

COVID-19 Italy – Update borderline-europe Sicily – part 1



23.03.2020

Here you will find a collection on the situation in Italy/Sicily during the Corona pandemic. The Sicily office publishes this update at irregular intervals.

State decrees of 4.3., 8.3., 11.3., 22.3., ...

(Not all were listed, because there is something new every day)

A detailed overview of all decrees up to 19.03.2020 can be found here

Here are just a few extracts

04.03.2020

All measures are described here that have to do with school closures etc., conferences etc. Furthermore: you are not allowed to accompany anybody to the emergency room anymore, you are not allowed to visit anybody in the hospital, home office is possible, measures to keep hygiene / distance, who should not go outside, obligation to report travellers and voluntary 2 weeks quarantine, what health authorities have to do after reporting a case, who comes into quarantine is not allowed to have social contacts anymore. Article 3 makes it clear that the prefecture can monitor all this = i.e. can use police to monitor compliance. The decree is valid until 03.04.2020. The military has the same functions as the police. From 20.03.2020 the MILITARY will also take over police control functions in Sicily

11.03.2020

All measures are described there, what is still possible and what is not, what may be open and what not.

12.02.2020, Palermo public prosecutor's office, admission to homes:

- Here it is determined that because of the many migrants who leave the homes and some of them come back, stricter rules must be introduced

o Once out you are not allowed back in

o The person is displayed

o The operators are allowed to lock the persons in their rooms (!!!!) This does not count as deprivation of liberty in terms of health security

o This applies to adults as well as comprehensive

Locked in rooms should not be a measure. There are always problems with migrants who do not want to stay in the homes, but want to walk around outside. Borderline Sicilia has received information from various centres that there was no communication to the residents and that they wanted to get out. There were also fights. In order to protect the other residents (apparently they are only male dormitories) the migrants were not taken back. This is also a desperate measure, as the migrants then become homeless and thus potentially endangered. But since there is currently not enough medical care to prevent illness and not enough places for isolation, the car quarantine remains the only way to avoid infecting oneself and others. It is important to observe whether these measures will be lifted immediately when the situation eases.

13.03.2020, Prefettura di Palermo, for the reception of migrants:

- Migrants must be properly informed [sic!]
- Hygiene material must be available [sic!].
- It is necessary to pay attention to the measures to be taken when someone enters Italy from a crisis state - this is all written in the DPCM of the government of 4.2.2020

16.03.2020

All connections to Sicily are interrupted at the request of the President of the Region. Only one train per day from Western Sicily (Palermo) and Eastern Sicily (Syracuse/Catania) will continue to Rome. From Palermo there are 2 flights a day to Rome and to the islands of Lampedusa and Pantelleria, which otherwise could not be served.

17.03.2020 Decree of the Ministry of Transport

- The decree is valid until 25.03.2020. Whoever enters Italy must go into a 2-week quarantine (see SAR NGOs), but it applies to everyone according to the decree.
- Those who have to enter for work purposes must deposit a declaration, max. stay 72 h, extendable for another 48 h
- The decree is de facto obsolete with the new decree of 22.03.2020. 19.03.2020
- The closure of the schools etc. will be extended (so far it was until 03 April), the date is not yet known.
- A new decree has been issued in Sicily. This is very controversial, but since Sicily is an autonomous region, the president of the region can issue it without the consent of the central government (which certainly has not happened, since other regions are also thinking about implementing such a decree):
- The decree, which consists of five articles in total, further tightens the curfew which has been in force since March 4th. Thus, the aisles for shopping or to the pharmacy are now limited to once a day. In addition, all outdoor motor and sports activities are prohibited. This also applies to individuals. Only dogs may be taken out in the immediate vicinity of the place of residence. The local authorities are now also obliged to ensure that the streets, built-up areas, public office buildings and school buildings are cleaned. In urban transport, access for passengers is allowed up to a maximum of 40% of the authorised seats, with a minimum distance of one metre between them in all cases. The space reserved for drivers must be delimited accordingly.

22.03.2020 Council of Ministers

Due to the now decided closure of many industrial plants - this became necessary because the commuters have contributed massively to the spread of the virus and have to protect themselves - it was decided that NOBODY should leave the place where he/she is currently located. With this, the government wants to stop the mass exodus from the north to the south, which has already taken place twice. It has nevertheless led to a mass flight of cars.

22.03.2020 Ministry of Health

It also stipulates that no one may move away from the place where he/she is located with public or private means.

Effects of the Corona situation on the situation of migrants in Italy

Bureaucratic implications

- Due to the operational and logistical difficulties caused by the pandemic, a number of legal services managed by the Italian Ministry of the Interior are now limited.
- As police staff, normally employed by immigration authorities for bureaucratic reasons, have been redeployed for coronavirus-related tasks in emergencies, applications and extensions of residence permits for foreigners have been suspended for 30 days from 2 March.
- The courts are also closed at least until 3 April, but there have already been announcements that all court proceedings will be suspended until the end of May, so the government has suspended personal interviews to determine refugee status and hearings for appeals in the event of rejections of asylum applications. These suspensions began on 12 March and will last at least until mid-April (30 days), but probably much longer.
- The first case of a migrant in Italy infected with COVID-19 was reported on Monday at a reception centre in Milan. The man, who showed only mild symptoms, was quarantined, and half of the 160 migrants in the centre were reportedly moved to another building in the city.
- A major problem is the continued delivery of refusals of asylum applications. As neither lawyers nor courts are working, it is impossible to file a complaint. Some immigration authorities send these rejections with the security mail PEC, but this is useless if nobody is working.
- Problem: Ending the residence: On 22.03., however, in a virtual meeting of the Antiracist Forum Palermo we learned that some homes in the province of Palermo were asking residents to leave them, as their time had now run out. They are to be put on the street despite the curfew. Borderline Sicilia is consulting with the anti-racist. Forum and the Law Clinic CLEDU.

Effects on the right of asylum and residence permits (compiled by Borderline Sicilia, as of 23.03.2020)

Residence permits:

- The decree of 2 March suspended applications for the issue and renewal of residence permits for 30 days. In a circular of 9 March, the immigration authorities were closed. Only the submission of applications for international protection and the procedures for expulsion orders are guaranteed - but due to the closure of most authorities it is not clear how this will be done.

- With the decree of 18 March, Art. 103 stipulates that "certificates, attestations, permits, authorisations, authorisations and enabling laws, however named, which expire between 31 January and 15 April 2020, shall remain valid until 15 June 2020". (Residence permits are deemed to be included).

That would mean:

- Expired permits will remain valid until June 15, 2020.
- One can submit applications for international protection (to understand the practical arrangements, which are different for each police station and will certainly not be easy)
- expulsions can be made
- Court proceedings
- All civil and criminal proceedings are suspended from 9 March to 15 April 2020. Exceptions to this rule are procedures relating to unaccompanied minors and procedures relating to expulsion orders.
- This means:
- Court proceedings relating to international protection, residence permits, Dublin procedures will be suspended in the sense that the deadlines will not run and no hearings will take place, as they will be postponed ex officio.
- Legal proceedings relating to unaccompanied minor refugees and deportations are excluded from this suspension and will continue as normal.

Social implications

- From civil society, the criticism comes above all from the fact that the decrees have forgotten migrants and homeless people: No concrete political instructions on how to deal with refugees in shelters, where numerous people live together in cramped conditions, sometimes under appalling hygienic conditions. In addition, there are often external visits (police, social workers, other services etc).
- Despite the plight and the increasing politicisation of migration issues, the local media have also reported a growing empathy of some local people for migrants seeking refuge in Europe. A video of Italians hurrying to the train stations before the forced closure shows some of them saying: "We feel like refugees; we run too."
- At first there was not enough information in other languages to make the situation clear to the migrants, but this is now changing thanks to the commitment of civil society actors, e.g. NAGA
- Recruitment/temporary suspension of services for asylum seekers, e.g. legal advice, Italian courses, etc.
- Joint letter from civil society organisations or actors calling for the closure of detention centres
- "In a letter signed by Legal Team Italia together with dozens of lawyers and various associations, including the ASGI, the Minister of the Interior, Quaestors and Prefects from all over Italy are asked to take measures to limit the risk of infection in administrative prisons, which, in weighing up the rights and interests at stake, are in line with the primary objective of preventing the spread of the epidemic and protecting the health and lives of prisoners and the population as a whole". ASGI
- There therefore seems to be an immediate need to adopt measures that limit the risk of infection and, in a balance between the rights and interests concerned (which are laid down by various provisions, notably those of the European Convention on Human Rights), obey the primary objective of preventing the spread of the epidemic and protecting the health and lives of prisoners and the population as a whole.
- For all these reasons, the authors call for the immediate suspension of any new entry into the CPR, for the alternative measures of detention for those already detained, as provided for in Article 13, paragraph 5.2, Consolidated Immigration Law, to be ordered, and for the gradual closure of the centres to be carried out as soon as possible.

Call of the ASGI lawyers' association, 23.03.2020 for all areas of migration policy

We (borderline-europe) have also signed this appeal as borderline-europe. The 12-page doc is available here
Unfortunately, this only exists in Italian. But it covers the demands of all sectors:

- Accommodation and everyday life: among others: opening of the second accommodation SPRAR also for asylum seekers (as it used to be) - hygienic standards for all - water access for people camping in the countryside - access to the health system - access to accommodation without mass occupancy - accommodation for homeless people - closure of the big centres (equalisation) - prolongation of the accommodation in the centres, especially for unaccompanied minors -

- distribution of information material for migrants- provision of exit tickets etc. for the migrants who can and must still work - financial support for those who lose their jobs
- Documents: Extension of papers even beyond 15.6. if necessary - Enabling asylum applications to be made even when the offices of the aliens authorities are closed - Applications for family reunification must be able to be made digitally, i.e. by e-mail - Suspension of (partially) negative asylum decisions.
- Court decisions: all courts are closed and no decisions are made, but deportations are not suspended! This is contradictory and must be changed
- Deportation detention and hotspots: must be closed immediately
- Rescue and arrivals: Ports must be allocated quickly, even if no European distribution is promised, no accommodation in large centres, protection of employees and rescued persons must be guaranteed.

