



Over 5,500 unaccompanied foreign minors landed in the first months of 2017, 20% more than the previous year

Milan, 11th May 2017

According to ISMU Foundation elaborations, the landings on Italian coasts are non-stop: from January 1st to May 8th, 45,000 migrants arrived in Italy through the Mediterranean Sea and, among them, more than 5,500 children who had to deal with the terrible voyage from the Libyan coasts all alone. Compared to the same period last year, unaccompanied minors who arrived by sea in Italy have increased by one fifth. According to UNHCR data, the main nationalities recorded in the first three months of the year are Guinea (579 minors), Gambia (565) and Bangladesh (489).

Thanks to Italy's Ministry of Labor and Social Policies data, it is possible to know more in detail some characteristics of unaccompanied minors who are present – and censused – in the Italian reception facilities. These data, however, also relate to minors who have reached Italy by sea or by taking a plane (the presence of minors from Albania and the Balkans is particularly relevant). The situation, as of March 31 2017, as well as an important presence in absolute terms (15,500 censused unaccompanied minors present in reception facilities), show some specific characteristics of these young people.

An increase in the female presence. The female component is increasing: if until 2015 the male presence was dominant (95% of unaccompanied minors), young unaccompanied girls today account for 7.1% of all unaccompanied children (1,091 at the end of March). Among female minors, 74% are between the age of 16 and 17. However, unlike males who are mainly 17 and 16 years old (61% and 24% respectively of all unaccompanied male minors), girls are usually in the 7-14 age bracket (namely 15% of all female minors, which means twice as many male minors). In terms of number of unaccompanied female minors, Nigeria is by far the main country of origin, with over 528 of them (48% of the female population). The second is Eritrea (152 presences, corresponding to 14%), and the third is Albania, with 95 young female Albanians (8.7%). If we consider all the Nigerian minors, the female component makes up 40% of them.

Untraceable and disappeared. According to figures from the Italian Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, many unaccompanied minors leave the Italian reception facilities. As of March 31, there are 5,170 children who cannot be found. Most of them are young Egyptians, Eritreans, Somalis, and Afghans who would either like to stay in Italy without looking for an institutional reception or reach their networks of relatives and friends in northern Europe.

As can be seen in the recent report of the Italian Ministry of the Interior on missing persons in Italy, from 1974 to the end of December 2016, the foreign minors (for the vast majority unaccompanied) who are yet to be found are 28,000, with last year's figures being particularly high (read the report: <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/persona-scomparse-aumenta-numero-dei-minori-stranieri-rintracciare>).

In line with the Communication from the European Commission of April 12, 2017, "*The protection of children in migration*" – which states the importance of promoting protocols and procedures systematically addressing the phenomenon of untraceable unaccompanied foreign minors – a protocol of agreement has been recently signed. Its aim is to share information and data between the Department of Public Security and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies and to protect unaccompanied foreign minors especially from trafficking in human beings and labor exploitation.