

**CeSPI Policy Paper on
The Integrated Migration Information System (IMIS)
Project**

**FOSTERING EGYPTIAN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT
THROUGH DIASPORIC NETWORKS IN ITALY**

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The policy paper has been realised on the basis of the three following field surveys outcomes:

“Egyptians in Emilia Romagna” by Laura Pozzoli

“Egyptians in Milan” by Petra Mezzetti

“Egyptians in Rome” by Lorenzo Coslovi.

Andrea Stocchiero coordinated the surveys, with the advice of Ferruccio Pastore (CeSPI), Anna Giustiniani and Ugo Melchionda (International Organization for Migration, Rome).

INTRODUCTION

Following an assessment of the changing situation of migration trends of Egyptians since mid 80s and the potential migratory flows due to the growing demand for employment opportunities abroad, Emigration and Egyptians Abroad Sector (ES) of the Ministry of Manpower and Emigration (MME) defined new policies and proposed political solutions to address the needs of migrants abroad. In addition, the expertise acquired by Egyptians abroad and the possibility of attracting investment and remittances towards Egypt were singled out as a resource to be tapped into for the benefit of the country's development. Upon the MME's request, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) started on 22nd of June 2001 the ***Integrated Migration Information System (IMIS)*** project financed by the Italian Government. The main objectives of the IMIS Project are to provide support to migratory strategy adopted by the ES Which entail:

- 1) "design executive plans and policies to encourage Egyptian migration and provide opportunities for its success;
- 2) sponsor Egyptians abroad, encouraging them to create Egyptian gatherings, unions and clubs, focusing on the second and third generation of migrants and fostering their ties to their homeland;
- 3) benefit from Egyptian potential abroad in the field of development, production and advanced technology in cooperation with the ministries and involved bodies; and
- 4) establish an integrated database on Egyptians abroad, emigration markets and migration regulating legislations in the countries of destination"¹ (implementation of the IMIS project).

In this framework and following the recommendations of IMIS 2nd Steering Committee, an *ad hoc* research entitled "*Fostering Egyptian local development through diasporic networks in Italy*" was commissioned to the Italian research institute Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI) with a view to providing inputs to the Egyptian authorities dealing with migration issues,. The study attempts to identify policy guidelines for promoting the positive impact of Egyptian migrants capitals on the development of their homeland, taking into account the real conditions of Egyptian migrants living in Italy. Italy has been identified as a target country of the research in view of hosting in the European context the largest number of permanent Egyptian Migrants.²

¹ Speech presented to the first work group by Mostafa Abdel Monsef, Head of the Emigration and Egyptians Abroad Sector, the Ministry of Manpower and Emigration, Arab Republic of Egypt, "Egyptian Migration", Rome the 26th April 2004.

² Source: "Contemporary Egyptian migration 2003" Report (p. 55)

As of January 2004, CeSPI implemented field surveys in Rome, Milan and the Emilia Romagna Region, where a high number of Egyptian Migrants concentrate. 60 interviews (20 in Rome, 22 in Milan, 18 in Emilia Romagna) to Egyptian Migrants were conducted and focus/collective meetings were organized. The “snowball effect” methodology for outreaching a higher number of community representatives was used.

Supported by a detailed analysis of the international and Italian literature on migration and development referring to the Egyptian diaspora, and based on the outcomes of the surveys, the CeSPI’s study has been divided into 3 chapters. The first chapter presents basic data and characteristics of (EMs) living in Italy. The second chapter summarizes the main outcomes focusing on the opportunities and constraints to the valorization of the Egyptian diaspora for local development in Egypt, taking into account their human, social and financial capitals. The third chapter suggests policy guidelines to improve the IMIS website.

1. EGYPTIAN MIGRANTS IN ITALY

1.1 Basic data

The Egyptian diaspora in Italy is well integrated, particularly if compared with other North African diaspora communities. Egyptian legal immigrants were about 3,751 in 1981³; increased to nearly 20,000 in 1990 and then to 26,000 in 2001 (during the '90s three Regularization measures took place in 1990, 1995 and 1998). Compared to other nationalities, the official increase in the number of EMs in Italy was low. However irregulars are still residing in Italy⁴. The ISMU⁵ Foundation estimates regular and irregular migrants' presences in the Lombardia region and shows the following figures: nearly 32,000 Egyptian migrants in 2001 and 40,450 in July 2003. The increase of the Egyptian presence in Lombardia has been 7% per year during the period 2001-2003.

In the meantime, Recent regularization process confirms that the magnitude of irregular Egyptians live in Italy. After the Regularization regulatory measures enforced by the new Italian Immigration Law in 2002, the Egyptian presence doubled reaching the number of almost **46,000 in 2003**⁶. Based on data collected, it is apparently that there is an increase of illegal immigration in the period 1998 (former regularization) – 2002 (recent regularization). Regularization demands coming from the Egyptian immigrants were about 16,000 in contrast with a regular presence of about 30,000 immigrants in 2002: consequently the new presence after the regularization has increased reaching 46,000 immigrants⁷ (54%). According to ISMU Foundation, despite the regularization process, the Egyptian irregular presence continues to be relevant in terms of number. Recent expulsions of Egyptian immigrants (2003-2004) confirm the existence of illegal flows and the **need to improve the migration policies between Egypt and Italy**.

Table 1. Regular EMs in Italy

1990	1995	1998	2001	2002	2003
20,211	21,874	27,664	26,166	29.861	46,000

Source: Caritas data based on Italian Ministry of Interior statistics (2003).

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³ Altieri Giovanna e Francesco Carchedi "Gli Egiziani", in Mottura Giovanni (1992).

⁴ The majority of irregulars do not derive from the illegal flows coming directly from Egypt, but depend on the difficulties faced by the immigrants in maintaining a regular status in Italy during their staying.

⁵ Istituto per lo Studio della Multiculturalità located in Milan.

