

LUISS



Department of *Political Science*

Master of *International Relations*

Chair of *Security Policies*

**Nigerian mafia in Italy:
the associations with the local organized crime in the
migrant trafficking management**

Thesis supervisor

Prof. Carlo Magrassi

Thesis co-supervisor

Prof. Mohammed Hashas

Candidate

Maia Sacchetto

Candidate ID

644832

Academic Year 2021/2022

Acknowledgments

Let it be said that the conclusions or bibliography are the most insidious part of a thesis, the acknowledgments still manage to beat them. The people who have been important to me for a long time already, and those who have become important to me in these five years, already know this very well. Yet it never hurts to remember it and put it in writing.

When I enrolled at LUISS Guido Carli five years ago, my expectations were very high. I was a little girl with a lot of enthusiasm, but I never imagined that, thanks to this University, I would have the experiences that have shaped my life. Little did I know that I would meet the people who I am sure and hope will populate my days even after the end of this academic career of mine.

Guys from the 7 Lisbon Street Residence, I don't want to exclude anyone, but you will recognize yourselves in these words, you are my second family. Without you, Rome would not be the city I love, although the Colosseum remains one of my favorite monuments. You have inspired me, consoled me, stimulated me, made me angry over these years. Without you I would not have had the right push to face with so much enthusiasm not only daily life in Rome but also and especially my studies.

Thanks to the love I met, to all the colleagues I met during this experience, both those in internships and those in Academia. To the evenings around town, the summer sweats repeating for exams together and the skipped organizations.

Special thanks to my family, to my Mother, who is my rock and without which everything I wrote earlier would have been impossible. Thanks also and especially to those who are no longer here, who taught me to spread my wings and fly with enthusiasm and the right degree of lightheartedness, never losing faith in my abilities.

Thanks to my Professors, to General Magrassi who gave me the opportunity to learn about subjects that I have explored in this research work, thanks to Chief Prosecutor Giovanni Bombardieri and to his willingness to give me the valuable information for this research work, and to the entire LUISS community who sincerely believe in the potential of each of their students.

It will not be easy to leave behind these five years of life here, but I know in my heart and mind that they will always be with me and remind me of how lucky I am to have the opportunity to experience such intense and meaningful moments of life with people with so much to teach.

Thank you all.

Table of contents

<u>Introduction</u>	2
<u>Chapter I: The rooting, the evolution, and the modus operandi of the Nigerian Mafia in Italy</u>	
1.1 The emergence of Nigerian “cults” in the Italian territory	8
1.2 Major profit-making sector: the trafficking in migrants	19
<u>Chapter II: Forms of co-partnership with autochthonous mafias</u>	
2.1 The Black Axe’s dome in Palermo and the association with Cosa Nostra	33
2.2 The Black Axe-Casalesis’ business in Castel Volturno	37
2.3 The partition of the traffic routes between Maphite and 'Ndrangheta	42
<u>Chapter III: Law enforcement actions and awareness enhancement at the national, regional and international level</u>	
3.1 The stance of the European Union	55
3.2 NAP TIP: the dilemma between increased sensitivity and structural deficits	68
3.3 The Italian countervailing capabilities: partnerships and efficiency	77
3.4 Policy recommendations	88
<u>Conclusions</u>	95
<u>Bibliography</u>	100
<u>Sitography</u>	102
<u>Summary</u>	117

List of tables and figures

<u>Figure 1: The main migrant trafficking routes (Frontex, Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings, 2015)</u>	26
<u>Figure 2: Countries of origin and number of victims of trafficking (adults and minors) (Report of Field Survey in Edo State, Trafficking of Nigerian Girls to Italy, 2003)</u>	27
<u>Figure 3: Estimated figures on the national grounds most involved in forced street prostitution (Report of Field Survey in Edo State, Trafficking of Nigerian Girls to Italy, 2003)</u>	28
<u>Figure 4: Main trafficking routes of narcotics (UN World Drug Report, 2007)</u>	39
<u>Figure 5: Percentage of foreigners residing in Castel Volturno in 2019 (ISTAT DATA, 2019)</u>	41
<u>Figure 6: Percentage of Nigerians in the category of foreigners residing in Castel Volturno in 2019 (ISTAT DATA, 2019)</u>	41
<u>Figure 7: Percentages of times in which Italy is a country of destination of trafficking, transit of trafficking, origin of trafficking, both origin and destination, both transit and destination (Transcrime elaboration on questionnaires filled in by some</u>	
<u>Figure 8: Detections of AFIC nationals presenting fraudulent documents by nationality (Africa-Frontex intelligence community joint report, 2015)</u>	65
<u>Figure 9: Cases reported, received and fully investigated by the NAPTIP (NAPTIP Data Analysis, Jan-Jun 2021)</u>	68
<u>Figure 10: EUCAP area of intervention (GISCO EUROSTAT DATA)</u>	70

“Abbiamo oggi una mafia più civile e una società più mafiosa. Una mafia sempre più in giacca e cravatta e una società che cambiandosi abito troppe volte al giorno sceglie il travestimento”.

Antonio Ingroia

*In memory of
Professor Carla Garreffa,
my grandmother*

Introduction

Premising that there are more flexible forms of Nigerian crime, such as small and scattered groups not in connection with each other that operate mainly as drug dealers of small districts in the suburbs of northern Italy, this research focuses on the most structured forms of criminal organizations, those directly descended from the cultist circles born in Nigeria in the '60s and resulted in real mafia associations already in the motherland and then extended throughout Europe.