Final sentence "A purely defensive attitude is not enough: The current crisis may be an opportunity to focus on the structurally unequal nature of the aliens law and to reverse the trend. It is necessary, starting from the protection of foreign citizens* in this particular case, to revive the need for systemic changes. The repeal of the so-called security decrees, the reform of citizenship discipline and the provision of measures to regularize undocumented foreign citizens can be the first step towards a fairer legal system for the benefit of all and everyone".

Calls for attention to safety also for refugees in the province of Palermo

- In Palermo: Porco Rosso (and in the 2nd letter also other associations) have written a letter to the head of the social department because the situation in the accommodation of Biagio Conte (3 facilities) does not meet the hygienic safety standards to avoid the spread of Covid-19. Biagio Conte itself rejected all cooperation during the week 09-13.03. In the meantime he seems to be aware of the possibly dramatic situation. A 2nd letter was written and on 19.03. there should be a meeting. Main demands are: Get more food so people don't have to go outside (over the blackboard), get a power generator so people don't have to go outside to charge their cell phones, more portable toilets and other facilities. Fear of the commune evacuating instead. This must be prevented at all costs.
- On 20.03. there was a meeting with the responsible persons and it was agreed to initiate the measures.
- The municipality of Palermo issued a letter on 23.03. stating that from now on it will work to provide food for the needy, a very positive sign. The Forum had also discussed on 22.03. exactly how to get food to the needy without harm. Starting from 27.03. a platform should make it possible to enter the names and addresses of the needy, these will then be supplied by Caritas, the civil defense and other associations authorized for this purpose, especially with food through the various boards. Caritas in particular will take care of the homeless and shelters for the homeless and other particularly vulnerable people. Meanwhile, the forum is also pushing an appeal for solidarity shopping, vouchers are to be bought from supermarkets, which will then benefit the needy migrants. In addition, the community is trying to find houses where homeless people can be accommodated and cared for. Together with the civil defence, buildings are to be found where the sick can be accommodated.
- In Campobello di Mazara: Seasonal workers are stuck in unworthy conditions in an old cement factory (currently about 40 people), no water etc. With a lot of effort, it has been possible that also these migrants can call the emergency number of the Red Cross and if necessary they are helped. But then (approx. 18.03.) the order of the mayor to clear the area came. Without any announcement where the people should go = homeless people are created. Protest of the anti-mafia organisation LIBERA. The eviction was then lifted after protests and the migrants still present there were provided with food.

Political discussions

- In Sicily, where most migrants arrive via the Mediterranean Sea, there is less fear that they will bring the corona virus, but rather that they will need medical attention in the already overburdened hospitals (e.g. due to injuries they suffered in Libya, or tuberculosis due to the hygienic conditions in the camps).

- "It's not a question of racism, but of common sense," said Mazzeo. "This situation could lead to a collapse of the national health system, especially in the south, which has a weaker infrastructure and where most arrivals end up.
- Therefore, the fear of returnees from the north of Italy is currently much greater than that of migrants, because this is a real "threat", as many of the people are carriers of the virus. This has led to the fact that many old people here have been infected in the old people's homes because the children and grandchildren from the North, who were without symptoms, did not think that they could pass it on.

BUT ALSO: Instrumentalisation by right-wing parties

- Claim that they would not comply with the quarantine
- Proof
- Unfortunately, this is also true to a certain extent, on the one hand this can be due to the lack of information, on the other hand it is also personal, there are people everywhere who "step out of line", this plays into the hands of the right nat.
- Popular arguments in this context:
 - We have to stay at home, while this does not apply to migrants
 - Migrants are racists because they do not go to Italy anymore because of the corona virus
 - Italians are now taking action in this situation and there is no capacity for foreigners
- On 21st February Salvini proposed to close the borders to migrants to protect Italians. A few days later, at a press conference in Genoa, he said: "The government underestimated the corona virus, even though none of the COVID 19 cases in Italy were linked to Africa and the continent had only one case (in Egypt). It is irresponsible to let migrants from Africa, where the virus has been confirmed, land".
- In a telephone interview with TNH last week, Antonio Mazzeo, a former League candidate for the European Parliament, suggested that local residents must be given priority and "migration policy should take a back seat".
- However, on 5 March, the League-led council in the northern region of Lombardy - the epicentre of the Italian coronavirus outbreak - called on humanitarian NGOs to make their medical staff available for the crisis. "In an emergency situation, we should all put aside our ideological differences and help in any way we can," Mazzeo said.

Sea Rescue

- All arriving migrants have to be quarantined, already happened with Ocean Viking and Seawatch 3, whose passengers and crew were in quarantine for two weeks in Sicily (migrants in the hotspot, crew on board)
- No arrivals / landings in Italy until 12 March. Guess: Coronavirus?

Situation on Lampedusa:

- 12.03. First autonomous landing of 26 people quarantined on the island
- 13.03. Arrival of three autonomous boats of 31-13-43 persons each Brought to quarantine in Sicily
- 15.03. Autonomous landing of 43 people Quarantined in Sicily
- Totò Martello (Mayor of Lampedusa): The island is overburdened with the additional quarantine requirements and can no longer accept migrants, not enough capacity
- On 18.03. the NGOs announced their sea rescue operations due to the current situation to cancel currently no NGO ships and thus no rescue in the Mediterranean!
- On 2.3. the first arrival in Calabria took place again. 12 men from Iran, Syria and Iraq started in Greece and landed on the coast in Crotona. They are said to have been examined for symptoms by the Red Cross, but since almost no samples are taken, unless severe symptoms are present, it is questionable what was done. All 12 men were taken to the large camp Sant'Anna (!)

COVID19 Italy – Update von borderline-europe Sicily - part 2



17.04.2020

Political changes

- The end of the lockdown originally planned for 03.04. was initially postponed to 13.04. From 14.04. onwards, some businesses are to resume operations, and a few shops will be allowed to reopen. However, each region regulates this differently. However, the curfew for the population has been extended until 03.05.
- A compulsory mask in shops was imposed, because although the number of infections is declining slightly (this does not apply to every region), the all-clear cannot be given for a long time, there are still several thousand new infections in the country every day. Problem: there are not enough masks. Therefore neck scarves are also considered possible.

Social changes

- After three weeks of the lockdown, the mood of the population changed. At the beginning, people were still singing from their balconies, but now the first riots are taking place in southern Italy.
- Many people, especially in the poorer south, are less afraid of the virus than of poverty.
- Long queues in front of the blackboards, as many people are running out of savings.
- There have been incidents where shopkeepers have been threatened by people to give them free food.
- Police patrol supermarkets.
- The risk of poverty is very high for the estimated 3.3 million undeclared workers in the country (1 million in Campania, Sicily, Puglia and Calabria).
- Prime Minister Conte promised 4.3 billion € for a solidarity fund to be distributed to all communities.
- Criticism from many mayors: the €400 million earmarked for food vouchers is not enough. The rest of the fund has already been earmarked for other areas.
- Danger of exploitation by criminal organisations that give loans to businessmen who are on the verge of bankruptcy or recruit new members.

The situation of migrants

- Many migrants are employed as harvest workers. Since supermarkets etc. are open, they are still working. However, it was found out that the safety regulations are not observed there. They have neither water to wash their hands with, nor a home to stay in.
- For many migrants, not leaving home means that they have no income (e.g. carers who were not registered, day labourers)
- The employees in the CPR (deportation centres) are obliged to regularly check the health of the residents. According to the employees of the anti-discrimination office Nouredine Adnane in Palermo, there are still many homes that do not have masks and gloves for themselves or the residents.
- In many homes and deportation detention centres, migrants have fallen ill with COVID19, but despite massive appeals by refugee organisations, deportation detention centres are not closed.
- At the end of March, at least 30 barracks inhabited by migrants burned down near Foggia. The barracks were located in Borgo Mezzanone, next to a reception centre. It is suspected that the fire was caused by a short circuit caused by illegal electricity connections. None of the residents were injured or died.
- The situation is particularly dramatic for those people who have no income. From a report of Borderline Sicilia: "The hashtag "everything will be all right" does not apply to the poor, the street vendors, the workers exploited in agriculture, the many people without a contract of employment, who make up a very high percentage in the Sicilian cities. "I eat only once a day: some toast and a cup of tea. I don't have anything else, and I can't get any help because I don't have the necessary documents. I do not know how long I can go on. I haven't sent money home to my family for more than 15 days, and when it ends for everyone, I don't know what will become of me," a street vendor tells us. In so many communities so many documents are needed to get help that many invisible people, migrants and others, have no access to them. (...) Another dark chapter in these days of economic crisis concerns many migrant who have recently left the reception system - working without a contract but having managed to rent a hut, a warehouse, a garage to sleep in - and who are now being evicted and put back on the street by less understanding landlords. Using mafia-like methods such as threats and the use of

violence, they are "moved" to leave the country and forced to move into houses or to unsafe places. Other invisible people move through the cities."

- The many appeals and demands of groups, NGOs and individuals to regularize migrants (as in Portugal) are not heard.