⁶ Data is provisional, excluding the presence of minors and taking into account that not all regularization demands will be accepted.

⁷ The increase of immigrants presence of other Mediterranean nationalities following regularization demands were of 32% in the case of Moroccans, 19% of Tunisians, 53% in the case of Algerians, 30% of Turks. The major regularizations involved East European nationalities: Ukraine (762%), Moldovan Republic (455%), Rumania (150%), Bulgaria (105%) (source: Dossier Statistico Immigrazione Caritas/Migrantes).

The need of improving migration management is also confirmed by the **poor use of the privileged quota for Egyptian labor migration** granted by the Italian Government in recent years. According to the Italian Consulate (in Egypt) in 2002, only few demands were coming from the Italian entrepreneurs for the recruitment of Egyptian workers. The same low propensity of Italian entrepreneurs to recruit Egyptian workers was collected by the Italian Regional Labor Agencies⁸. In this regard, the IMIS project is welcomed but it should be more targeted to raise awareness and disseminate information on the Egyptian labor capacities and availabilities towards Italian territorial enterprise associations.

Table 2. Italian privileged quota for Egyptian labor migration

Quota	Year	Quota	Year
-	2001	300	2003
1.000	2002	1.500	2004

Source: Italian Ministry of Welfare

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Regarding the **visa concessions**, data indicate that there is a major demand coming from Egyptian citizens for a short-term staying in Italy. However, the comparison with the visa policies of other European countries indicates the following figures for the Egypt-Italy case:

- Few visa requests coming from Egyptians (not only with respect to traditional countries of emigration like UK, France and Germany, but also relatively to Spain);
- A higher percentage of rejected visa requests (18,5%, against 11% in the case of France; 16% in the case of Germany; 15% for Spain; 10% for UK);
- A higher percentage of visa requests for long-term staying (22%, in contrast to 2% in the case of France, Germany and Spain in 2003).

The low rate of visas demands for Italy from Egyptians may be explained with the scarce knowledge of Italian job opportunities (but it is not supported by our analysis), and/or with the greater difficulty to obtain visas. However, both reasons described above, highlight the **issue of difficult access to information and long bureaucratic procedures**. In this framework, the IMIS project is again welcomed to improve the access of Egyptian migrants to the Italian labor quota and job opportunities. The greater demand for long-term staying visa is linked especially to family reunification reasons, considering that family reunification satisfies labor needs of Egyptian entrepreneurs living in Italy.

⁸ Meeting in IOM MRF Rome, the 26th of April 2004.

Table 3. Visa comparaison

Country	Transit	Business, Tourism, Studies, short time permanence (less than 90 days)	Labor, Studies, Family reunification, long permanence (more than 90 days)	Visa with limited territoriality	Total granted	Total rejected	Total demand	Diplomatic Visa	Year
Italy	7	4527	1005	41	5582	1046	6628		2002
	18	4122	1252	251	5643	1282	6925		2003
France	300	30315	549	290	31164	3033	34197		2002
	257	18414	444	763	20886	2717	23602	1767	2003
Germany	189	23597	1116	33	24902	4004	28834		2002*
	178	25303	1165	656	27811	5002	29816		2003
Spain	412	6709	122	274	7526	1684	9249		2002
	329	4921	111	494	5855	1427	7112		2003
U.K.						2315	26552		2002°
						2453	23824		2003

* Germany: data cover the period January-November 2002

° U.K.: data on 2002 cover the period February 2002 – January 2003

Source: Italian Consulate in Cairo, Egypt

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1.2 Who are the Egyptian migrants in Italy?

The first flow of Egyptian migration in Italy occurred during the 70s. The flows were characterized by the presence of young and well-educated migrants. The following flows in the 80s and 90s had same basic features, although if presenting slightly lower educational levels.

Migration from Egypt to Italy is selective. The majorities of EMs are male, young and belong **to the middle class**. They are attracted by the income differential and by cultural and social opportunities. The majority of them were employed before migrating to Italy. Initially they were interested in accumulating savings in order to return home after few years. But during their stay, they changed their migratory project due to the improvement of their economic and the social integration in Italy and opted for a long-term staying. The migratory project changed from temporary to permanent.

EMs are **well-integrated culturally and socially**, mostly due to the high levels of education, mixed marriage and family reunifications. After an initial short period of illegal work, they find a regular job (according to the recent Italian Law on Immigration, migrants must have a regular work contract before entering into Italy). The good level of integration is reported also by the rate of mixed marriage between Egyptian males and Italian women. EMs seek family reunification but less

than other Maghreb nationalities: Egyptian percentage of family reunification was 23% in 2001 in contrast to the 30% of Moroccans (Caritas source). The trend does not present an increasing curve. Egyptian women are housewives and very few work in the service sector. They live in isolated situations and are very dependent on husbands' resources. Many of them feel homesickness and want to return to Egypt.

Migrants' links to the extended family in Egypt remain strong. EMs want to maintain cultural and religious identity. Various Egyptian families, living in Italy, want their children to return to study in Egypt. The commuting is also necessary to favor the marriage of daughters with Muslim men. Even second generation Egyptians want to recover their origins and traditions. In this sense, integration in the destination country does not reduce EMs ties with Egypt, but produces a change towards a sort of dual identity. They have strong cultural identity linked to family ties in Egypt, while, at the same time; they are increasingly involved in the Italian social and economic context. In this way, they live simultaneously in Egypt and in Italy; they have networks “here and there” and connect two spaces. Meaningfully, many EMs have dual citizenships. These characteristics are known in international literature as forms of **transnationalism**. However, living simultaneously in two spaces does not present always the same features.

Table 4. Egyptian migrants geographical distribution in Italy in 2001

Regions	Lombardia 16,264	Lazio 5,824	Piemonte 1,120	Emilia Romagna 1,096	Liguria 524	Toscana 464
Provinces	Milano 13,110	Roma 5,620	Torino 915	Reggio Emilia 573	Savona 273	Firenze 294

Memo: 26,166 total Egyptian immigrants in Italy in 2001. Other Italian regions have an EMs presence under 100 units each.