The choice of this theme and this very specific category of Nigerian organized crime is based on the belief that well-structured and organized groups are more dangerous and difficult to counter for three reasons basically: the first is that it is rarer for associates to decide to betray the group to favor information to the police or intelligence. This is because of the closer ties between group members (and in this case this element takes on an even more incisive relevance since the subject is an ethnically based organized mafia in which ethnic-cultural ties provide the basis for interaction between associates), but also and especially because of the coercive and intimidating forces between members of mafia associations towards the ones prone to cheat on the group; the second is developed from the assumption that a more sophisticated internal structure of the association also corresponds to more elaborate *modus operandi* and operational strategies that allow prosecutors of illicit activities to camouflage or hide the proceeds of illicit activities; the third reason is closely related to the first and second and consists in the fact that mafia associations that are highly organized and capable of taking advantage of substantial material resources are also more likely to act in a capillary, widespread, large-scale and sprawling manner to the point of infiltrating the legal economy.

As will be described in the first chapter of this research, the Black Mafia originated in Nigeria as a protest movement against constituted power and composed mainly of members of Nigeria's leading universities. Over time it expanded, heightened the violence of its manifestations, and began to move out of the realm of mere ideological rebellion by directly affecting public institutions. In a short time, the cults turned into full-fledged clans and began to act in Nigeria as the Italian mafia acts in Italy, intimidating political and economic opponents who would stand between their illicit activities and the achievement of their goals: the accumulation of wealth and power. From the outset, these associations are thus characterized by a high degree of pervasiveness in the political, social and economic structure of their country, as well as multifacetedness by dealing with a massive and varied range of illicit activities, including support in the arms trafficking of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram. With the conclusion of the Cold War, the tearing down of the Berlin Wall and restrictions in the mobility of people, and the emergence of the new globalized and interconnected world, the Black Mafia, which had already shown a remarkable predisposition to expand and sprawl, crossed its national borders. Following a progressive evolution, it has developed into a form of transnational organized crime which according to the UNODC represents the main threat to the security and political and economic stability

of states (UNODC, 2006)¹. Undergoing continuous metamorphosis and adapting immediately to the changing needs of the market and globalization, it has then become increasingly sophisticated and pervasive (UNODC, 2018)². Out of sheer opportunism, it started allying itself with other forms of crime in order to strengthen its organization and to extend to more and more operators: drug traffickers, arms traffickers, human traffickers, up to encompassing operators that act daily in a regime of legality, all in order to increase their revenues.

Since it not only infiltrates the economies of states and politics, disrupting the daily functioning of public life, but also interferes in a global crisis such as the migratory crisis, the Black Mafia directly threatens the very democratic order of states. Considering that this phenomenon implies not only the facilitation of illegal immigration, but also trafficking for exploitation, the threat becomes universal as it affects the protection of the more general sphere of human rights and dignity. The great migrations of the 1980s, which also marked the first major movements of African migrants to the African continent, were the springboard for the spread of the criminal groups that initially staked out Northern Italy, mainly in Piedmont. This is how groups such as the Black Axe, which still remains the largest and most widespread clan in the country, and the Maphite began to entrench their presence in the territory initially by dealing heroin and cocaine and managing the prostitution market of fellow countrywomen.

This second type of activity proved to be the largest source of profit for the clans, favored especially by the massive number of women who since the early 2000s began to leave Nigeria for major European cities. What was initially a circumscribed and somewhat limited phenomenon of a few women voluntarily deciding to leave the motherland to seek their fortune elsewhere, with the onset of the mass migrations that later resulted in the migration crisis of 2015, became a vicious cycle of constraints in which the Nigerian mafia sniffed out a business that could attract ten times more investment than those related to mere street dealing or simple prostitution facilitation. The trafficking of migrants and their subsequent exploitation in destination countries is a transnational business in scope, it requires a high use of means and people and benefits from the breaking down of borders and the desires of those who were ready to leave for a better future to accumulate capital and wealth. In managing it, the Nigerian mafia exercises all three forms comprised in the phenomenon of human trafficking namely smuggling, trafficking, and exploitation in the target territory, concepts that will be explored in the course of the research. It would not be inappropriate consequently to allege that the fight against the Nigerian mafia as a form of transnational organized crime that profit from the trafficking and exploitation of migrants, is an issue that should be globally addressed. In this sense, the framework currently in place is a political, legal and regulatory framework that certainly needs to be developed, but which has already begun to be progressively updated.

¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) – *Organized Crime and Irregular Migration from Africa to Europe*, July 2006, available at: https://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/Migration_Africa.pdf

² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) – *New forms of organized crime: networked structure*, May 2008, available at: <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/organized-crime/module-7/key-issues/networked-structure.html>

The ethnically organized mafia, which mainly benefits from the unfavorable condition characterizing its compatriots, is not the only one to have undertaken this process to the “transnationalization” of its business. Although historically tied to the territory of origin, or rather to the local reality of belonging, which still represents the main pole of decision-making, the Italian mafia like the Nigerian one has also shown a high degree of adaptability to the new international demands of a globalized market. By opening their business to the entire world, 'Ndrangheta, Camorra and Cosa Nostra in particular have set aside, although not eliminated, activities strictly linked to the territory and have specialized in international narcotics trafficking, smuggling and foreign capital investments. This, in addition to earning domestic mafias revenue in the billions of euros, has also inevitably brought them closer to their ethnic criminal counterparts competing in the international illicit business market. With these, 'Ndrangheta, Camorra and Cosa Nostra have linked stable partnerships that vary according to the level of complementarity of interests. If the associations with the Albanian or Romanian mafia are much more obvious their actions are conducted in the light of day and with openly violent methods, the associations with the Nigerian mafia, now second after the Albanians in terms of presence in Italian territory, are much less well known and only recently revealed.