Developments/events in the Mediterranean

- 27.03. Arrival in Cerano, Puglia: 44 migrants, all wearing masks, landed in Puglia independently. All were healthy and were taken to the quarantine in the reception centres. Most of them are Egyptians and Iraqis and the majority are minors.
- New Mediterranean mission: Irini instead of Sophia. However, it is more focused on respecting the arms embargo in Libya. Rescued migrants are no longer brought to Italy.
- The rescue ship Alan Kurdi set sail again from Spain on 30.03. On 06.04. it rescued 150 migrants in two different operations. One of them had to be evacuated on 10.04. for health reasons. Since Italy has declared its ports as unsafe, the Alan Kurdi cannot go ashore there. But an interim solution was found. So the people on board shall spend the quarantine time on a ship off the coast of Sicily. Afterwards they are allowed to enter the Italian mainland. The migrants* were taken on the ferry "Raffaele Rubattino" on 17.04. There they must spend the two-week quarantine. There they are looked after by the Red Cross, which acts on behalf of the Italian civil protection (Protezione Civile). The ferry is located one nautical mile from the port of Palermo.
- In addition, the Corona pandemic was used to get rid of the responsibility for the migrants*. Thus, on 07.04. Italy declared its ports unsafe and thus closed for rescue missions. One day later Malta followed. Another day later Libya declared its ports unsafe and refused to dock its own ship of the so-called Libyan coast guard (277 migrants were on board, who were stopped by them and wanted to be brought back).
- So far nine boats landed autonomously on Italian coasts in April (a total of 559 persons).
- During the Easter weekend there were at least six, but it is assumed that there were more than 10 boats, in the Mediterranean. Four of them had previously contacted the Alarmphone. One of them with 77 passengers reached Sicily autonomously on 13.04. Another boat, which contacted Alarmphone on 10.04., drifted for more than 80 hours at sea, including several days in the Maltese SAR zone. The private rescue vessel Aita Mari, which has no medical crew on board, set out to look for the people in the boat and reached them on 13.04. Currently the Aita Mari is waiting with the 43 rescued people on board for the assignment of a safe harbour. So far, eight people from medical greenery have already had to be evacuated from the Aita Mari in four different operations. She is currently on her way to the west coast of Sicily. Another boat with 101 people, who also called the alarm phone, has safely arrived in the Sicilian port of Pozzallo itself. There was no trace for days of a boat on which 55 people were originally suspected. On 15 April it turned out that the boat (actually 63 migrants), which had been drifting for days in the Maltese rescue zone, had been brought back to Libya as part of an illegal push back. The alarm phone, in its report mentioned below, gives the exact time schedule. On April 14, the cargo ship IVAN reached the boat in distress, but could not save the people due to the weather. Furthermore, there was no order from Malta to do so. Out of desperation seven of the passengers jumped into the water and drowned. On the same day a fishing boat and a still unidentified ship reached the migrants*. They were brought back to Libya by them. In addition to the seven drowned, five people died of dehydration.
- From the report of Borderline Sicilia: "In three days more than 120 people have arrived in Lampedusa and have been stuck on a pier for more than a day (as of 11.04.2020) because the hotspot is occupied by people who were quarantined in mid-March. As always, the emergency system is taking effect, and so the prefectures are opening new emergency centres (CAS) to empty the island, where tensions among the inhabitants are very high. The hotspot in Pozzallo was also emptied to make room for 50 of the last people who arrived in Lampedusa, including a 15-year-old Egyptian boy who tested positive for corona virus, while the other 74 were transferred to the hotspot after a cold night, apparently mixed with the 36 people who ended the quarantine. 72 people who left Libya and arrived autonomously 9 nautical miles off Lampedusa were intercepted by the coastguard and the GDF the night before and it was decided to disembark them at Porto Empedocle (Sicily) in view of the overcrowding of the hotspot and the protests of the islanders. The migrants were then left in the big tent on the harbour area, because the mayor had decided in the meantime to prohibit landings in her town.

COVID19 Italy – Update

borderline-europe Sicily - part 3



30.04.2020

Political/Social

- From 04.05., phase 2 in the fight against COVID-19 will begin in Italy, which means that the first measures will be relaxed. In this phase, distance and hygiene rules will continue to apply, as well as the obligation to wear masks in closed rooms and places where many people are present. By law, a price limit of 0.50€ has been set for surgical face masks.
- It is allowed to go for a walk and to practice sports activities outside again. In addition, public parks and facilities may be opened again. However, this is at the discretion of the individual mayors. Furthermore, relatives may be visited, but no celebrations may take place.
- It is still not allowed to leave one's own region (except to get to the place of residence / for work or other very urgent reasons).
- Wholesalers and factories may resume work. This also applies to all public construction sites.
- While bars and restaurants must remain closed for seated customers until June 1st, there is the possibility in phase 2 to order food in advance and pick it up on site. However, it must be consumed at home. This has been the case in general. Through this, social restaurant projects like the Moltivolti in Palermo have kept their heads above water.
- In Crespina Lorenzana, a community in the province of Pisa, a decree on 17.04 caused astonishment. The mayor, Thomas D'Addona, introduced a minimum purchase amount in this ordinance. This means that citizens have to buy for at least 50€ in supermarkets and in grocery stores for at least 20€. In addition, at least 5€ must be spent in butcher shops and bakeries. At least one medicine must be bought in a pharmacy and at least three packets of 20 cigarettes each in a tobacco shop. If citizens violate this rule and are caught, they are liable to a fine of 500€. In a Facebook video, the mayor justifies this as follows: "Essentially, you risk much more when shopping than when walking in the fields. While we wait to be able to walk freely again, we limit the risks in the shops. With a little mental organization and a little optimization, we can cut the cost of shopping in half. Fresh bread is a luxury we cannot afford unless the neighbours get organised by walking one by one. Food shopping should not be an excuse to leave the house because those who do so know that it is wrong for themselves and the community".
- This regulation has been widely criticised for encroaching too deeply on personal freedoms. It also fails to recognise that these minimum expenses are not realistic for every citizen and many cannot afford them. In the meantime, the mayor has gone back on his word and the values are considered as recommendations.
- After a long rest Salvini also emerged again - strangely enough exactly at the time of the first loosening. These are not enough for the Lega, together the Legists spent the night in Rome in the parliament to "be close to the citizens* and help them". 50 days of lockdown have nat. brought many economic problems with themselves, the Lega is now getting into it: the Conte government doesn't care about its citizens properly, and this is exactly where the Lega could be successful, because the promised payments to the population don't come and many have massive financial problems. So far the Conte government was praised for the anti-Corona measures, this could now tip over. Now from 4.5. on, the people will no longer be restrained, the question remains whether they will remain reasonable, keep their distance, wear masks. Salvini wants to abolish the so-called Autocertificazione, on which one has to describe where one comes from and where one goes, immediately. The Italians are also reasonable. But we have seen shortly before the lockdown that thousands have taken trains and cars on the way from the north to the south and thus contributed to the spreading of the virus in southern Italy. In Calabria, the regional governor issued a decree, which says that from next week on restaurants and pubs should be open again - but most of the mayors are against it because of the massive danger of infection.

Situation of migrants

- Since 23.04. the project "Migrant voices at the time of the coronavirus" is available on the website of Todo Cambia. It is a project that wants to tell the life of migrants in this emergency situation through interviews. Many of the people who never stopped working in hospitals, nursing homes, families are migrants.

- The situation in the hotspot on Lampedusa is tensed. The hotspot, which is designed for 96 people, currently has 116 migrant in quarantine. The 100 migrants who arrived autonomously on Lampedusa on 28.04. had to spend the night outside at the harbour. They are to be brought to Porto Empedocle the next day. There are also protests from the inhabitants of the hotspot. Some of them complain, for example, that they have completed the quarantine period and are still not being taken anywhere else. It is said that there have even been cases of self-injury to draw attention to the situation. According to reports there is a lack of food and water. The mayor has announced that the situation will improve in the next few days as the quarantine period of the last arrivals will end and Covid-19 tests will be carried out on all residents.
- Furthermore, there is currently a debate in Italian media about the legalisation of irregular migrants. One argument in this regularization debate is that although COVID-19 does not distinguish between social and economic status, the consequences of it do. Thus, the debate is being conducted within the framework of a debate on justice, since everyone should have equal access to health care. In addition, it should be avoided that the consequences of the crisis increase precariousness. More than 250,000 migrants live in Italy in illegal or irregular employment. Although in the current situation they are caring for the elderly and sick, provide fruit and vegetables through their work, society is pushing them underground. The advocates hope that such legalisation will not only prevent health problems but also boost the economy.
- Borderline Sicilia also notes that more and more migrants are starving in Corona times and queuing up for Caritas. But there are also many tireless people who organize and distribute food. One of them is Nizar, who fled himself and is a cook who cooks kilos of couscous for the harvest helpers in the ghetto Campobello di Mazara, which was then distributed with the help of an NGO.
- Borderline Sicilia on the current situation here: "After Agrigento, which has already opened two emergency facilities (CAS) entrusted to the cooperatives Acuarinto and Cometa, Palermo has asked the current administrative bodies to open new facilities or increase the number of places, and Enna has published a call for expressions of interest to manage the CAS from 51 to 150 places for the duration of the Covid-19 emergency.
- Trapani, on the other hand, published three calls for expressions of interest, one - with a base of 28 euros per person per day - to find hotels to accommodate migrants for health emergencies, one for new CAS' - with a base of 42 euros - and a third for social workers, which provides 18 euros per day per person for assistance.
- Also in Catania, there is a public notice for expressions of interest to host quarantined migrants for a total of fifty places. Between ships, hotels and new CAS with higher specifications and direct allocations, the risk of a new 'business wave' is high. Many are standing like vultures at the door, waiting for the right moment, and there is no prospect of improvement on the horizon once the reception system is destroyed by the unchanged security decrees".
- Positive: together with the anti-mafia organisation Libera and others, pressure was exerted on the local government in Campobello di Mazara and large water tanks were set up and locked in a harvest workers' camp, so that the migrants there are finally supplied with fresh water.



