012 (135,000 applications submitted, less than half compared to the previous regularization campaign in 2009: 295,000). For the future, we hope for the introduction of a permanent regularization *ad personam*.

Even during the years of the crisis (2008-2012) the employment rate of immigrants increased, in both absolute and percentage terms; while the number of employed Italians decreased by almost 1 million people, non-nationals increased by 31.4% (from 1.75 to 2.3 million and even more, when counting seasonal workers and those who live with their employer), reaching at least 10% of the total employed population, although the majority was employed in low-skill jobs not sought after by the Italians.
Foreign-born business owners are 477,519 (including individual enterprises, companies or corporations in which more than half of their members is foreign-born), a significant amount despite the fact that foreigners have more difficulties in obtaining loans.

In 2012, one of the main reasons for the growth of the foreign population are the children born in Italy to foreign parents (79,894; they were less than 30,000 in 2000), who are joined by the 26,714 children of mixed couples (who have direct access to the Italian citizenship).

Overall, if considering both minors born in Italy and those reunited with their families, the total number of non-EU minors staying in Italy is 908,539 (24.1% of the total), whereas the EU minors should be at least 250,000.

786,650 foreign students enrolled in 2012-13 (representing 8.8% of the total and 9.8% of those enrolled at elementary schools). In 2,500 schools (14.6% of the total) foreign students are more than 30% of the total student population. In this regard, the Minister of Education, Mrs. Carrozza, recommended not to exaggerate with the difficulties and to be more flexible, based on the circumstances and the resources available; after all, 47.2% of these students was born in Italy.

81,322 visas for family reunification were issued in 2012 (almost equal to those of the previous year, that is 83,493). Permits for family reasons now account for 40.9% of all foreign citizens with an expiring permit (48.5% of which for work reasons) and for 44.3% of new entries (26.9% for work reasons): in times of crisis, family reunification is the most widespread entry channel.

Long-term non-EU residents (authorized for permanent stay) have also increased: they are now more than 2 million people, 54.3% of the total (8% more than in 2010).

Return flows, more out of necessity than choice, are also increasing as a result of the crisis and the unemployment rate of the country. Overall, in 2012, 180,000 residence permits expired without being renewed (source: Istat), more than half of which were permits for work or family reasons; it is a substantial amount, but lower than the amount of those expired in 2011 (263,000), when the law which extended the duration of a residence permit for seeking employment from 6 to 12 months was not enacted yet.

Flows of people fleeing in search of safety and protection, which greatly increased in 2011 – the year of the so-called “Arab Spring” – were also quite relevant in 2012 (17,350 asylum applications, plus 10,910 of the first half of 2013). Often, these are people fleeing across the Mediterranean sea, landing on Italian shores (13,267 landings in 2012). The total number of foreigners staying for asylum or humanitarian reason is 77,000.

As regards irregular migration flows and the measures adopted to combat this phenomenon, as well as concerning the necessary further attention towards human rights, the Dossier underlines the expensiveness and non-effectiveness of such measures, including detention at the Centers for Identification and Expulsion (between 2005 and 2012, 40.5% of detected irregular immigrants were removed, whereas in 2012 they accounted for 51.8% of the total).