As far as the Italian mafia is concerned, the acceptance of the new entries in the same perimeter of interest was not immediate, but even after the *placet* was granted, the homegrown mafia did not show itself totally compatible with the type of activities performed by its Nigerian counterpart. Migrant trafficking, especially in its phase concerning the exploitation of the prostitution of young Nigerian women, does not fit well with the traditional values of the homegrown mafias in which the woman is often portrayed as the one who pulls the reins of the family and the real backbone of the association. The two mafias have thus limited themselves to maintaining peace and cohabitation between them in the same territory, where the homegrown mafia still clearly maintains superiority in drug trafficking business. As far as human trafficking is concerned, between Italian and Nigerian clans there is a relationship that could be called "vassalage": the homegrown mafia offers logistical support and protection to the Nigerian mafia in the course of conducting illicit business, while exploiting the migrant in the last phase of the trafficking process, namely exploitation specifically in the form of “caporalato”. This, however, is enough to confirm that although migrant trafficking remains a purely indirect business of the local mafia, the latter has ended up interfering in it or at least facilitating it through partnerships and protectorates to those who manage it.

Countering a mafia that operates under the protection of other mafias through solid partnerships, highly sophisticated and diluted from the Sahel to northern Europe requires a concert of forces and advanced prevention and repression tools. It is first necessary to make a typological effort by beginning to categorize Nigerian organized crime as a type of transnational organized crime in that it acts purely outside its national borders and has a fairly broad geographic scope. In this regard, international protocols and conventions are

already quite up-to-date as well as international treaties for the fight against human trafficking. Scarce or still in the primordial state, on the other hand, are the tools to counter human trafficking as a business of transnational mafia-style organized crime. This is a very special case that requests targeted intervention that combines both actors dedicated to combating trafficking and those dedicated to combating mafias. What is required, in a nutshell, is the front-line intervention of specialized expertise and task forces that collaborate with each other through a nationwide network at both the national and European levels, for combating a problem that must be all-encompassing and not fragmented into two different cases. Information exchange, border protection, and law enforcement must be integrated and perfectly complementary in the fight against this Italian, European, and ultimately global security threat.

All of the above aspects are related to recent findings of the Italian State Police or investigations conducted by the DIA, DDA or law enforcement agencies in the Italian territory. Before then, the true extent of the phenomenon was completely unknown to institutions as well as to civil society and scholars. Hence, the phenomenon of the spread of the Nigerian mafia in Italy and its associations with domestic mafias in the management of migrant trafficking still remains a poorly navigated terrain and the literature on the subject is very scarce and mainly related to some experts who already dealt with the entrenchment of local mafias in the territory. Almost all the references supporting this research work will therefore be based on official documents retrieved from the archives of the Ministry of the Interior, the State Police, Public Prosecutors' Offices, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European agencies such as Europol or from interviews carried out in person with the directors of some of the operations that will be mentioned in the course of the research, among which the chief prosecutor of the Province of Reggio Calabria, Giovanni Bombardieri, made a fundamental contribution for the ongoing research. From a literary perspective, this research will benefit from the analyses and texts of Sergio Nazzaro, expert on organized crime and foreign mafias, who in addition to writing a book dedicated to the particular case study of Castel Volturno, which will also have its own space in this research work, filmed a documentary recently aired on Rai3 known as “Black Mafia” in which the origins of the Nigerian Mafia phenomenon in our territory are traced.

The ultimate goal of this work is to dismantle the anachronistic portrayal of the mob with the beret, rifle and narrow territorial interests destined to be swept away and drowned by the wave of modernization and globalization. On the contrary, economic liberalization, the opening of borders, the deregulation of markets, has provided the mafia with an incentive to spread, multiply in various forms, become entrepreneurial, better conceal itself and colonize new territories. In short, to become a global phenomenon. These “new mafias”, since it is also anachronistic to speak of mafias in the singular, have a particular flair for sniffing out lucrative business deals and, no longer being constrained within their local or national boundaries, inevitably come into contact with one another. Therefore, they are less predisposed to fight for monopoly and instead support each other, cover for each other, peacefully divide competencies, mutual spheres of influence, and then share

revenues. Among the opportunities for enrichment that the new globalized world offers to mafias, migrant trafficking is certainly the most fruitful business as well as the one in which, given the crumbling of European and national policies in this regard, the mafia can most easily act sometimes by substituting itself for the State. The fact that a mafia could become so sophisticated to the point of profiting from a global crisis is worrisome, as is the projection of the emergence of partnerships with more and more established mafias around the world and which would make combating this phenomenon an increasingly unfeasible feat of success.

This research paper will be structured as follows: the first chapter will take a historical-diachronic approach by tracing the origins of the Black Mafia in Nigeria to its entrenchment in Italian territory. It will then move on to a descriptive approach in which the connotative elements and the key factors of this criminal, such as the magical-tribal element and the use of specific figures such as the *maman*, will be handled, together with the *modus operandi* of the clans and their similarities with our own mafias. The second chapter will be a focus on the partnerships that the Nigerian mafia has formed so far with homegrown mafias. The approach used here is to divide the chapter into three case studies (one per local mafia taken as a reference, i.e., one for the partnerships with the 'Ndrangheta, one for those with the Camorra, and one for those with Cosa Nostra). A focus will be therefore made concerning the activities of Nigerians in the Ballarò neighborhood in Sicily, the case of Castel Volturno of the Domitian, and finally the presence of the Nigerian mafia in Calabria especially in the province of Reggio Calabria. The third chapter will investigate about the efforts that Italy, Nigeria, and Europe, respectively, have conducted so far to counter the phenomenon, both from the perspectives of intelligence, law enforcement, legal and political institutions. A separate section will be thus devoted to the author's personal policy recommendations for effective and definitive countering of the phenomenon. Conclusions will then be drawn.