Photo: Borderline Sicilia

- **DUBLIN 1:** We have received a message from Pro Asyl asking us how Italy is reacting to the latest steps taken by the BAMF regarding Dublin returns: "As you have probably noticed, the BAMF is going out on a limb with the suspension of the Dublin return deadline. Despite the relatively clear comments of the Commission ("Where a transfer to the responsible Member State is not carried out within the applicable

time limit, responsibility shifts to the Member State that requested the transfer pursuant to Article 29(2) of the Dublin Regulation. No provision of the Regulation allows to derogate from this rule in a situation such as the one resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic" (p. 8 of the Communication of 16 April 2020 on Covid-19 and refugee policy), the BAMF maintains the suspension and does not see it as an extension of the deadline but merely as an interim suspension of the start of the term. If the renditions were maintained and responsibility were not transferred to Germany, this would primarily affect persons seeking protection who had entered Germany via Italy. After all, Italy is the Dublin Classic in Germany." To date we have found no further reaction to this, but an article was published in a right-wing newspaper just today: <https://www.imolaoggi.it/2020/04/29/coronavirus-germania-ne-approfitta-e-rispedisce-migranti-in-italia/>. There, exactly what Pro Asyl wrote is reproduced. Further reactions are not to be found in times of the Corona topic so far.

- **DUBLIN 2:** Minister of the Interior Lamorgese has been negotiating for days with the other EU member states that were prepared to accept refugees from Italy upon arrival, e.g. Germany, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Romania... Now there is great fear that because of CORONA nobody wants to accept any more refugees. Lamorgese wants to make Germany in particular accept the refugees of they ALAN KURDI, who are still in quarantine on the ferry off Palermo.

Central Mediterranean Sea/Sea Rescue

- On 17.04. all 146 migrants of the Alan Kurdi were taken on the ferry "Rubattino" for quarantine. On 19.04. the 34 migrants followed from the Aita Mari. The ferry is located one nautical mile away from Palermo. A total of 222 corona tests were carried out on the migrants but also on the crew. All were negative.
- Another so-called "floating hotspot" like the "Rubattino" is now to be set up between Lampedusa and Porto Empedocle (Sicily), as the capacities of the hotspot of Lampedusa are not sufficient. An open letter from left-wing groups on Lampedusa, which also calls for a quarantine ship, seems unpleasant, but there is a background to this: migrants in small boats are arriving there again and again, but the precautions are zero, as the open letter from Giacomo Sferlazzo of the left-wing group Askavusa describes: the policemen and employees of the hotspot at the pier are not protected by masks and gloves, which means that the migrants come into contact with a lot of people and could infect them. This has caused panic in the population, because recently a young Egyptian arrived on Lampedusa, came into the hotspot, had a lot of contacts and only after that has been tested positive in Pozzallo on Sicily (allegedly, maybe already on Lampedusa). The island is small, there is no hospital, the fear is not completely incomprehensible. This letter does not only refer to the arriving migrants but also to the constantly changing staffs of the police and medical forces on the island, who move "freely" on the island, get on the plane and have contact with islanders. This also hijacks dangers without proper controls. Sferlazzo sharply countered newspaper articles which put into his mouth that he did not want the "clandestini" on the island any more. He also reported on Facebook about an autonomous arrival on 29.04. where the migrants again had to sit for hours on the pier and the police again did not take any protective measures such as masks etc.
- At the moment there is no private sea rescue ship on duty in the Mediterranean. There are several reasons for this. One is that people with medical training who otherwise regularly participate in rescue missions, cannot leave their jobs in the current situation. For another, the quarantine regulations are delaying crew plans. While a normal rescue mission is scheduled for two weeks, an additional two weeks must now be added for the quarantine in Italy. Furthermore, an additional quarantine may be threatened on return from Italy.
- So far in April, 836 people (including those on board the "Rubattino") arrived by sea, 656 of them autonomously.
- Borderline Sicilia on the current situation: "The pandemic has turned reality upside down. The Italians could forget everything else and concentrate on the slogan "Stay at home", on the daily hosting of the Italian flag and on the songs from the various balconies on duty: At last a country united in suffering." The article (German) describes the rescue operations and the situation in the hotspots, as well as the new floating detention centres of the quarantine (the article is from April 18th, on April 28th it appeared in German).
- A new case of the Alarm Phone has been demanding attention for two days - 62 people, about whose fate nothing is known. Nobody knows if Malta, which was responsible, saved them or not, if there was a pushback, if the people are still alive. Here is a press release of the organisation aditus (with other groups and NGOs, including the AP): <https://aditus.org/mt/the-government-must-provide-information-on-rescue-operations/>

COVID19 Italy – Update borderline-europe Sicily - part 4



13.05.2020

Political/Social

- Phase 2 began on 04 May, uniformly throughout Italy. On 11 May, a concept for differentiated opening was accepted at a video conference between the President of the Government and the central government. In some regions, bars, hairdressers' shops and restaurants are allowed to open from 18 May and not only on 1 June as originally provided for in the decree. The regional presidents will still have to comply with guidelines that will be adopted by the government in the coming days.
- In Sicily, President Nello Musumeci has already announced that he will sign a decree to reopen shops, bars, restaurants and hairdressing salons. Customers of restaurants and bars must be separated by three metres inside and one and a half metres outside; waiters must wear surgical masks, ffp2 outside and in any case gloves, which must be changed several times a day. The cosmeticians can only open by appointment, they must guarantee a distance of at least three metres between customers and wear masks with filters (ffp2) Shops can be opened with the same rules that apply to grocery stores: a limited number of customers, compulsory masks and disinfection of premises and exhibits.
- So far, Sicily is still isolated from the mainland, and travel is only allowed with a reason. The "autocertificazione", a paper in which one describes where one comes from and where one goes, and which must always be carried with one. The number of infections has decreased, but after the first opening on 4 May, it remains to be seen whether this will continue.
- The Human Rights Office of the UN and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) criticise the way the EU states deal with migrants in the Mediterranean. They accuse them of violations of international humanitarian law, as Malta or Greece have forced boats with migrants into international waters or back to Libya. They call for the opening of the ports and the return of the lifeboats, whose fixing in Italy (Alan Kurdi and Aita Mari) they criticize at the same time.
- Italy's government wants to issue residence permits to thousands of migrants. At first sight it sounds good, but in reality it is a law with many built-in pitfalls. The residence permits will be valid for only six months and will only concern those who already have an expired residence permit or who have worked in agriculture in the past.
- This still excludes thousands of migrants who are denied access to health care in these difficult times of the pandemic. So it remains just as much an amnesty fraud as in 2012, when the government has already failed with such a regulation. Many migrants could not officially prove their residence permits at that time because they came into the country irregularly. This time the same threatens again for thousands of migrants who never had a residence permit or never worked in agriculture. So as long as such a reform is not based on the mere presence of migrants in Italy, nothing will change progressively. This compromise text of the government therefore remains above all a gift to the farmers' lobby, which, similar to Germany, needs cheap replacements for unusual Eastern European harvest workers.

Situation of migrants

- The ship "Moby Zazà", which is now being fitted out as a quarantine ship between Lampedusa and Sicily, can accommodate 250 people. This is intended to defuse the situation on Lampedusa and its crowded hotspot. On the ship there is a separate area reserved for people with COVID-19 symptoms and 35 places for medical staff. However, it is feared that there will not be sufficient capacity for the migrants arriving autonomously on Lampedusa. The cost of the ship will be around 1.5 million euros per month. It is currently in the port of Porto Empedocle and is undergoing a security check.
- During the last arrivals from Tunisia a significantly increased number of women could be observed (around 50%). These migrant women, most of whom come from Côte d'Ivoire, are often part of a network of local exploitation. These women are often picked up in their villages and often even brought to Tunisia by plane. There they are then forced to work as slaves in order to finance their own boat trip to Italy. Not infrequently, even after their arrival in Sicily, they are taken in charge by the mafia structures there and continue to be exploited in the fields and unfortunately also as prostitutes.

- Police and authorities searched the coasts of Sicily last week following reports on Wednesday of another autonomous landing of migrants on the south-west coast in the Torre Salsa nature reserve. So far 29 people have been found, but police suspect that there were "about 50" in the boat. They were unable to arrest any more migrants. The authorities believe that the boat probably came from Tunisia.
- There are no figures about the number of migrants who contracted COVID19. So far the rescued have been negative with very few exceptions. There is no reliable information about how it looks like in other regions with migrant arrivals and those who are already longer in Italy and have to live in homes.