Source: Ministry of Interior

EMs are **concentrated geographically** in metropolitan areas, in particular in the cities of Milan and Rome, and in the industrial districts in the Northern-East of Italy, where there are greater opportunities of employment⁹. This is the case of the EMs in the Emilia Romagna Region, and especially in the Province of Reggio Emilia (see table 4).

The most important areas of origin are Cairo and Alexandria metropolitan areas and small cities in the Nile Delta.

⁹ Half of the entire Egyptian immigrant population in Italy, live in Milan. See: Gian Carlo Blangiardo (edited by). 2003. L’Immigrazione straniera in Lombardia, Rapporto 2002, ISMU-Regione Lombardia, Milano

The first flows of migrants opened the way in Italy and facilitated the consequent flows of EMs. **Migration networks are working well** in supporting an efficient economic allocation and social integration of migrants. Moreover, the networks are not only bilateral (between Egypt and Italy) but in various cases they spread in different countries such as Canada, and/or United Kingdom, and/or USA.

In short, transnationalism phenomena are somewhat different according to the **three phases/typologies of EMs**. The first phase/typology involves the first flow of EMs during the '70s. Many of them were students coming to Italy for cultural reasons. Others were employed in the Egyptian public sector coming to Italy to improve their economic well being¹⁰. They are now grown-up, well integrated in the destination economic and social context, with families living in Italy (mixed marriage). They do not think of returning but maintain family and cultural ties with Egypt, and in some cases they have also commercial interests with their homeland. They transfer low amount of remittances. They come mostly from Cairo and Alexandria for cultural and economic reasons.

The second phase/typology includes EMs coming to Italy during the 80s and 90s, emerging with the first regularization in 1990. They are integrated in the labor market and committed in family reunification, but, after the first years of staying in Italy, some of them are also interested in returning home with their family: they would like their children to attend Arab schools, and women (isolated in Italy) want to return to their cultural and social environment. In this sense, they are integrated in economic terms while they continue to be strongly linked to the countries of origin in cultural and social terms. Some EMs want to invest in small and medium size business activities in their town of origin, but they are facing a difficult investment environment in Egypt. They transfer remittances but in decreasing amounts while concentrating their integration in Italy. They came to Italy for economic reasons from Cairo and Alexandria but also from cities in the Nile Delta.

The third phase/typology addresses EMs in recent latest years, particularly after the Italian regularization measure of 1998. Since 1998 until 2002 (new Italian regularization law) many of them were irregulars without the possibility of improving their economic situation and applying for family reunification. Others are integrated in economic terms but maintain strong social and cultural

¹⁰ According to the law no.111 of 1983, Chapter IV art.16, "an Egyptian worker who emigrated and had been working in the government, one of the local governance units, general agencies or public sector, and whose resignation had been accepted for the purpose of permanent emigration, and who returned back home within two years from the date his resignation has been accepted, shall be re-appointed at the entity where he had been working before emigration".

ties with Egypt. They transfer substantial amounts of remittances (irregulars especially through informal channels). Moreover, some EMs are facing economic difficulties and are thinking of returning to their homeland.

Moving from the first phase/typology to the last one, the number of migratory projects increases (not only permanent but also – ideally - temporary projects), as well as the geographical areas of origins of EMs broadens, coming not just from Cairo and Alexandria but also from towns and villages of the Nile Delta (Tanta, Kifrakila al bab–elMahalla elKubra) of the Sharqiyya governorate (Belbes related to economic reasons and less to cultural ones) . EMs continue to maintain a good level of education and strong family and cultural ties with Egypt. However, as a general rule, the more they are in Italy the less they want to return in Egypt and the less they present real transnational patterns.

Egyptian migrants represent a successful case regarding their insertion in the labor market, also due to their **vibrant entrepreneurial spirit**. In Italy, nearly 114,500 enterprises are managed by migrants coming from Developing Countries (see table n. 5). A recent research undertaken by the ‘*Confederazione nazionale dell'artigianato e della piccola e media impresa*’, shows that 1,236 enterprises are run by Egyptians¹¹. Other researches estimate a greater number of Egyptian entrepreneurs: data of Infocamere (the database of Italian Chambers of Commerce) show a number of 5,124 Egyptian entrepreneurs registered in Italy. About half of them (2,683) are located in Milan and another 15% (778) are established in Rome.

A caution note is needed: many of these enterprises are indeed based on a self-employment pattern and forms of outsourcing, especially in the construction sector. The increasing Italian flexible labor market masks dependent labor with self employment and puts EMs in precarious conditions.

However, Egyptian entrepreneurial vocation in Italy is one of the highest among migrant nationalities (5,124 Egyptian entrepreneurs out of 46.000 migrants: 11% of Egyptians living in Italy are entrepreneurs; against 19% of Senegalese, 16% of Chinese; 11% of Moroccans and Nigerians; 10% Tunisians). They want to improve their social and economic status through the creation of enterprises. Their education, the-on-the-job training, social mobility motivation and local social networking are the basis of their capacity to start up business activities.