CHAPTER I

1. The rooting, the evolution, and the modus operandi of the Nigerian Mafia in Italy

1.1 The emergence of Nigerian “cults” in the Italian territory

In the words of former anti-Mafia national prosecutor, and now European parliamentarian, Franco Roberti, the Nigerian mafia is one of the "most dangerous, aggressive and pervasive of the transnational mafias"³. Although there are still discordant opinions regarding the dangerousness and aggressiveness of Nigerian criminality, as there are those who believe that this phenomenon is to be considered marginal compared to the rooting of the historical local mafias, concerning the other two elements, that of transnationality and pervasiveness, experts concur.

Undoubtedly, the character of transnationality does not characterize only the Nigerian mafia as such, but it is a connotative element of all the mafias settled in Italy since the eighties (Becucci, 2003). Like the Russian, Albanian and Chinese mafia, the Nigerian mafia has been able to exploit the abatement of the restrictions on the mobility of capital and people of the new globalized world, thus creating an unprecedented opportunity to expand and diversify its illicit business (UNODC, 2010). And exactly like all the foreign mafias that have settled in the Italian territory, the Nigerian one is also a “resident” mafia (Ciconte, 2003), that is, it lives together and collaborates with the native mafias. The result is a particularly ductile, shrewd criminal association capable of conforming and fitting into an illegal global market of fierce competition. To emphasize flexibility as its defining element, the expert on organized crime and foreign mafias, Sergio Nazzaro, has used to define it as a "liquid mafia", particularly adept at seizing local weaknesses (Nazzaro, 2019). In effect, compared to other foreign mafias that operate on the Italian territory, the ability of Nigerians to act in secret, undercover or simply in a less evident way than Albanians, Russians or Chinese, stands out.

In 2000, the Superior Council of the magistracy had declared foreign criminal infiltrations in the Italian territory to be small, fluid criminal realities, not centralized, not endowed with organizational stability, incapable of exercising any form of control over the territory, and that this would have been

³ Parliamentary questions, 14 February 2018, Question for written answer E-000937-18 to the Commission. Subject: Nigerian mafia. The answer is viewable on: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2018-000937_EN.html?redirect

sufficient to exclude them from being categorized as "mafias"⁴. This thesis was denied shortly afterwards by the Ministry of the Interior which, in the same year, published a report resulting from in-depth investigations, alleging that unlike other criminal groups, especially those of Maghrebi origin, Nigerian clans have also often demonstrated a certain ability to manage and carve out a space for themselves within the international trafficking market, as well as to create the necessary links with the major players and with other mafias⁵. This would partially explain the second element that characterizes this mafia, that of pervasiveness.

In either case, the secret of the Nigerian mafia's success also lies in the strong ties with its motherland, notwithstanding they operate through dislocated cells abroad. This criminal organization has its origin in the so-called "cults" born in Nigeria in the 1960s, years of great turmoil in a country that was regaining its independence from colonial powers. These were fraternities composed mostly of university students, and it is in Nigerian universities that these organizations became associated with the aim of bringing together promising young people sharing anti-colonialist political ideas⁶. Neila Zaizer, journalist and geopolitical expert, writes that the cult phenomenon⁷ intensified and took a violent turn starting in 1964, the year that corresponds to the establishment of the first Nigerian cult, the Eiye, settled in the University of Ibadan. Students belonging to the fraternity reclaimed African history and independence through political activism and public demonstrations against apartheid and the echo of the organization spread like wildfire throughout the country, encouraging sudden imitation by students from neighboring universities. The confraternity of the Black Axe was founded in 1977 at the University of Benin City, in the very region where the multinational oil companies owned by colonial powers were situated.

When the tensions between the different ethnic groups and the government exploded in a civil war that lasted from 68 to 70, the different cults cooperated in the fight for a fair distribution of oil profits and in the clashes against the monopoly of the colonial powers of the oil companies. In these years, university cults were deeply rooted in the country and had considerable influence on local and national politics and, since the late 90s and early 2000s, they developed a particular hold on public

⁴ C.S.M. resolution on organized crime. Available on:

<https://www.csm.it/documents/21768/81517/quaderno+138/3bcc54d7-b221-4cb0-989a-acc0825654fa>

⁵ Ministero dell'Interno - Rapporto sulla criminalità in Italia. Analisi, Prevenzione, Contrasto. Available on:

https://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/14/0900_rapporto_criminalita.pdf

⁶ The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada's 2016 report reconstructs the history of Nigerian organized crime from its origins to its transnational development. The report is available at:

<https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/tehis/vtx/rwmain?docid=5843fa1f4>

⁷ A theme explored by Lorenzo Pirozzi in the Sentiti Libera podcast, which in three episodes analyzes the Nigerian mafias, describing their origins, organization, economic interests and ties with the Italian mafias. It is possible to listen to the podcast online through the following link:

<https://www.qcodemag.it/podcast/sentiti-libera-mafie-nigeriane-origini-e-sviluppi-dei-cult-in-italia/>

opinion thanks to the growing online activism through the publication of manifestos and ideological messages on official websites (IRB, 2016). They also acted as a protective nest for all unemployed youth, offering them a purpose in society and a monthly tip to survive. A BBC report⁸, published in January 2016 after two years of investigations within Black Axe, confirms that the original intent of the association was precisely to make a “positive contribution” to the development of Nigerian society by providing young people with a point of reference that they could not find in their family or contemporary political figures.

The violent degeneration of cults paradoxically begun with their proliferation and "verticalization". At the end of the 70's, the cults gave themselves a structure and an organization through the establishment of an internal hierarchy of pyramidal type (Farnesina, 2019), which foresaw a figure at the top called the “Don” and a series of people in charge of the organization's activities. The presence of an internal organization, as well as of leaders who were at the head of it, favored a greater cohesion of the members of the same group, but also hostility towards other cults according to a "us versus them" dynamic. Cults became increasingly violent and radical, not only against the Nigerian government but also among themselves for the control of territories and resources.