Central Mediterranean

- **Malta** has officially informed the European Commission that it will not commit to any further military resources to the **EU operation Irini**. In doing so, Malta is above all doing a favour to Turkey, which is actively providing weapons by sea to the UN-recognised "Government of National Accord" (GNA) and against which the European arms embargo is specifically targeted. The cynical hope of this indirect and grubby agreement of both countries is that the GNA will act more decisively against smugglers and migrants than its competitors in Tripoli. In fact, in the first three months, the number of refugees in the Mediterranean has increased by 400%, while in the eastern part of Libya, which is controlled by the GNA, the number is zero.
- **The container ship "Marina"** of the Ellerbek shipping company Klingenberg was allowed to dock in Porto Empedocle, Sicily, late Friday evening (8 May) around 11 pm. At Malta's request, the ship had rescued 79 refugees from the Mediterranean Sea, but was not allowed to dock there, although the state coordinating the rescue is actually also responsible for receiving the rescued. Klingenberg had warned on Wednesday of an escalation on his container ship "Marina". The ship's crew had then entrenched themselves in the superstructure on board and went on the bridge only to bring water and food to the migrants. The ship did not have enough supplies to feed the people on board and was not allowed to enter any port for several days.
- Interesting: While the "Alan Kurdi" and the "Aita Mari" had to go through a two-week **quarantine in front of the port of Palermo** before they could bring the rescued people ashore, and this although Malta as well as Italy declared their ports in the Corona crisis to NGOs as "not safe", **the container ship was allowed to leave for Malta again after only a few hours**. There, containers are to be unloaded and new provisions taken in. This makes clear once again that Italy looking for technical pretexts to stop the Alan Kurdi and the Aita Mari to disembark again.
- After the migrants of the two rescue ships "Alan Kurdi" and "Aita Mari" with 146 and 34 persons on board were transferred to the ferry "**Rubattino**" and **put in quarantine** for two weeks, both NGO ships have now been blocked by the Italian authorities. According to them, there were "several irregularities" which could endanger not only the crew but also other people on board. The fact that the Italian authorities are really concerned about the safety of the passengers is not credible. "It seems cynical to hold the 146 rescued on board of the 'Alan Kurdi' for 12 days before certifying that the ship is not suitable for the safe care of so many people and the safe disposal of the waste produced," said Sea-Eye spokesman Gorden Isler.
- **Borderline Sicilia on the farce of bringing the rescued to land**, for whom accommodation was only provided then (although they had been in quarantine for two weeks): "Yesterday was a hectic day and we spent it searching for information. The first thing we wanted to do was to find out what the Prefecture of Palermo was planning to do with the people on board. However, the only thing we could find out was that there is no plan for phase 2 yet. There were no clear instructions from the Ministry of the Interior, so, as usual, the whole responsibility was in the hands of the officer on duty. In the event of a wrong decision, the blame would then have been shifted to this unlucky person. The Prefecture inquired about available places in the Extraordinary Reception Centres (CAS*) of Palermo and in the province to accommodate the 183 people there. Without success, however. The reaction from the relevant institutions was as follows: "Since the beginning of 2019 we have been waiting for our payments, as soon as we receive the money we can talk about further admissions. We're not stupid!" (...) Of the initial 43 minors, only 33 were unaccompanied foreign minors after the inspection. Shortly after 8 pm they could leave the ship and were taken to Salerno and Campobasso. As for the rest of the people on board, the decision to accommodate them outside Sicily was taken late at night. Then the organization of the necessary buses was started. Once again we had to note the lack of respect in dealing with people who are only considered as bodies that have to be locked up and hidden. Once again we witnessed a lack of responsibility, delays and illegal practices, even though the accommodation of the people could have been realized and planned from the first day of the quarantine. We are also surprised

that the Mayor of Palermo spoke of a successful outcome while the migrants were still on board and with the complicity of journalists the resettlement was declared to be finished on Monday noon.

- The "Alan Kurdi" should remain moored until the defects are corrected. For the Sea-Eye crew the complaints are "technically solvable tasks". However, this will not allow a new deployment in May and at the moment there is NO lifeboat at sea. The ships of the EU Irini mission are also supposed to patrol mainly off the current refugee routes and therefore the next weeks will show how dangerous the situation in the Mediterranean will be.
- There are still **autonomous arrivals in Sicily**. From a report by Borderline Sicilia of 5 May: "As on the island of Lampedusa, where the people who disembark, including children, have to spend one or two nights at the port. The reception centre of Lampedusa, with its current 116 inhabitants, is still under quarantine. The 136 people who arrived yesterday have therefore been left at the port.
- In May alone, nearly 477 **people arrived on Lampedusa**, 321 reached the island by themselves, 156 were rescued nearby. People who arrived without warning. They have decided not to respect the agreement between Italy and Libya. Someone must take responsibility and take care of the dignified accommodation of these migrants without treating them like dirt, as Don Carmelo la Magra, the parish priest of Lampedusa, said. He had offered some people a place to sleep with him in his own buildings.

COVID19 Italy – Update borderline-europe Sicily – part 5



28.05.2020

Political/Social

- Since 18 May, hairdressers, bars and restaurants have opened again in Italy. In all closed rooms there are still rules of distance and mask obligation. In addition, the self-declaration only has to be filled in when leaving your region. From 03.06. it should be possible again to travel from region to region and the borders should be opened.
- In the regions of Lombardy and Piedmont the new infections have increased again, so there are considerations to exclude the two regions from the openings. While in the other northern and central Italian regions the situation is slowly easing, the social crisis in the south is massive. Also in Palermo, many people are in financial difficulties and they feel left alone by the state. In order to prevent the mafia from profiting from this situation, there are numerous local aid organisations that distribute food to affected people.
- The first verdict for Matteo Salvini in the "Open Arms" case has already been reached. The Immunity Committee of the Italian Senate has decided to reject the request of the Sicilian judges to bring the former Minister of the Interior to trial. This is a surprising result, which was not expected in Italy. It only came about because the senators of Matteo Renzi's party "Italia Viva" decided not to vote at all and a 5-star deputy voted against the trial. Even if Salvini of course propagandistically exploits this first vote, the whole senate will have the last word which has to give its final verdict by the end of June. How the outcome will be depends above all on the five-star movement, which, ironically, was itself involved in Salvini's government and is therefore now in disagreement about how it should vote.

Situation of the migrants

- A migrant, who was on board of the quarantine ship "Moby Zaza", jumped into the sea near Porto Empedocle on 20 May under as yet unknown circumstances and died. The search in the sea ended with the recovery of his dead body. He probably tried to reach the coast by swimming. This case once again makes clear how dramatic the situation is for migrants on these quarantine ships who are often shaken by traumatic memories that are triggered again on these ships.
- Migrants on board the Captain Morgan boats have been on hunger strike since 19 May, and some of them have even attempted suicide. This was made public by the Alarm Phone after several migrants managed to get in contact with the NGO. The migrants reported that they are being held for weeks and that anxiety, hopelessness and depression are increasing. The Maltese government publicly declared that it knew nothing about a hunger strike, but at the same time prevented a delegation of the Malta

Agency for the Care of Asylum Seekers (AWAS) from going on the boats. This could indicate that the government might indeed fear a negative assessment of the conditions on board of the ships.

- Legalisation due to the Corona crisis: the Italian state has launched a legalisation campaign that will allow employers and migrants to legalise workers in agriculture, livestock, fishing, care and household from 1 June to 15 July. Of course, the background is not the joy of humanity, but simply the problem that these sectors are currently suffering from a shortage of labour. However, there are a lot of stumbling blocks built in, a decree for implementation came into force at the end of May and now needs to be studied carefully in order to be able to advise people properly. The uncertainty is very great, the queues in the advice centres are long. This legalisation campaign has no numerical limitation, so anyone who wants to can apply. However, it becomes dangerous for employers and employees who have employed or worked "black" people: such an application means that the person is accused of having acted illegally. Therefore, great caution is required here. It also becomes dangerous for those who were previously registered with a false identity and would now like to legalise themselves legally with this government measure.

Situation in the Mediterranean

- The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) published a joint declaration on 22nd May calling on Malta and other EU countries to find a way to bring 425 refugees to safety on board of three private ships in the Mediterranean. The IOM and UNHCR now specifically asked Malta to bring the remaining migrants on board of the two "Captain Morgan" ships to shore after the earlier evacuation of 47 people (mostly families, women and children). This has not yet been done: on 22 and 27 May, 60 and 90 more migrants were added.
- The Maltese Armed Forces (AFM) allegedly turned a boat with migrants out of their waters at gunpoint after giving them fuel and the GPS coordinates to reach Italy. Exclusive footage, based on internal research from the Alarm Phone, shows a Maltese Armed Forces vessel refusing to rescue a small rubber boat carrying 101 refugees who were clearly in Maltese territorial waters. Instead, it has provided the equipment to continue its journey to Italy. The investigations now under way in Sicily will not be easy, however. The investigators must ask their colleagues in Malta for cooperation. And it will not be easy to obtain the crew list of the patrol boats and their presentation of the facts. A diplomatic dispute is in the air.
- Libya's coastguard stopped almost 400 migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean in five boats last weekend, 23-24 May, according to the United Nations migration agency. The IOM announced that 317 migrants were sent back to Libya on 24 May. More than 70 others were stopped ashore and returned to the centres the same day. The Alarm Phone itself reported that it was contacted by over 400 people in five different boats during the weekend. For some of these boats there is still no clarity about what happened to them. The UNHCR reported that two people drowned in the boats that were stopped on Sunday evening. This brings the number of people to over 1,000 who have attempted to cross the Mediterranean this month despite the closure of Libya's international borders due to coronavirus. The pandemic and the increase in fighting over Libya's capital Tripoli have exacerbated the problems for thousands of refugees trying to cross the country on their way to Europe.
- The total number of arrivals in Italy tripled compared to the same period last year. The reason for this is that more crossings from Tunisia are now registered whilst fewer are from Libya. While the Libyan militias are busy organizing crossings and a civil war, Tunisian criminal organizations are acting more effectively. In this way, they are able to have several thousand people depart in a very short time. The Tunisian smugglers mostly use fishing boats. Among the numerous "normal" fishing boats in the Mediterranean, these are not discovered so quickly by coast guards or aircraft. Moreover, these motorized boats reach the Italian coasts more easily since they are not rubber boats made in China, which lose air relatively early in the crossing. Many of the people leaving from Tunisia have been to Libya or Egypt before. There are also some Tunisians on the boats that have already been deported from Italy.
- The statistics of the Ministry of the Interior provide the following information about the numbers and the countries of origin (they correspond quite exactly with the statistics of the data collected by borderline-europe): Since 1.1.2020, 4,838 people have reached Italy's coasts, in May alone 1,373,

coming from Bangladesh, the Ivory Coast, Tunisia, Sudan, Algeria, Morocco, Somalia... Departures from Tunisia have increased massively.