¹¹ Cfr <http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/news/cna22feb2003.htm>

Table 5. Egyptian entrepreneurs in Italy (May, 2004)

MOROCCO	24.751	EGYPT	5.124
CHINA	15.937	ARGENTINA	4.020
SWITZERLAND	14.496	NIGERIA	3.108
GERMANY	10.418	BELGIUM	3.046
ALBANIA	9.709	VENEZUELA	2.876
SENEGAL	9.696	UNITED KINGDOM	2.822
FRANCE	7.581	PAKISTAN	2.281
ROMANIA	6.880	U.S.A.	2.195
TUNISIA	6.228	BRAZIL	2.006
JUGOSLAVIA	5.766	CANADA	1.874
		DEVELOPING COUNTRIES	114.569
		TOTAL	182.506

Source: Infocamere, Italian Chamber of Commerce Database

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They run small enterprises in the traditional service sector of restaurants, especially pizzerias and bakeries, shops, hotels; building and related activities (carpentry); manufacturing activities (metalworking); transport, international trade between Egypt and Italy; and new migrant specific activities as internet and international calling points. The expansion of EMs has been accompanied by an increasing differentiation of entrepreneurial activities. Generally their enterprises do not present ethnic features but sell goods and services to Italian customers. Egyptian commercial enterprises operate in competitive but saturated markets with small mark up. However some EMs import-export companies exist. furthermore, EMs enterprises working in the Italian market are creating new trade links with the country of origin: for example some Egyptian building enterprises in Italy are demanding Egyptian carpets and artisans goods for interior decoration.

2. MIGRANT CAPITALS FOR EGYPTIAN DEVELOPMENT

The Egyptian diaspora in Italy has important characteristics for the development of transnational activities with the country of origin. Potentially, they have resources, capacities, know-how and knowledge that may be useful for the local development of villages and cities in Egypt. According to the recent international literature, three typologies of migrant capitals may function as forces for the development of the country of origin: human capital, social capital and finance capital (Ammassari and Black, 2001).

2.1 Human Capital

Human capital refers to skills and brain resources that migrants improve or develop in the country of destination. In this context, Italy is not a country for the ‘brain development’ (even Italy has phenomena of brain drain): Egyptians like others nationalities are facing problems of **brain waste**. Egyptian diplomas are hardly recognized, and if they are, EMs do not manage to fulfill positions that correspond to their educational level.

The first flow of EMs during the 70s were students interested in improving their education but they faced difficulties. Some of them dropped out of university and preferred to invest their human capital in economic and social mobility. At the beginning of their staying in Italy, migrants find employment only in menial jobs (dirty, dangerous and demanding). EMs try to improve their economic and social status along with their permanence in Italy, and many achieve social mobility especially through entrepreneurial activities. Successful social mobility counters intellectual frustration.

Some EMs have acquired **skills** in mechanics and metalworking through the on-the-job training. Thanks to migrant networks, some Egyptians with these competencies immigrated to Italy (especially to Reggio Emilia) to work in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) during the 90s. Another economic sector, where EM skills are requested, is the construction one, especially with regards to stone and carpentry work. Training courses for migrants are few and particularly in Italian language. Migrants declare that it is difficult to attend training courses; they do not have the time to spend since they work a lot and need to take care about their family. Learning new skills can be acquired only through the on-the-job training. However, it is interesting to note that there are cases of EMs interested in learning software, information and communication technologies in addition to the Arabic language.

EMs are willing to transfer their skills to Egyptian enterprises, particularly towards family enterprises through commuting. On the other side, they do not want to return and work for low salaries in Egyptian enterprises. They are not aware of Egyptian entrepreneurial associations¹² and government programs to encourage skill transfers. They do not have trust in Egyptians institutions and are critical about the capacity of the public sector. However EMs are willing to improve relationships and they demand a direct link with a public office specialized in migration problems and in assistance to entrepreneurial new activities.

¹² Egyptian Businessmen's Association is interested in developing a mechanism for inserting EMs with high skills in Egyptian enterprises (Interview of the author to EBA in Cairo, April 2004).

Moreover, some EMs with long residence in Italy say that they have a reduced knowledge of Egypt, it is therefore difficult to consider them as potential ‘bridges’ between Italy and Egypt. Consequently migrant skills could be transferred to Egypt not only through the physical permanent return but also through temporary and virtual return, based on a commuting pattern.

EM could transfer other skills to Egypt in terms of **entrepreneurial capabilities**. Many of them are self-employed and work in outsourcing, artisans, [SMEs](#) and contribute to high visibility of the Egyptian presence in Italy.

Entrepreneurial transnationalism, in terms of import-export companies but also of Egyptian enterprises in Italy that can create new economic links with the country of origin, could increase by facilitating contacts between business communities. However, EMs stress the problems that Egyptian entrepreneurs have to obtain visa for business: they are critical about the bureaucratic procedures of the Italian consulates and lack of transparency.

The majority of EM in Italy are not planning their **return back to Egypt**. “First typology” EMs are permanent migrants, with spouses and children, with their own house and work. Second generation migrants want to recover cultural identity but they do not intend to return to their mother country. Some of them have the Italian citizenship and are critical about the economic and social situation back in Egypt. EMs who came during the ’90 and in the latest years are more prone to return, particularly when they face difficult labor integration, family reunification and cultural problems. But, on the other side, often they do not want to recognize the failure of their migratory project and decide to stay in order to improve their situation and therefore postpone their return.

However, returns have been recorded for migrants who accumulated savings and retired with pension and social insurance contributions. However, with the recent new Italian Law on Immigration, the possibility to take back the pension benefits it is not allowed before reaching the age of retirement. This change decreases the opportunity to return back.

2.2 Social Capital

Social capital refers to “*the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition*” (Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) in Ammassari and Black

(2001)). Social capital is structured by relational goods, social ties, networks and associations, which increase the access of migrants to information, capacities, resources, empowering their role in the society.

In Italy, the Egyptian immigration has been defined as a '**non community**' (Ambrosini and Abbatecola, 2003). Cohesion among migrants is not relevant. On the contrary, the family allegiance (here and there) is of prominent importance. So far, the Egyptian diaspora has not set up important **unions, hometown associations** nor any other organization networks to strengthen the links with villages and cities of origin. EMs say they are individualistic, family captured, and not prone to community activities. Little associations exist in Bologna and Reggio Emilia (Emilia Romagna Region), in Milan, Rome, Turin and other towns. Nevertheless, they are weak, with little representation, not connected at the national level, and depend on the character of the president. They are not specifically linked to the village or the towns of origin. However, minority cases of informal ties with villages of origin have been recorded.