The investigations of the Central Directorate of the Italian Criminal Police⁹, revealed that the Nigerian government has undertaken its fight against the spread of local organized crime since the beginning of 2000, but the instruments activated so far are precautionary rather than responsive: they aim to discourage or even prohibit the younger portion of the population from "enlisting" within the cults. This somewhat heralds a topic that will be discussed in depth in the third and final section of this dissertation, namely the urgent need for synergy between the judiciary and police forces of Nigeria with that of neighboring states and major European countries aimed at covering the gap left by the lack of anti-crime tools at the national level.

Nonetheless, to trace back how this mafia, initially closely linked to the social, economic and historical contingencies of its country, then spread throughout Italy and beyond to become a global phenomenon, it is necessary to recall the migratory flows of the late 1980s. While economic difficulties in the 1980s drove many skilled workers to leave the country, the following decades have seen an increase of unskilled workers and irregular migrants (ISPI, 2019)¹⁰. According to the

⁸ BBC News: The world of Nigeria's sex-trafficking 'Air Lords', 27 January 2016:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35244148>

⁹ Service of Criminal Analysis of the Department of Public Security - Focus on Nigerian Mafia in Italy, 2020, available on: https://www.poliziadistato.it/statics/41/focus_la_mafia_nigeriana_in_italia_dicembre_2020.pdf

¹⁰ ISPI Caritas Report - Causes of Migration and Contexts of Origin, 2019, available at: https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/rapportoispicaritas_0.pdf

testimony of Antonio De Bonis, of the special anti-crime ROS section of the National Army, Nigerian criminals have settled mainly in the cities of Northern Italy including Turin, Brescia and more areas of Veneto also establishing some detached cells in Puglia and Sicily (De Bonis, 2021). From the investigations undertaken in the 1980s, it emerged that these still relatively small criminal groups had not created relations with the local mafias, nor even an equal relationship with them, remaining more than anything else isolated with respect to the criminal panorama and traditional mafia activities such as drug trafficking. According to the 2019 DIA report¹¹, as of the second half of the 1990s, these criminal groups were not yet operating in an "integrated criminal system", nor were they making pacts with local mafias. Rather, they created consortia with other criminal organizations of foreign matrix that were more flexible than the indigenous ones. In other words, the phenomenon defined as the "ethnicization of organized crime" (Massari, 2002) occurred, in which criminal groups preferred to structure themselves according to an ethnic basis.

Also, the fights for hegemony in some criminal business, according to the investigations carried out in the cities of Turin and Brescia between 2002/2003¹² on the occasion of some street brawls, took place mainly among the same compatriots belonging to different criminal groups, but the phenomenon still seemed to take the form of a fight between gangs. The same investigations revealed shortly thereafter that the major profit-making activities of these initially mixed and scattered criminal groups were mainly those that took place on the streets: drug dealing and aiding and abetting prostitution, but this business still seemed restricted to a reality that was not just local, but even neighborhood-based. The latter was by far the most profitable activity because it allowed to fully exploit the vulnerable figure of the irregular immigrant, as less inclined to denounce violence or abuse due to his being "not regular", but there was still no link between the promotion of prostitution in the neighborhoods of Northern Italy and the trafficking of migrants on an international scale. The phenomenon still seemed to be circumscribed.

In the 80's there was the first wave of women from southern Nigeria destined for the international prostitution market, but none of them ever dared to denounce a compatriot before 2012, when a Nigerian woman testified against two compatriots accusing them of exploitation and induction to prostitution. The woman had been embarked with destination Lampedusa, after having been

¹¹ Relazione del Ministero dell'Interno al Parlamento - Attività svolta e Risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia, January - June 2019, available on:

<https://direzioneeinvestigativaantimafia.interno.gov.it/semestrali/sem/2019/1sem2019.pdf>

¹² Camera dei Deputati – Focus: Criminalità organizzata nigeriana in Italia, 2018, Doc.LXXIV N.3, available at: https://www.camera.it/_dati/leg18/lavori/documentiparlamentari/indiceetesti/074/003_RS/00000034.pdf

convinced that in Europe she would have led a better life and found a stable job¹³. This testimony marked a watershed in managing the investigations on foreign organized crime. A massive concentration of instruments and personnel was dedicated to detecting the real scope of a phenomenon that until that moment had been considered second rate compared to the scope of indigenous mafias, but above all by the purely small dimensions. It was later discovered in Turin, where the first task force dedicated to human trafficking was set up (Terenghi, 2019), that the issue had acquired a global scope in a short time and was inevitably linked to two other affairs: the aiding and abetting of illegal immigration and the trafficking of persons (Colombo, 2021). Ethnic specialization has taken on a broader meaning in this sense, referring not only to the tendency of perpetrators to group together to form criminal groups, but also to a certain preference for the ethnicity of the victims: compatriots, with regard to women destined for the sex market, and other irregular immigrants coming not only from Nigeria but also and above all from North Africa, used as couriers in international drug trafficking networks or as exploited manpower¹⁴. This aspect will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

The investigations were part of a complex police operation called "Athenaeum"¹⁵ which began in December 2012 and allowed to identify two secret organizations operating throughout the Italian territory made up of Nigerian citizens, the Eiyé and Maphite, specializing in the exploitation of prostitution and drug trafficking at the international level. The police task force managed, through the operation, to infiltrate several meetings of the organizations and identify as many as 53 individuals responsible for crimes of various kinds, including robbery, large-scale drug dealing, exploitation of prostitution and forgery of official documents. From the meetings, it also emerged the existence of close relations between the two organizations and their involvement in a "large international organization, with contours comparable to our mafias" (Nazzaro, 2019). First, it has been proved that these groups manage, from a dominant position, not only the market of sex for payment, but also the traffic of narcotics and that this business is not limited to the North of Italy, but it develops along the Adriatic coast. According to the semi-annual report to the Parliament, issued by the DIA in September

¹³ Arrived in Sicily on June 2008 together with other immigrants, the young Nigerian girl was transferred to the Cie in Gradisca d'Isonzo. The two Nigerians then gave her an apartment in Pioltello, in the Milan area, to force her into prostitution between August and September 2008. The victim was able to return to Gradisca, thus distancing herself from the two exploiters, but after three months of reception in the center and after having entrusted herself to Caritas, she decided to file a complaint.