- Since 05 May, the Alan Kurdi and Aita Mari are at the port of Palermo. Although they are considered fully functional, they are still fixed due to technical defects. There are currently no NGO rescue vessels operating in the Mediterranean.

COVID19 - Italy Update borderline-europe Sicily – part 8



10/06/2020

Politics

- After the opening of most activities in Italy on June 3rd, now travel from region to region is possible again and life seems to return to "normality". From 15 June, cinemas should also be allowed to open again but it is still unclear whether or not masks will be compulsory. But the appearance of normality is deceptive, because in the north of Italy the infections are continuing and a committee has been formed in Bergamo to investigate why red (i.e. sealed off) zones were not established in the area from the start, which could have prevented such a massive spread. Bergamo and the whole of Lombardy are the area with the highest number of corona victims (almost half of the total victims in Italy).
- After the sharp increase in the number of arrivals this year, tension is mounting over the sensitive issue of "redistribution", a buzzword that continues to block the reform of the Dublin system. So far, the EU Commission has announced that only four EU states, including Portugal, France, Luxembourg and Germany, have agreed to accept some of the refugees who have landed in Malta.
- Meanwhile, five EU countries, Italy, Malta, Spain, Greece and Cyprus, have called for a binding distribution key for the reception of refugees in an informal letter on 6 June. There will probably be an old new dispute about this.
- On Lampedusa, several refugee boats, with which more than 600 refugees arrived in May, were set on fire in two different places on the island. It took the fire brigade several hours to get the fire under control. It was only on 3 June that the Porta d'Europa, a monument near the port, was defaced with rubbish bags and parcel tape. Many inhabitants of the island are also resisting the construction of a second reception centre, which the city council is planning together with the Ministry of the Interior.
- In Italy and Palermo, too, the murder of the African-American George Floyd by a policeman in the USA has caused great consternation and generated anti-racist protests. In Milan and Rome thousands of demonstrators took to the streets. In the foreground was the structural racism in Italy, which is reflected above all in the immigration laws, which label thousands of migrant women as "illegal" and drive many into exploitative conditions (such as in agriculture). In Palermo, there were also protests against the mooring of the sea rescue ships "Alan Kurdi" (of the German NGO Sea-Eye) and the "Aita Mari" (of the Basque organisation Salvamento marítimo humanitario).
- Due to the regained freedom of travel, Salvini, former Minister of the Interior and head of the right-wing Lega, is also reappearing on the scene: he will travel through northern Sicily between June 10 and 12. Committees have formed against his presence.

Situation of the migrants

- The appearance of normality is also deceptive for migrants who urgently need counselling. Many counselling centres are still not open, especially the question of the new legalisation brings much uncertainty. So far, it is reported, that only very few applications have been made. The legalisation campaign for the fields of work in the agricultural and fishing industry as well as for domestic help and care for the elderly has many pitfalls that do not allow most migrants to submit an application. What was moreover to be expected has happened: mafia groups sell false employment contracts, the price has risen from 3.500 to 5.000 Euros.
- As many people have lost their jobs during the lock down or have not yet restarted their work, many people lack money for food. Cities such as Palermo have set up emergency supplies, but applying for them has led to much chaos, leaving some families without supplies.

- In mid-May, the Italian government adopted a "decreto legge", a legislative decree (No. 34, Art. 16), which lays down new measures for the reception of migrants. Those who, at the time of the decree (19.05.2020), were living in secondary accommodation, which is also an attempt to integrate the residents, may remain there until the end of the emergency (so far on 30.06.2020), but under the conditions provided for in a CAS, an extraordinary "emergency centre". This means: only a roof over your head and something to eat. Through COVID19 the times in the CAS for the residents had also been extended, which now, due to the increased arrivals, means that there are not enough places available in Sicily.

Situation on the Central Mediterranean

- "Justice for George Floyd." With this inscription on a white sheet the Sea Watch 3 left the port of Messina on June 6th and also the "Mare Jonio" of the Mediterranean Saving Humans left Trapani for Libya on June 9th. For weeks the UN and NGOs have been sounding the alarm for the hundreds of people who continue to be involuntarily repatriated by the Libyan Coast Guard. The Corona Pandemic poses a particular challenge to the rescuers. The crew on the "Mare Jonio" will wear special protective equipment all the time and all cabins will have to be cleaned twice a day to minimize the health risk for everyone.
- According to our census, a total of 1,550 refugees arrived in Italy and Malta in May. While in the past the overwhelming majority of people fled from Libya, there is now an increasing trend towards Tunisia as a place of departure. About one third of the boats arriving there came from there. We can also see a trend towards Tunisia in the repatriation of refugee boats. They so-called Libyan Coast Guard, according to a census by borderline-europe (without guarantee), intercepted 730 refugees during the crossing and the Tunisian coast guard intercepted 912 refugees and brought them back involuntarily. Unfortunately, we are counting more repatriations than arrivals this month.
- Malta: The approximately 425 refugees, who were detained on four tourist boats off the Maltese coast outside Malta's territorial waters, were allowed to disembark in Valletta during the night between 6 and 7 June. Some of them had been confined to the boats since 30 April. The decision was made after refugees that were held indefinitely on the boat of the shipping company Captain Morgan, the "Europa II", protested against their imprisonment. The "Europa II" chose to enter Malta after refugees on board occupied the kitchen, allegedly resorted to knives and threatened to blow up a gas cylinder and burn rubbish, as Prime Minister Robert Abela announced on 7 June. "They gave us half an hour to act, otherwise they would kidnap the crew," he said.
- The trial of Maltese Prime Minister Robert Abela and the Maltese armed forces concerning the sabotage of a refugee boat and an illegal push-back to Libya over the Easter weekend has been dropped. In an investigation of 491 pages, the responsible public prosecutor found no reason for criminal action against the Prime Minister or the responsible commander. In his conclusions, the public prosecutor stated that the closure of Maltese ports due to the coronavirus pandemic was fully in line with Malta's obligations under international law. The families of deceased migrants as well as the NGO Repubblica have asked the Maltese Attorney General to return the controversial report on the murder of migrants to the examining magistrate, as it had a number of shortcomings. In particular, the important testimonies of 66 people on the boat were not recorded.
- Malta had drawn attention to itself in recent weeks and especially around Easter with several spectacular cases: in addition to the illegal repatriation to Libya, the Maltese military also pushed a refugee boat with 101 ppl on board from the Maltese SAR area towards Italy. The refugees were given petrol and life jackets in return and were then forced to sail towards Sicily. The public prosecutor's office in Sicily is investigating the case.

COVID19 - Italy Update borderline-europe Sicily – part 7



25.06.2020

Political/Social

- The discussions about the so-called "security laws" of Matteo Salvini in the new coalition continue. The Social Democratic PD, Matteo Renzi's centrist party and the Italian Left would like to make rescue operations in the Mediterranean easier again, in particular by abolishing the fines for NGOs. The "humanitarian protection" abolished by Salvini, which was guaranteed to those who suffered from serious mental problems or illnesses and were threatened with "inhuman and degrading treatment" in their home country, should not be reinstated. In any case, the 5-Star Movement refuses to soften Salvini's provisions, fearing that they will lose votes to the right. The Minister of the Interior, Ms. Lamorgese, will present a first compromise proposal on June 30. What exactly this proposal contains and whether it will be accepted remains uncertain.
- The law for the "legalisation" of refugees turns out to be a big flop. At the time of the Corona pandemic it became once again clear that workers are urgently needed, but only 32,000 requests have been received by the Ministry so far, mostly from domestic helpers and private carers, i.e. not from urgently needed migrants working in agriculture. The numbers are thus far away from the expected 150,000 - 200,000 migrants and the "invasion" feared by the Right. The disappointing figures are mainly due to the complexity of the procedure. Especially agricultural workers have difficulties in finding honest entrepreneurs who are willing to pay 500 euros for the procedure or they simply cannot provide documents proving that they have been in Italy for a year.
- In Palermo - as in other cities - demonstrations and sit ins against this legalization campaign are being prepared. "With this unfair law, those who work under contract only in four sectors - agriculture, fishing, personal hygiene and household cleaning - can obtain a residence permit, while those who have worked in these sectors in the past can only have access if their residence permit has expired since 31 October last year. These absurd regulations have not only given rise to shameful speculation about the workers' skin, but they also seek to restrict people's freedom to choose their place of work".
- The documents of the UN expert group on Libya reveal the great international hypocrisy in dealing with the Libyan government. Some of the current refugee movements across the Mediterranean may well be part of a "deal" between Libyan coastguards, Maltese smugglers and the Sicilian mafia. The deal, which can probably be summed up under the motto "Oil for Migrants", provides for illegal oil supplies to be brought to Sicily with Maltese mediation. As soon as this trade is disrupted, the so-called Libyan coast guard and its militias send more ppl from their torture camps at sea towards Italy/Malta. According to Avvenire, this may also have led to a 150% increase in the number of crossings from Libya this year. At the centre of the events is Abd Al-Rahman al-Milad (Bija), who was officially responsible for a refugee camp in Zawiya, which by pure coincidence is located next to the oil refinery from which oil was transported to Sicily.