Egyptian associations are interested principally in sustaining local integration of migrants and the preservation of the Arab culture and language in Italian schools, and in assisting the transfers of the deceased bodies. In Rome, the Egyptian League promotes cultural activities and supports the transfers of deceased bodies. It maintains good relations with the Egyptian Embassy. A mixed Italian and Egyptian association in Emilia Romagna Region promotes cultural and economic links, sustains the participation of Egyptian and Italian enterprises in the Bologna Fair and Cairo Fair, and gives assistance for the setting up of EMs' business in Cairo (but only as occasional activity). Another Association 'Egypt 2000' in Milan sustains cultural activities; it is launching a web site www.egypt.it, and wants to develop new activities with the support of Italian NGOs and the Municipality of Milan. It is in contact with the General Union of Egyptians Abroad and would like eventually to link with other Egyptian associations in other Italian cities as well as in Europe. In Milan, the neo-born Italy-Egypt cultural association *El Nadi El Masri El Itali* sustains reciprocal knowledge and would like to support the establishment of courses in Arab language in Italian public schools. They are also thinking of setting up a database of Egyptian enterprises in the region (and on a later stage also nationwide) in order to identify business opportunities.

The majority of Egyptian associations in Italy have no links and exchanges of information with the Egyptian Embassy and Consulates. Only the Egyptian association in Rome has good relationship with the Embassy. Many migrants are **distrustful of Egyptian official institutions** and have a

utilitarian attitude towards the Consulates and the Embassy. On the other hand, some Egyptian entrepreneurs living in Italy are satisfied with the Commercial Consul in Milan who is giving assistance to business activities and who is willing to develop trade and investment linkages with the homeland.

The economic and social integration of EMs endorses the institution of **relationships with Italian organizations**. The creation of social networks in Italy begins through family and relatives knowledge of the local context, that increases with mixed marriages (there are also enterprises where the husband and the wife are partners), labor relationships with the employers, links with trade unions and social associations for facilitating the integration, creation of mixed associations with Italian people. Egyptian entrepreneurs have links with local Italian entrepreneurial associations and the Chambers of Commerce. Some of them participate in social organizations with international relationships (for example in the Foreign Women Association that works with the League of Arab Women in the World on projects for childhood assistance). The majority of EMs claim they would trust Italian and international organizations and institutions even for the implementation of development projects with Egypt. The EMs social capital is greater in Italy than in Egypt, where they maintain ties only with the family.

The EMs social capital with migration networks is relevant for introducing and accompanying relatives and friends in the Italian local labor market. EMs seem to be **‘natural’ brokers to informally support the insertion and integration of labor migrants**. Their informal networks are already effective in calling relatives and friends from Egypt as well as they assist Italian small entrepreneurs in selecting new employees coming from Egypt. The capacity to help relatives in finding employment in Italy is an important factor of their successful integration and migratory project. The majority of migrants recruited by the Egyptian diaspora in Italy come from the metropolitan areas of Cairo and Alexandria. They are inserted in family business, especially in restaurants. In few cases strict linkages between EMs and their villages of origin have created important labor flows, inserting them in the building sector for example.

On the other hand, according to the Italian Consulate in Cairo, there are few visa requests, for Egyptians with labor contracts arranged with Egyptian entrepreneurs living in Italy. Consequently, it seems that EMs use family reunification as a labor recruitment measure, especially in the commercial and restaurant sectors, where relatives may share business risks and are more flexible.

However, Egyptian entrepreneurs in Italy are adopting a strict economic stance concerning recruitment: they do not privilege nationals unless Egyptian recruitment is considered profitable in comparison to other nationalities. A utilitarian attitude is guiding more and more Egyptian entrepreneurs in choosing workers. Other variables for recruiting Egyptians are represented by the better cultural communications and the lower probability of competition regarding other nationalities (for example Rumanians are eager to learn but wish to open their own business activities).

2.3 Financial Capital

Financial capital refers to migrants' remittances and transfers of accumulated savings. They may be divided in: individual remittances for the family basic needs, home building and for entrepreneurial activities (remittances and transfers of accumulated savings as foreign investment); and in collective or individual remittances for community social development.

Individual remittances for the family basic needs are not relevant considering that the majority of EMs of the first and second typologies come from middle classes. Moreover, remittances diminish with the lengthening of the residence in Italy. After some years, remittances are directed occasionally and only for immediate needs, feasts, and gifts. On the contrary, EMs who arrived in Italy during the last years are transferring substantial remittances: for example some interviewees said that they remit about 500 Euro per month equivalent to 25% of their salary.

Remittances are transferred essentially through informal channels (during holidays and in occasion of journeys of friends) and also through bank services (particularly by the Arab Bank located in Rome and the Misr Bank which have an inter-banking agreement with Banca di Roma) and money transfer companies (Western Union and Money Gram). EMs are among the foreign nationalities in Italy with the best access to bank services. They access to credit for family and enterprises' needs. This factor confirms the Egyptian satisfactory economic integration. In the mean time, they have bank accounts in foreign currency in Egypt.

Remittances channeled through the banking sector more than doubled in the last ten years, but they remain low in absolute terms (only about 3-4 millions Euro) and in relative terms (about an average of 130 Euro per person per year). Even if the value is triplicate when taking into account informal channels, the result does not seem to change much.

Table 6. Egyptian remittances from Italy through the banking channel (in thousand Euro)

1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
1,639	1,865	1,710	1,858	1,419	2,112	3,512	3,319	4,749	3,557

Source: Ufficio Italiano Cambi

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It is important to stress that after the attacks in New York on the 11h of September 2001, many EMs became more concerned and more checks on the transfer of *zakat* are applied.