¹⁴ Relazione al Parlamento – Sull'attività delle forze di polizia, sullo stato dell'ordine e della sicurezza pubblica e sulla criminalità organizzata, 2018, available at:

https://www.poliziadistato.it/statics/23/relazione_al_parlamento_anno_2008.pdf

¹⁵ Athenaeum has been a massive intelligence operation, as well as a police operation, that has unveiled the international criminal networks of the Nigerian mafia thanks to the cooperation of the Italian, Dutch, French and German intelligence services. The final acts are over 3000 pages long and the interceptions listened to are in the hundreds of thousands by eight men and women of the Turin municipal police.

2020¹⁶, since the '90s Nigerian and Albanian criminal organizations have built a partnership for the management of landings in Puglia and to which the Apulian Mafia would also take part in the logistic support.

Investigations also revealed a certain diversification of the activities of criminal groups between the North and the South of Italy. While in the northern cities, as mentioned above, Nigerian criminality has managed to carve out an autonomous space even in the international traffic of narcotics, in the South this is an activity that remains primarily in the hands of traditional mafias. It is instead an almost exclusive business of Nigerians, the facilitation of prostitution and trafficking of migrants, or rather, the facilitation of the illegal stay of immigrants on Italian territory (Palmisano, 2008).

The presence of Nigerian criminality in the Southern Italy deserves a separate analysis. Having to deal with networks in which the presence of indigenous mafias is predominant, the Nigerian criminal groups of Southern Italy have acquired exceptional adaptability. They vary interests, behavior, and *modus operandi*, according to the local mafias with which they had to interface and in order to operate in peace, without the local criminality exercising undue interference¹⁷. Consequently, in the Southern Italy, Nigerian criminality has not succeeded in assuming the predominant positions that it has assumed in the North and has adapted instead to the tacit rules of a simple coexistence within the same territory. Apart from a few sporadic episodes related to the short period judicially defined as the "massacre phase", such as the famous massacre in Pescopagano in 1990¹⁸, this coexistence has always been peaceful or consensual. The relationships with the local mafias substantially follow a logic of maximization of the reciprocal interests and of differentiation of the activities in sectors that, even if inevitably intersected each other, as in the case of aiding and abetting prostitution and the trafficking of migrants, remain faithful to a criterion of subdivision of competences. The tacit rule is that as long as the groups do not interfere with each other, peace is guaranteed. This is advantageous for Nigerian criminality since it can carry out its international business in a regime of semi-coverage, but also for the same local mafias that do not miss the opportunity to create, when they can,

¹⁶ Relazione del Ministero dell'Interno al Parlamento – Attività svolta e risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia, January - June 2020, available at:

<https://direzioneeinvestigativaantimafia.interno.gov.it/semestrali/sem/2020/1sem2020.pdf>

¹⁷ Direzione Centrale della Polizia Criminale – Focus sulla mafia nigeriana in Italia, 2020, available at:

https://www.poliziadistato.it/statics/41/focus_la_mafia_nigeriana_in_italia_dicembre_2020.pdf

¹⁸ Since the mid-1980s, the Camorra has been using blacks for petty trafficking, but has kept control of the business firmly in its hands. Year after year, the impressive growth of the black population went in conjunction with a dramatic decrease in opportunities for clean work. Hence, ethnic Africans, led by Nigerians, began to set up their own businesses, independently importing heroin and then building up a network, which was also autonomous, of dealing. In a short period of time, this business brings billions of euros in investments to the Nigerian community that are inevitably taken away from local mafias. In the case of Pescopagano, the Camorristi started to claim the drug trafficking business as their property through warnings, threats, persecutions, then blown up on April 24th 1990 in a shootout in front of the bar "Centro" in the town of Mondragone in which some Nigerian racketeers and other Camorristi lost their lives.

relationships of subordination with some members of foreign groups using them as laborers, as couriers or as accountants. Other times, instead, the consent given to Nigerian groups to exercise their autonomous business in their own territory, has a price. The management of the market for street prostitution in Campania, for example, is conducted almost exclusively by ethnic Nigerian groups who pay monthly to the families of the local Camorra a sort of "tax" to be able to occupy a portion of the territory for the trade of girls (Manojlovic, 2013). Other times, these agreements turn into real partnerships, but this aspect too will be explored in the next sections.

At any rate, the most connotative aspect of the Nigerian criminal organizations that have established themselves in the main regions of the south is that of having gone through a real osmotic and almost emulative process of the native mafias. From recent investigations of the Direzione Distrettuale Antimafia of Bari¹⁹, it has surfaced that the group of Eyie operating mainly in Piedmont, has maintained the original and typical structure of the Nigerian cults with a precise subdivision of roles and the direction of activities in the hands of a so-called "Chairman". Differently, the Maphite group, which is mainly based in Sicily, has acquired the typical traits of Cosa Nostra with a top-down structure headed by the head of the association, the Don, to whom are subjected the so-called "Lords"²⁰. The Black Axe, operating mainly in Campania and Calabria has an internal organization similar to the bangs of the camorra or the 'ndrine, in which the subordinate relationships between associates do not count as much as the strong family ties that allow the association its very survival (Nicaso, 2010). Also in a 2018 DIA report²¹, it appears that: "The organizational chart and hierarchies are those of the 'ndranghetistas, in fact the subdivision of the territories, as well as the decision-making processes, are typical of Italian cosche".

