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Motivations, experiences and consequences of returns and readmissions policy: revealing and developing effective alternatives



# National Summary Report

## Experiences, expectations and views of migrants and professionals in the field around RR and alternative policies

### Case Study: **Italy**

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## Disclaimer:

This document provides a concise summary of the key findings of **MORE Project WP5 in Italy**. For detailed analysis, evidence, and comprehensive insights, please refer to the full report. The information in this summary should not be considered complete or fully representative of the entire study.

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## Introduction

Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between March and June 2025, this executive summary presents the main findings of the Italian country study within WP5 of the MORE project. The research explores the experiences, expectations, and perspectives of migrants living in situations of administrative irregularity or at risk of return, as well as those of the actors who support them—lawyers, social workers, NGO professionals, volunteers, anti-trafficking specialists, and activists. In total, the fieldwork involved 17 migrants in diverse administrative positions and 16 supporting actors, complemented by two focus groups.

The aim of the fieldwork is to examine how return and readmission (RR) policies shape daily life in practice, tracing how legal frameworks, bureaucratic requirements, and enforcement strategies contribute to processes of irregularisation. The findings illustrate how migrants become trapped in cycles of precariousness, exploitation, and invisibilisation, and how supporting actors navigate institutional barriers to mitigate harm.

## Evidence and analysis

**Living conditions** are among the most urgent issues. Access to healthcare is consistently obstructed: irregular migrants face adversity from local health authorities to provide STP cards (Foreigner temporary present), and preventive healthcare remains largely out of reach. Mental health issues are common but not institutionally recognised, leading to worsening conditions and greater vulnerability. Housing stability is also fragile: night shelters are scarce and often inaccessible to irregular migrants, forcing many into abandoned houses or onto the streets, where safety is compromised and conditions are degrading. Employment is mainly informal and exploitative, as restrictive immigration laws link residence permits to work contracts, perpetuating a cycle of irregularity and job insecurity.

**Social connections** play an ambivalent role. Family in Italy is a driver of resilience and efforts at regularisation, whereas abroad, family can exert pressure to prove success. Male migrants tend to hide their hardships from relatives due to societal norms related to gender roles. Ethnic communities offer both support and oversight, while links with Italians can help with integration.

**(Im)mobility** is influenced by the “obliged path” of Italian migration law, which limits legal options and drives some migrants towards illegality. Many employ invisibility strategies—such as avoiding city centres or living in isolation—to minimise the risk of being stopped. Time also plays a role in immobility: waiting for documents or appeals results in stagnation, frustration, and sometimes leads to illicit strategies.

**Rights and protection** within CPRs (Centres for Repatriation) are disjointed and inconsistent. Access to lawyers and communication is limited, conditions are tougher than in prisons, and a “market of rights” has emerged around detention, with services and documents sold at high prices. Public administration is often seen as adversarial, further increasing mistrust and invisibility.

**Compliance and resistance** appeared in both subtle and overt ways. Migrants adopt adaptive practices—such as providing false information, creating fake documents, or quietly negotiating with authorities—and also express open resistance through riots or self-harm in CPRs. Supporting actors, in turn, use “trespassing practices” to facilitate services but face chronic stress and burnout caused by systemic constraints and hostile policies.

**Alternatives to return and readmission** were considered from both pragmatic and radical perspectives. Some stakeholders support strategies like case management, street mediation, and harm reduction, whereas others argue that the sole acceptable solution is to close CPRs and eliminate forced returns.

**Gender** significantly influences experiences: women appear more protected by services, but when judged as “unfit mothers,” they face harsh consequences, including custody loss. Male migrants struggle with expectations to support families, resulting in silence, isolation, and psychological pressure.

In conclusion, RR policies in Italy function as mechanisms producing exclusion, invisibility, and human suffering, although their declared intent is to manage migration movements. Supporting actors mitigate these effects but remain constrained by structural limitations, while migrants continue to adapt, resist, and strive for dignity in a system that undermines their rights.