More relevant are the **investments of remittances** in building houses and in entrepreneurial activities. Obviously, the capacity to invest remittances depends on the successful economic integration of EMs in Italy. As we have seen, the economic integration of EMs is good but in most cases they are small entrepreneurs. Consequently, the capacity to invest is on a small scale basis and linked to family networks. Various EMs transferred their accumulated savings for the setting up of small enterprises in different sectors, where some initiatives were successful and others not. The main business activities are commercial ones: export of machines and spare parts to Egypt and import of craftworks and carpets in Italy.

Some business activities set up by EMs in Egypt are based on the transfer of know-how and technologies learned in Italy. Several cases have been recorded. For example, a group of returned Egyptians started a company of brick making using Italian technologies. Others are willing to open enterprises of linen production in Egypt importing Italian power looms. An Egyptian return migrant opened a foundry near Alexandria using Italian technologies. Others are interested in investing in new agro food projects in the Nile Delta, acquiring Italian machines and exploiting trading channels towards European markets.

According to EMs' views, business opportunities with and in Egypt include: import-export activities, the building/construction sector (i.e. marble artisans), furniture (especially wooden furniture), tourism and agro food enterprises, (for example the production of exotic fruit juice). Import-export activities are considered the most obvious forms of setting up transnationalism businesses.

They complain about **the bureaucracy** and the **lack of information on business opportunities** in Egypt. Several cases of EMs business failure seem to depend on an incorrect evaluation of the local demand, on unfair competition, high transaction costs and the lack of transparency. Hence, EMs

look like small foreign investors, except for the presence of parents and friends who are engaged as local partners. On the other side, some EMs who are living in Italy since many years and that have lost relationship with their country, stress on the necessity of finding local partners. They are more interested in trade business than in starting up enterprises in Egypt. Other partners in business with EMs are Italian entrepreneurs. Some Egyptians indicate the presence of joint ventures.

An important drawback for the development of business activities between Italy and Egypt is the **visa management issue**. The strict supervision and delays in issuing visas reduce any free and speed mobility necessary for business.

Regarding **collective remittances for community social development**, EMs do not seem committed in helping their villages of origin through collective actions. Differently, EMs sustain small local social activities giving their aid individually to local Islamic organizations through informal channels. Cases of aid through the remittances (or when they return for holidays) of *Zakat* or *Sadaqa* for building schools and mosques in villages have been reported. However, due to the current political situation in the Middle East, EMs are more concerned of the scarce transparency of informal channels and they are aware that finding new formal transfer opportunities would be safer.

EMs do not have much knowledge and experiences of social development projects managed by Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Egypt. Associations of Egyptians living in Italy have organized few and occasional collections of money and subscriptions for sustaining school activities in the villages of origin. They are still more interested in the creation of a solidarity fund for sustaining the costs of body transfers. EMs believe that the best way to contribute to the development process in Egypt would be through their entrepreneurial capacities and investments.

3. POLICY GUIDELINES

Egyptian diaspora research outcomes reveal the need for a comprehensive policy and an institutional framework able to enhance the EMs potential to foster local development in their homeland. Moreover, the high entrepreneurial spirit of the Egyptian diaspora abroad asks for more clear guidelines in the setting up autonomous business projects.

Channels and transnational economic ties are quoted in the international literature as key elements through which migration can contribute to development of the country of origin. Martin and

Straubhaar (2001) indicate 3 R's through which maximizing migration payoffs for development: Remittances, Return and Recruitment. "*Countries that export labor have three major channels through which they can influence recruitment or who emigrates, the amount and use of remittances, and the activities of returned migrants*". Recently Guarnizo (2003) summarizes a conventional typology of transnational economic ties with positive effects for the local development of the countries of origin: monetary remittances, transnational entrepreneurship and community development support. If we apply these typologies and other original suggestions of EMs in Italy, the following hypothesis of public policy may be endorsed.

3.1 Assistance to Egyptian transnational entrepreneurs and foreign investments

(Remittances and transfers of savings for the setting up of enterprises in Egypt).

EMs as foreign investors need information on business opportunities, business activities, business meeting organization, technical assistance and accompanying services on bureaucratic procedures and for the reduction of transaction costs (corruption as well). Probably also access to credit in Egypt could be important for the capitalization of the enterprises, depending on the business plan and sector of investment.

As stressed earlier, EMs are confident and interested in the proximity services offered by Italian local entrepreneurial associations and Egyptian institutions. In this case, it is necessary to set up a **transnational network of services to accompany EMs' investments in Egypt** (or a sort of transnational incubator for the setting up of transnational enterprises). The network could be constituted by agreements between Italian entrepreneurial associations and similar organizations in Egypt, under the auspices of the Egyptian and Italian governments.

The Egyptian Commercial Consul within the Promos¹³ in Milan represents an important focal point in Italy. He is recognized by some EMs as a competent and dynamic person. Both the Consul and some Egyptian associations in Italy are interested in drafting a map of the Egyptian business community. Another Italian institution interested in promoting trade and investment with Egypt is the *Confederazione Nazionale dell'Artigianato* (CNA), which has about 1.300 Egyptian members. CNA has an agreement and a joint office with the Productive Cooperatives Union in Cairo, to support economic cooperation initiatives among Italian and Egyptian small entrepreneurs. These and other institutions could offer services in Italy and in Egypt to facilitate investment of EMs.

¹³ Promos is the special agency for economic internationalization of enterprises set up by the Chamber of Commerce of Milan.

EMs point out that also the Egyptian Ministries and Agencies competent on Trade and Foreign Investment should guarantee effective services for their small and medium enterprises and not only towards Multinationals. In the same way, they want access to have facilities for foreign investment (tax breaks, off shore facilitations).

Another idea is to offer **training and support to EMs on trade and on foreign investment promotion**. Some EMs are facilitating trade and investment of Italian enterprises in Egypt. However, these initiatives often remain at the individual and spontaneous levels. EMs need training for increasing their professional skills, information, and new relationships with Egyptian institutions competent on trade and foreign investment promotion as well as with Egyptian enterprises looking for new markets in Europe.