This behavior was confirmed by the surprising discovery of a document, known among Nigerian groups as the Green Bible, contained in a package sent from Nigeria to Italy and seized in Rome by the Turin mobile team in 2018, containing a series of invaluable information on the *modus operandi* and organization of Italian Nigerian clans. The police authorities of Turin have not hesitated to define

¹⁹ Operazioni Antimafia a Bari e L'Aquila. Lamorgese: un intenso lavoro investigativo per contrastare vecchie e nuove mafie, 26 Aprile 2021, available at: <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/operazioni-antimafia-bari-e-laquila-lamorgese-intenso-lavoro-investigativo-contrastare-vecchie-e-nuove-mafie>

More than 400 men and women of the Carabinieri Provincial Command and of the Police Headquarters of Bari and of the whole national territory have been employed. There are a total of 99 subjects, including leaders and affiliates, recipients of an order of pre-trial detention in prison and at home issued by the Court of Bari - Gip Section, at the request of the District Anti-Mafia Directorate, investigated, for various reasons, armed mafia association, possession and carrying weapons, including war weapons, association aimed at drug trafficking, murder and attempted murder and extortion.

²⁰ Camera dei Deputati – Focus: Criminalità organizzata nigeriana in Italia, 2018, Doc.LXXIV N.3, available at: https://www.camera.it/dati/leg18/lavori/documentiparlamentari/indiceetesti/074/003_RS/00000034.pdf

²¹ Relazione del Ministero dell'Interno al Parlamento – Attività svolte e risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia, January- June 2018, available at: <https://direzioneeinvestigativaantimafia.interno.gov.it/semestrali/sem/2018/1sem2018.pdf>

it, given its contents, as a true “code of honor” of Nigerian criminality. The Green Bible appears as an instruction manual for affiliates and for the so-called "ignorant". The latter are those who aspire to be part of the association and its activities, but that are not yet adequately prepared to take part of it. In the Green Bible an entire section is dedicated to this category who, after a period of so-called "apprenticeship" orientation, if considered adequately trained, can join the organization with the obligation to abandon their old name and take on another code name, so as to be recognizable only to other members of the organization²².

A certainly peculiar and connotative element within the Green Bible, is that of rituals. The new recruits, to complete the training necessary to enter the group, are subjected to a final step, a rite of initiation through which they demonstrate that they are ready to abandon their old lives and join the group, to which they must swear eternal trust, on pain of death in some cases. Specifically, new recruits are forced to drink human blood while reciting an oath, they are branded with symbols that vary from organization to organization, and they are forced to set fire to important objects from their previous lives to break away from them for good²³. This reference to tribalism, which might seem to be an element exclusively linked to ethnic and cultural factors, is not dissimilar from many symbolic elements also present in Italian mafias, especially in the ‘Ndrangheta and Camorra. The magical, superstitious, or religious element, rather than the ideological one, is often what maintains the internal cohesion of the group and often limits its members to betray a comrade or a victim of exploitation to denounce the profiteer.

The frequent presence of superstitious fideism could lead to advance biased considerations that would frame the Nigerian mafia in a context of ethnic deviance linked to irrational factors and would not allow instead to consider the delinquent versatility of this organization whose system is not limited to drug trafficking and prostitution aiding and abetting. Already in 2005, in fact, the investigations had allowed to trace the chameleon-like character of the organization that manages to perfectly combine primitive criminogenic elements with functional and technological abilities²⁴. On April 26, 2021, the State Police completed Operation Hello Bross²⁵ in which as many as 100 members of the Black axe cult were arrested on felony charges of computer fraud and money laundering through the

²² Service of Criminal Analysis of the Department of Public Security - Focus on Nigerian Mafia in Italy, 2020, available on: https://www.poliziadistato.it/statics/41/focus_la_mafia_nigeriana_in_italia_dicembre_2020.pdf

²³ Ministero dell'Interno, Servizio Analisi Criminale – La tratta degli esseri umani in Italia: Focus, 2021, available at: https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2021-04/focus_la_tratta_10mar2021_10.30.doc1.pdf

²⁴ Archive of Agenzia Informazioni e Sicurezza Interna, GNOSIS Rivista di Intelligenza, “La mafia nigeriana fra voodoo e computer”, GNOSIS 2/2005, available at: <http://gnosis.aisi.gov.it/Gnosis/Rivista3.nsf/ServNavig/15>

²⁵ L’Aquila – Operazione “Hello Bross” – Questura, available at: <https://questure.poliziadistato.it/it/LAquila/articolo/129260869fe52fa76551803869>

buying and selling of bitcoin. The investigation revealed that the group would have made substantial profits from cybercrime activities²⁶. Money laundering is the latest proof that the crimes typically attributed to the Nigerian mafia are flanked by crimes more closely related to economic crime and that intensify the danger and pervasiveness of this phenomenon. In Cagliari, 40 people were arrested by the Guardia di Finanza in November 2021 for international money laundering proceeded from drug and human trafficking. The turnover was about 2 million euros, but the ascertained money flows to Nigeria and out of Italy would be more than 11 million euros²⁷.