Situation of the migrants

- 28 refugees rescued from the Sea Watch 3 and now accommodated on Moby Zaza tested positive for Corona. This was confirmed by the Sicilian regional president Nello Musumeci on 24.06. It is not known where the migrants were infected and where they came from. All but one were asymptomatic, Italian media reported. The infected were now being treated on the ferry in a "red zone", according to the Ministry of the Interior in Rome. There is no danger of infection for the local population. Sea Watch also called on the German government to support in "solidarity with Italy".
- The Italian Government's contract with Moby Zazà as a floating quarantine ship has been extended. Sicily's regional president is calling for more ships from the government, but it is feared that the hotspot system will be transferred to ships with the excuse of the Corona crisis.

Situation on the Central Mediterranean

- After anchoring in Palermo for almost two months, the Alan Kurdi of the sea rescue NGO Sea-Eye was allowed to leave the port of Palermo for Spain on 25 June. This was preceded by a conversation between the Antiracist Forum Palermo and the crews of the Alan Kurdi and the Spanish Aita Mari, who were also blocked, and the mayor of Palermo, who was campaigning for the release of the ships.
- The "Sea Watch 3" and the "Mare Jonio" have both completed successful rescue missions in the Mediterranean. The "Sea Watch 3" rescued 211 people from drowning in three different missions and successfully brought them to Porto Empedocle, Sicily. The first operation was on 17.06, where almost 100 people were rescued 29 nautical miles from the Libyan coast, while the second operation with 65 rescued people took place two days later. The last operation took place on 19.06 shortly before Lampedusa with 46 rescued people. The Sea Watch was allowed to enter Porto Empedocle on 21.06.
- The "Mare Jonio" was also able to rescue 67 people from the Mediterranean Sea in a rescue operation in Maltese waters shortly before Lampedusa and was able to enter Pozzallo on 20.06 after consultation with the Italian MRCC in Rome.
- Unlike the "Sea Watch" in Porto Empedocle, the "Mare Jonio" was welcomed with open arms by the mayor of Pozzallo in his town. Now that 23 of the rescued Sea Watch people have tested positive, the crew of the "Sea Watch 3" has also requested a test for themselves. The Sea Watch is now again facing strong accusations from the Italian media and politics. Demands for a suspension of NGO rescue operations will probably become louder again after this incident.
- The "Ocean Viking" is also on the way again and reached the rescue area on 24.06. After SOS Méditerranée and Doctors without Borders ended their cooperation, as the latter had spoken out against rescue operations during the Corona pandemic, the "Ocean Viking" left Marseille on 22.06. On 25 June, the OV rescued 51 people from a wooden boat between the Italian and Maltese SARs.
- Between 17-19 June alone, more than 800 people tried to cross the Mediterranean Sea. 168 of them made it to Lampedusa on their own, 261 refugees were rescued by NGO rescue vessels while 458, more than half, were brought back to Libya against their will. This confirms the trend that more and more refugees do not make it across the Mediterranean, which of course leads to higher death rates.
- There are also autonomous arrivals daily, mostly on Lampedusa. The attacks against the Sea Watch3, which has now brought corona patients to Sicily, are absurd, because a targeted transfer of migrants to Sicily and their care (it remains questionable whether this has to be done on a ship) is much more controlled than the autonomous arrivals, which are often not noticed, at least on Sicilian territory. With the sea rescue NGOs, the health service would have much more control over possibly sick people who have a right to medical care, which they cannot receive in torture states like the civil war country Libya. At present, the corona care situation in Italy has also eased, so that a lack of places in hospitals is not an argument.
- Unfortunately, in the course of the increased number of departures in the last two weeks, there have also been significantly more shipwrecks and thus deaths. On 13.06 a tragic shipping accident occurred on the coast of Zawiya in which 12 people lost their lives. The shipwreck of the small wooden boat with 32 people on board, on which the Alarm Phone was alerted by a family member, was possibly caused by the bad weather. 20 survivors were rescued by local fishermen. The so-called Libyan Coast Guard did not react and refused to help. On 17.06, four days later, the body of a five month old girl was also found, still wearing her pajamas and also on the ship.
- After another shipping accident on the Libyan coast last weekend (20.-21.06) several people were killed again. The incident occurred near the capital Tripoli. The exact number of victims is not yet known, but according to initial reports, three bodies were washed up on the beach near the city of Zawiya, about 50 kilometres west of Tripoli. There were at least 19 survivors, who, according to initial reports, were taken back on board by fishing boats. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the survivors were taken to an unofficial detention camp.

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10/07/20

Political/Social

- The "Sea Watch 3" was fixed after a two-week quarantine and a subsequent inspection by the Italian Coast Guard. The inspection revealed that there had been "several irregularities of technical and operational nature" as well as breaches of environmental regulations, which allegedly endangered the well-being of all passengers on board. This means that the "Sea Watch 3", just like the "Alan Kurdi" and the "Aita Mari" before it, has been detained indefinitely until the alleged "irregularities" have been rectified.
- On 7th July the Italian Senate approved the budget for foreign missions and, therefore, also more money for Libya. The government has thus narrowly escaped a coalition break, because the majority for this was not given in the meantime. Some members of the Social Democratic PD and the Left Party had announced that they would vote against it. In the end, the law could only be passed because of the centrist party of ex-Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, which based its approval on the government's assurance to promote respect for human rights on the part of Libya. In fact, the Conte government wants to relaunch the "Memorandum" negotiated with Libya in 2017 to combat "illegal immigration". Unfortunately, this also means that the new government will maintain the right course of the previous government, only without a dazzling Salvini and with less protests and scandalization.
- The discussion about the admission of refugees in Italy has flared up again, partly because of the increased number of positive Corona cases on board the "Sea Watch 3" and the "Mare Jonio". Salvini criticizes that NGO ships were allowed to enter at all, as they would now allegedly bring the virus back into the country. What is fatal about this argument is that there have only been a few NGO missions this year. Most of the refugees arrive in Italy autonomously. The tests are much more uncontrolled and are published irregularly.

Situation of migrants

- Many refugees have to stay in a crowded reception centre on Lampedusa because of poor coordination with the mainland. The structure, which is actually designed for just under 100 ppl, was at times overloaded with over 340 ppl who arrived on Lampedusa between July 1st and 2nd. The ferry was not operational for days, as it had to transport sensitive material from the island, where it was not possible to accommodate additional refugees. It turns out that Italy has still not managed to find a permanent solution for refugees on Lampedusa, which is increasingly provoking the displeasure of the inhabitants.
- Many needy refugees do not have access to so-called "dormitori" in Palermo, i.e. free overnight accommodation in emergency situations. Since the corona crisis many more people are dependent on emergency accommodation, but there are fewer places to keep the distance rules in times of corona. The "Forum Antirazzista" would therefore like to increase the pressure on the community to provide more places.
- In Sicily there are more and more cases of racist attacks. In Palermo, for example, a Senegalese refugee was insulted and beaten up by a group of Italians. He had to be taken to hospital afterwards. As the "Forum Antirazzista" in Palermo was informed, he would like to report the case and therefore they are trying to provide him with a good lawyer.

Situation on the Central Mediterranean

- The 52 refugees on board the Lebanese merchant ship "Talia" were evacuated after days on board by the Maltese Coast Guard and brought to Malta. Previously, Italy had denied the ship entry to Lampedusa, which would have been the next safe haven. Initially, Malta also refused the ship entry and only sent a medical team after several requests. In a video published by the captain of the Lebanese flagged ship, he had once again urged the EU, Malta and Italy to take these people on board, as they could not be properly cared for on board and the ship was actually designed to transport livestock. The rescue came at the last minute, as the ship would not have had enough supplies to supply these ppl for another day.

- The "Ocean Viking" has moored in Porto Empedocle after 12 days of trying to get a berth. The captain had declared a state of emergency on 3rd July after several of the rescued had tried to take their own lives and Italy and Malta had rejected five requests from the rescue vessel for entry. Others had started a hunger strike. The situation had become so acute that the safety of the people on the ship could no longer be guaranteed. The "Ocean Viking" had rescued the 180 ppl from the Mediterranean on 25 and 30 June. The 180 refugees on board were all tested negative for Corona. Nevertheless, they must now remain on board of the quarantine ship "Moby Zaza" for 14 days, although there is now no longer any reason to do so.
- The "Mare Jonio" completed its second mission on July 2 and brought a total of 43 refugees safely to Sicily. Among the refugees, however, there were eight positive corona cases, which once again caused severe irritation among the population. The right-wing Sicilian regional president Sebastiano Musumeci also sharply criticized the government and demanded more quarantine ships for Sicily in order to "protect its citizens". The crew of the "Mare Jonio" now had to undergo quarantine after her second mission and cannot leave the port for the next two weeks. At the moment there is no NGO rescue ship on the sea.

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27.07.20

Political/Social

- The Italian Chamber of Deputies, the second parliamentary body in Italy also approved the budget for missions abroad on 16th July after the Senate had already given its approval on 7th July. Thus the funds for the Libyan government Al-Serraj and the so-called Libyan coast guard were increased from 56.3 to 58.3 million, 10 million of which will go directly to the so-called coast guard. In addition, 30 vehicles will be made available to the Libyan government for controlling the country's borders. Italy will also contribute another 15.5 million to the French-led Taks Force "Takuba" in the Sahel, which is also to be involved in the fight against "illegal migration".
- In Italy, a captain is to be prosecuted for the first time because he allegedly brought refugees rescued from sea distress back to the civil war country Libya in 2018. Documents from the public prosecutor's office in Naples show that the captain and a representative of the ship operator Augusta Offshore are accused of violating international law because they brought ppl back to Tripoli and handed them over to the so-called Libyan coast guard. From the documents inspected it is clear that the captain did not inform the Italian coordination centre for maritime rescue coordination (MRCC) about the rescue operation, although ships flying the Italian flag are under Italian jurisdiction. The company Augusta Offshore stated that the rescue was coordinated by the Libyan authorities. However, this was not confirmed during the investigations of the public prosecutor's office, according to the research of the Italian investigative journalist Nello Scavo. This is the first trial of its kind to publicly prosecute an illegal repatriation.
- The Italian Ministry of the Interior is looking for a second quarantine ship. There have been three "expressions of interest" for the Ministry of the Interior's accelerated call for tenders to find another quarantine ship capable of accommodating 250 refugees until next October 31st. The contract is worth 4 million euros. A selection was to be made between the bids received on 20 July. However, it is not yet known which company has been selected and when the deployment of the ship will begin.
- The hectic search for another quarantine ship must also be understood in the context of the fierce public protests of the Calabrian and Sicilian regional presidents. Both have been heating up the mood against refugees for days by warning of the risk of infection from the people arriving. The right-wing regional president of Calabria has threatened to block the landing of refugees if the Italian government does not provide her with quarantine vessels, while the Sicilian regional president has signed a decree defining special areas within ports affected by landings where vessels must be quarantined.