The feasibility of trade and investment depends on the **good management of business visa**. In this regard, Egyptian Authorities and the IMIS project should assist Egyptian businessmen in requesting the visa to the Italian Consulate.

3.2 Fostering EMs skills and brain circulation

The valorization of EMs skills for development (which is one axis of the Egyptian strategy: “to take benefit from the Egyptian skills abroad in connection with the transfer of scientific and technical knowledge...”¹⁴) [May](#) be sustained through targeted measures fostering virtual returns and commuting.

- Skills and brains of EMs are useful to **train Egyptian entrepreneurs** involved in the setting up and modernization of transnational and local firms. As we have seen, Egyptian migrant businessmen as well as Egyptian enterprises (Egyptian Businessmen’s Association) request workers who can manage and have adequate preparations and skills. EMs with specific skills, for example in Italian technologies management, could be contracted for transferring their capabilities and training to Egyptian workers and entrepreneurs in the homeland. In this sense, a database of EMs skills should be set up. At the same time, projects for skill transfers to micro and small Egyptian enterprises in sectors where EMs have high capabilities could be identified and sustained by the Italian Cooperation.

¹⁴ Speech presented at the first work group by Mostafa Abdel Monsef, Head of the Emigration and Egyptians Abroad Sector, the Ministry of Manpower and Emigration, Arab Republic of Egypt, “Egyptian Migration”, Rome the 26th April 2004.

- Skills and brains of EMs may be useful in **training potential migrants** for the Italian labor market. The new Italian Law on Immigration supports the training and the selection of potential migrants in the country of origin for the better insertion in the Italian labor market. The training may involve the EMs living in Italy as trainers and key witnesses. They know the problems and demands of the Italian labor market. They know the skills requested in specific sectors. EMs indicate the Italian schools in Cairo (Istituto Leonardo da Vinci) and in Alexandria (Don Bosco) as possible local institutions where potential Egyptian migrants could be trained in technical subjects. Otherwise, potential EMs could be trained in Italian technical schools and receive directly on-the-job training through contracts with Italian enterprises.
- Moreover, EMs know integration problems in Italy, they can spread better information and in some cases dissuade Egyptians to emigrate. In this sense, EMs should be the **privileged actors of any information campaigns regarding migration opportunities and constraints towards Italy**.

3.3 Support to community development initiatives

Despite few cases reported, some EMs might be interested in directing individual and collective remittances towards social development initiatives (education, healthcare, sanitation, small irrigation systems) for their origin villages and cities. An incentive for the gathering of individual and collective remittances may be through co-financing measures of the Italian cooperation and/or Egyptian local authorities and state: 1\$ from collective remittances plus 1\$ from co-financing measures can form the capital for social investment¹⁵. The organization of these pilot projects may be promoted and supported by local NGOs of the villages of origin and by Italian NGOs linked to EMs' networks or directly by EMs' associations. The Italian NGOs and/or EMs' associations might make EMs aware of the social development initiatives and promote the transfer of individual and collective remittances towards the local fund. The fund might be established in an Egyptian local bank collecting individual and collective remittances coming through EMs bank accounts in Italy.

A pilot project could be promoted by Italian cooperation linking Egyptian remittances to social and economic initiatives of Community Development Associations (CDA) of the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP). The pilot project should sustain direct linkages among CDAs and Egyptian

¹⁵ This kind of mechanism is very successful in Mexico, where 1\$ of collective remittances mobilizes 1\$ of Local Authorities fund and 1\$ of State fund.

associations in Italy, through facilitator agents like for example the Italian NGO COSPE (that works in the PAP and has relationship with Egyptians in Italy). CDAs and Egyptian associations should identify small social and economic projects where remittances could be invested. The canalization of remittances to the projects should be easier when EMs come from the same area where the CDA operates. The co-financing of the Italian cooperation could stimulate the investment of remittances.

On the other hand, the weakness of CDA in Egypt and of Egyptian associations in Italy calls for capacity building programs (like the one managed by the NGO Service in Cairo) and networking services. Local Authorities and agencies, under the auspices of Egyptian and Italian competent Ministries, could sustain the capacity building programme for Egyptian associations in Italy.

3.4 Valorization of the Arab culture and mutual understanding

Considering that EMs in Italy are interested in preserving their culture, the Egyptian Ministry of Manpower and the Italian cooperation might promote school exchanges and courses on the Arab culture in Italian schools and courses on the Italian culture in Egyptian schools. EMs ask for educational materials (books and e-books, CDs, educational softwares) in Arab language. The program of school exchanges may diffuse such educational materials and create linkages between Egyptian and Italian teachers and students. It may have a very important role in improving mutual understanding between the Arab and European cultures, promote integration and a multicultural society in accordance to the third pillar of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. EMs may play the role of promoters of school exchange programs both in the Italian and in the Egyptian schools. The Egyptian Ministry of Manpower could envisage a program of journeys in Egypt for second-generation migrants with cultural and social activities.

3.5 EMs for the IMIS project: giving roots and services to recruitment

As for the exploitation of the privileged quota for immigration accorded by the Italian government to Egypt, EMs may be useful as labor recruitment brokers. The EMs labor brokerage is completely informal and it needs a sort of institutionalization by the Italian Welfare Ministry and Labor Agencies (Italia Lavoro and Agenzie del Lavoro regionali). **EMs are willing to commit themselves as labor brokers.** Some of them are just working for local social service associations and trade unions on immigration assistance. They propose the creation of a network of EMs labor

brokers (who may be also Egyptian associations) distributed in the different Italian territories (where they live and have strong relationships with Italian local institutions competent in immigration procedures). This network is the best mechanism for giving information and assistance services for the insertion and integration of Egyptian labor migrants. Through the network, they can collect labor demands of Italian small and medium enterprises per sector and job specialization, and pass them to the Labor Agencies. A parallel network it is already existent in Egypt and it is formed by the social relationships of EMs with relatives, friends and local communities. These networks (here and there) are maintained through the transnational behavior of EMs and they could represent the roots of the implementation of the job matchmaking mechanism. Obviously EMs want to be recognized by Egyptian and Italian institutions and receive adequate payment for the services.