Situation of migrants

- The body of a refugee, which has been drifting at sea for 15 days, has been sighted several times by the Sea Watch "Seabird" plane and has never been recovered, despite the corresponding reports. First, the Sea Watch photo of the body was posted on Twitter on June 30. It states that the refugee may have been the victim of one of the shipwrecks that took place off Libya between 29 and 30 June, when several rescue operations rescued some eighty people, in particular by the rescue vessel of the "Mare Jonio".
- The cases of ppl tested positive for Corona are increasing. When 70 Pakistani refugees arrived in Roccella Jonica in Calabria, 28 of them tested positive, five of them were minors. On another arrival in Pozzallo, Sicily, on 13 July, 11 people tested positive. Both groups are each isolated in refugee accommodations guarded by the police. The security measures even go so far that even refugees who tested negative have to be isolated. In Calabria, however, protests were launched against these people, spurred on by the regional president there, who showed understanding for the protests and even publicly supported them. At the same time, it is clear that it is always premature panic-mongering when it is claimed that only infected ppl are arriving: The police union on Lampedusa, for example, had claimed that a group of women was positive, even though the second test had not been waited for. This test, like the first one, was negative. Mayor Martello accused the union of spreading fake news, which harmed the island and tourism. According to the daily Repubblica, 455 ppl were still in the hotspot on 26 July, compared to 1,027 the day before.
- More and more refugees are fleeing from the reception centres where they were supposed to spend their two-week quarantine. These are often isolated cases of refugees who have arrived in Sicily and Sardinia. Most recently, on 18 July, 23 refugees were captured in Perugia who had originally landed in Agrigento. Even though the public in general reacts very anxiously to these reports and some regional presidents request quarantine ships, isolation on land is safer, according to the renowned virologist Professor Galli, because it is easier to establish social distance on land.

Situation on the Central Mediterranean

- The Italian Interior Minister Lucia Lamorgese arrived in Lampedusa on 20th July for a meeting with the mayor of the island, Salvatore Martello. She was received by a group of citizens who were demonstrating against the arrival of ppl on the island. The extreme right-wing Lega Nord tried to take advantage of the situation by the presence of their former senator of the island. The social mood on the island has been heated up for a long time, also because since the Corona lockdown tourism has been missing, there is still no hospital and people are worried about their economic future.
- In fact, between 9 and 14 July, due to the good weather and the calm sea situation, about 1,277 people came to Italy. The first reception centre on Lampedusa "Contrada Imbriacola" occasionally hosted more than 700 ppl, although it is actually designed for 96 ppl. However, the Italian government's policy of isolation actually encourages this situation, as the failure of the authorities and NGOs to rescue the refugees encourages many autonomous arrivals on Lampedusa, as they do not make it to the mainland.

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06.08.2020

Political/Social

- For the second time this year, the Italian Senate has lifted the immunity of former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini in the dispute over the sea rescue of refugees. This clears the way for a further trial against his anti-refugee policy as minister until 2019. 149 senators voted for the suspension and 141 against it on 30 July. The current case concerns a trial for deprivation of liberty and abuse of office before a court in Palermo, Sicily. A year ago, Salvini, as Minister of the Interior, had blocked the private Spanish rescue ship "Open Arms" with dozens of migrants on board for almost three weeks at sea. Salvini spoke on Thursday in the Senate in a heated debate about a "political process" and called the "Open Arms" a "pirate ship". He is threatened with 15 years in prison if convicted. He could also be temporarily banned from his political activities. The vote comes at a time when Salvini is already campaigning ferociously for seven planned regional elections in September.

- On 30 July, in a coalition round with Minister of the Interior Lamorgese, Salvini's security decrees were renegotiated. An agreement was reached between the coalition partners, which includes the return to the Sprar (a communal system of second accommodation, which is also open to asylum seekers), the reintroduction of humanitarian protection and the halving of deportation detention periods to 90 days. The penalties for NGO sea rescue vessels are still under discussion. Similarly, residence permits should also be able to result in work permits and asylum seekers should be allowed to re-register with the residents' registration office. Finally, the maximum period for completing the procedures for granting citizenship for residence and marriage will be reduced from 4 to 3 years.
- The trial of Salvini and the increased number of arrivals in July, especially from Tunisia, has brought the political debate back to the migration issue. The pressure from the right-wing opposition seems to be so high again that the Minister of the Interior Lamorgese felt compelled to fly to Tunisia in an urgent action on 27 July to persuade the government representatives there to act against the departures. While Lamorgese promised the Tunisian government support, Foreign Minister Di Maio threatened to freeze the aid funds for Tunisia if the latter did not take back more compatriots. Both urged to speed up deportations to Tunisia, and as early as August 10, two flights a week are to bring 80 people back to Tunisia each.
- The Italian Ministry of the Interior is looking for a second quarantine ship. There have been three "expressions of interest" for the Ministry of the Interior's accelerated call for tenders to find another quarantine ship capable of accommodating 250 refugees until next October 31st. The contract is worth 4 million euros. A selection was to be made between the bids received on 20 July. However, it is not yet known which company has been selected and when the deployment of the ship will begin.
- Lampedusa's mayor Totò Martello called the situation on his island "uncontrollable" and threatened to declare a state of emergency himself if the government did not do so, as it will in 2011. On 1 August he announced the closure of the hotspot "because there are a thousand people there", a figure ten times greater than the capacity offered by the facility. Mainly due to the mooring of rescue vessels and since there are more autonomous arrivals from Tunisia, almost all the refugees in the central Mediterranean arrive at Lampedusa.

Situation of migrants

- The cases of migrants who tested positive for Corona are increasing and are causing a lot of agitation among the Italian population. However, there are two yardsticks: the journalist Mauro Seminara from Lampedusa reports that the island is full of Northern Italian tourists who populate the streets without masks and who were not tested before entering the island. The same is true in other holiday resorts. The migrants on the other hand are all tested and isolated in the centres. However, there is also strong criticism of the government's procedure. For example, the virologist Massimo Galli, who has already been quoted in our updates, speaks of the fear that the quarantine ship could become a second "Diamond Princess", the cruise ship on which hundreds of vacationers fell ill. He argues that hotels/large tourist facilities should be used as centres, which is not done during the peak tourist season for economic reasons. A quarantine ship would only make sense if only sick people were accommodated there and closely monitored and, if necessary, taken to hospitals.
- Between Sunday 26 July and Monday 3 August, some refugees tried to leave the centres. Some of them were returned to the reception centre by the police. The background to this is, above all in the case of Tunisian migrants, that from now on they can be immediately returned to Tunisia, as the agreement with Tunisia has been renewed (two flights per week with a maximum of 80 persons). Furthermore, in the Covid crossing / quarantine centres, no information is given to the refugees, there are no professional staff to look after them and the people are completely on their own, guarded only by the police.
- In the course of arrivals, new transfers have been made from Porto Empedocle (Agrigento) to reception centres throughout Italy. 320 refugees have been transferred to Lazio and 200 to Piedmont, after the centres in Puglia, where most of the refugees were previously distributed, became overcrowded. Finally, 200 more refugees were brought to Molise. Further transfers have taken place and will take place.

Situation on the Central Mediterranean

- In July, almost as many refugees arrived on Lampedusa as in the whole of the first half of the year. According to United Nations figures, 5,067 people reached Italy by sea in the last four weeks. In the whole of the previous six months, a total of 6,653 people had arrived in Italy over 7000 according to the Italian Ministry of the Interior. Most of the arrivals are refugees who left Tunisia on small boats. They arrive on wooden boats, which usually have room for between 20 and 40 people. But boats from Libya also arrive.

- According to the Italian Ministry of the Interior, Tunisian nationals accounted for around 39 percent of all arrivals in Italy by sea this year. They were by far the largest group, followed by Bengali nationals (14 percent) and Ivorians (6 percent).
- A new quarantine vessel has been in operation off Lampedusa since 3 August. The quarantine ship "GNV Azzurra" has a capacity of 700 passengers and is to relieve the reception centre in Lampedusa. The first 350 refugees have already been quartered on the ship and another 350 people are to be transferred to the boat. However, the embarkation had to be cancelled due to the bad weather and the boat will now dock temporarily in Trapani. In the meantime, the Ministry of the Interior has launched a new tender to find a second ship on which migrants landing in Italy can be quarantined. Originally it was planned to leave the ship off Calabria, but it is not impossible that in the end it will be able to anchor in Sicily again. Nevertheless, quarantine ships are generally not very useful as we have explained in our first point of this update.

Further information on the situation in Italy can be found in our "Streiflicht Italien" and our previous Corona Updates on our homepage <https://www.borderline-europe.de/projekte/newsletter-italien>