Finally EMs complain about the relationships with the Italian Consulate and Embassy in Cairo: procedures for visa requests are extremely difficult and time-consuming. EMs would like that IMIS project could assist them in facilitating the visas' demands.

The matching process between labor demand and offer through the distribution of the Egyptian privileged quota among Italian Regions and the provinces represents a problem. For example, the Emilia Romagna Region distributed its quota among its Provinces, but the quota established for the Reggio Emilia Province (maximum of 6 workers) is smaller than the demand for Egyptian workers coming from the local enterprises, while at the same time the quota established for the Province of Bologna (37 workers) is greater than the local demand. Despite this mismatch, the need of compensation in the quota distribution among the provinces faces rigid bureaucracies among different administrative levels. The Italian Ministry of Welfare should intervene and establish a new mechanism to ensure more flexibility in the distribution of quotas.

3.6 Suggestions for the improvement of IMIS web site

Regarding the evolution of the IMIS web site, the majority of EMs are not Internet users. Moreover, they are suspicious about the possibility that this instrument might be used to control and not to promote their role as development actors. Similarly, EMs stress that also Italian SMEs are not willing to use Internet and database services for recruitment and investment. They prefer direct personal contacts. Consequently, **it is necessary to complement the IMIS web site with offices and networks of focal points for spreading information and services.**

However, if the IMIS web site and database may facilitate the visa issuing and reduce bureaucratic costs for business activities, it may be considered a very useful instrument. In this case, the IMIS web site must be accompanied by other activities, and especially by direct personal contacts (telecommunications, missions, business meetings...) and services as pointed out above. EMs would like a prompt service through direct personal contact by the Ministry of Manpower for the resolution of migration disputes and procedures with Italian Consulates and Embassies.

EMs propose themselves as promoters for the IMIS web site in Italy (he/she might be a focal point of the network mentioned). They can collect and canalize information and requests.

The IMIS web site could dedicate windows of information and communication on different specific opportunities of cooperation through the valorization of EMs capitals:

- A window on “What Egyptians living abroad say”, where Egyptians give information on integration problems and labor opportunities in different countries. They may tell their personal stories and give advice on various issues. Films on Egyptians living abroad could be shot and uploaded on the IMIS web site.
- A window on “Trade and investment opportunities in Egypt”, where different Egyptian institutions (Trade Ministry, General Authority on Foreign Investment,) and Banks give information on regulations and procedures, specific business opportunities in different economic sectors,
 - A special sub-window could be opened on “Success Stories”, where EMs explain their successful investments in Egypt.
 - Another special sub-window could be dedicated to e-commerce between Egyptian local enterprises and EMs enterprises abroad.
- A window on “Egyptians abroad: skills and brains for development”, where a database of Egyptians abroad offering their skills and brains could be hosted and specific projects promoted
- A window on “community development opportunities”, where Egyptian NGOs and Social Ministries indicate education and health projects at the local level which could be supported by EMs remittances and skill circulation. The window could provide information and addresses on NGOs and Egyptian associations abroad facilitating direct linkages between them.
- A window on “cultural and education exchanges”, where information and addresses of Egyptian as well as Italian associations and schools could be listed facilitating direct links; information on education projects, seminars and conferences could be diffused; e-books in Arab language could be downloaded and educational software be made accessible.

- A window on “Egyptian networks in the world”, where Egyptian associations abroad may exchange information and best practices on economic and social initiatives as well as exchange information with Egyptian NGOs for identifying common projects.
- A window on “services for migration and integration”, where potential migrants could find social and economic information on destination countries, addresses of Local Authorities and associations which offer services for integration (home facilitations, language courses)

The IMIS website should be promoted through the Egyptian Embassies and Consulates and then endorsed to the Egyptian associations. It could strengthen the capacity of Egyptian Embassies and Consulates in spreading services for migrants. Training on IMIS web site and services to migrants for officers and civil servants of Egyptian Embassies and Consulates should be foreseen. Egyptian migrants themselves could be promoters of the IMIS web site and services.

3.7 Deepening the research on Egyptian migrants in Italy for the IMIS project

The outcomes of this study might be more precisely focused on increasing the impact of the IMIS project and Egyptian diaspora on homeland development (as foreseen in the Terms of Reference). The deepening of the study could cover some of the following topics:

- a) An analysis of migrants' networks in the towns and villages of the Delta Nile in order to identify specific cooperation opportunities for investing remittances, community development initiatives, skill circulations;
- b) An analysis of recent EMs flows and different EMs typologies (second generation, Copts, EMs coming from rural areas) in order to identify new cooperation opportunities;
- c) An analysis of Italian institutions (Local Authorities, Entrepreneur Associations, NGOs and civil society) which might be involved in social and economic cooperation with EMs;
- d) A survey of the Italian Banks interested in channeling remittances and of Italian cooperation financial instruments (soft loans, joint venture capital) which could be directed also to sustain investment of EMs in homeland.

Furthermore, additional information could be collected for the IMIS web site:

- A map of Egyptian areas of origin and destinations in Italy
- A map of Egyptian associations in Italy with characteristic profiles
- A map of Egyptian enterprises in Italy with characteristic profiles, business demands and offers.

The last map would be very useful when considering the possibility to **create an Egyptian entrepreneurs' association in Italy**. CeSPI with IOM Rome could collect information, create a data base and promote a Conference to launch the idea and to set up the Egyptian entrepreneurs' association in Italy. The Italian-Arab Chamber of Commerce, Promos and other Italian institutions could sponsor the Conference. The necessary incentive for the involvement of Egyptian entrepreneurs should be represented by the availability of financial instruments (soft loans and joint venture capital of the Italian cooperation).

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