Regardless, therefore, of elements linked to symbolism or beliefs, the most visible element of conjunction between the codes of honor of domestic mafias and the Green Bible is the use of intimidation as a means of coercion and the "omertà" as a bond between the members of the organization²⁸. Therefore, it is not only the extent of the established market and the relationships with local mafias, but above all this combination of intimidation-omertà and the ability to infiltrates the market, that earned Nigerian criminality the categorization of "mafia" and its various ramifications that of "clan". Based on investigations induced by Italian authorities in 2014, a UNODC report defined the level of organization, violence and intimidation of Eiy members as on par with that of the most powerful and widespread mafias in the world (UN, 2014, 56); as defined by Stefano Delfini, director of the Office of the Central Directorate of the Criminal Police, who warns against an organization that has solid bases in the country of origin, but operates on an international scale and has in fact become a global threat²⁹. The National Anti-Mafia Prosecutor Federico Cafiero De Raho has defined the Nigerian criminality as the most powerful in our territory and so much integrated in the illicit business of the local mafia clans that it can be defined as a mafia organization in turn³⁰. All these specialists and institutions agree on the fact that the Nigerian mafia is a highly dangerous and

²⁶ Police have discovered the presence of a transnational network of hackers specializing in credit card cloning. The buying and selling of bitcoins on the Dark Web was then used to launder money in an attempt to conceal its illicit origin.

²⁷ The investigations, aimed at identifying the methods of laundering the proceeds of the above-mentioned criminal activities, revealed that these were mainly destined for real estate investments to be made in Nigeria, implemented through the use of couriers "suitcase holders", the recharging of prepaid cards, or through money-transfer channels (Guardia di Finanza Ufficio Stampa, Cagliari, 22 novembre 2021 <https://www.gdf.gov.it/stampa/ultime-notizie/anno-2021/novembre/riciclaggio-di-capitali-illeciti-e-favoreggiamento-dellimmigrazione-clandestina>).

²⁸ With sentence no. 4258 of July 20, 2016, the 2nd Criminal Section of the Court of Palermo recognized the existence of the aggravating circumstance of the use of the "Mafia method" consisting in the combination of intimidation-homelessness to convince victims and cult members themselves.

²⁹ Stefano Delfini, Dipartimento di Pubblica Sicurezza – Direttore Servizio Analisi Criminale <https://banchesicurezza.abieventi.it/relators/stefano-delfini>

³⁰ Federico Cafiero de Raho is the national anti-mafia and anti-terrorism prosecutor. In his hearing before the Schengen Committee on the role of the Nigerian mafia in the trafficking of human beings, he defined the phenomenon of the Nigerian mafia in this way, warning of its real scope, which on the surface might appear to be managed by autonomous and disorganized gangs, but which in reality are linked together in a systemic transnational network of illicit activities that crosses Italy and all of Europe and extends beyond the continent.

sprawling global threat, which from Nigeria has almost entirely managed to recompose itself in Italy, even in a strengthened version favored by the new relationships with local mafias and the fact of being able to act outside the presence of government authorities, compared to what they were in the motherland (Nigerian Embassy in Rome, 2011).

Investigations already launched in 2018 along with the discovery of the Green Bible have resulted in a high number of arrests and in an increase in complaints against Nigerian citizens. The focus on the Nigerian Mafia in Italy published by the State Police in December 2020, analyzes the statistical data related to the law enforcement action carried out by the Police Forces in the biennium 2018-2019. Following the discovery of the Green Bible and the opening of official investigations into Nigerian organized crime, 14,005 individuals were arrested/denounced for activities related to human trafficking, exploitation of prostitution, extortion, robbery, currency forgery and fraud. Nigerians accounted for 5% of the total number of foreigners reported/arrested in the country. A growing phenomenon that has been going on since 2013, that is, since Nigerians have reached the top positions in terms of the number of people reported for the above-mentioned crimes compared to other foreign mafias, such as the Romanian, Albanian and Italian ones. Based on the same focus, even in the first 9 months of 2020 among the most reported ethnic groups, the Nigerian was in first place (with 37 reports in 2020 compared to 109 in the same period last year). Of these complaints, almost all are for mafia associations.

From the recent investigations, in short, two factors appear evident: first is that the activities related to Nigerian business, being all intrinsically linked to the phenomenon of clandestine migration, cannot disregard a real criminal platform that extends from a local reality to an extra-territorial one making Nigerian criminality an unexceptionably transnational phenomenon. The second is that, considering the systemic nature, the methods used and the very purpose of the activities, that is to obtain profits with the necessity to keep the illicit patrimony hidden, as well as the links with local mafias necessary to reach such purpose, this form of criminality distances itself from traditional organized crime and approaches instead a form of real mafia associationism. Yet, despite the evidence presented by the charges, the testimonies of collaborators with the police and the existence of the "statute of the bosses", the cases in which the existence of real mafia-type criminal organizations is recognized at the judicial level are rare. As already mentioned at the beginning of this section, the Superior Council of the magistracy and most of the Italian courts have been skeptical about the real rooting and integration of this criminal specie in the national mafia panorama and the question of categorization has become a particularly abstruse judicial phenomenon.

The question concerns the applicability or not of the *41-bis* to Nigerian criminality, already initiated in 2003 by the DIA to the Antimafia Commission³¹, in which the latter stated that a phenomenon of "metastasization" of Nigerian criminality in Italy was already underway and that in fact the various groups had managed to obtain, for each region of Italy, an independent microcosm dangerous and commonly accepted by other criminal groups both foreign and local. In 2009, with regard to sentence 45782 referring to two proceedings of the Court of Turin, the magistrates of the Supreme Court expressed their opinion regarding the cults under investigation, the Black Axe and the Eiyé, deeming it incontestable that the operative modalities, the structure and the associative ties established within these groups corresponded to the requisites foreseen by the 41 bis and that this should be applied at the level of judgment³². Through the categorization of cults as mafia-type associations, the effectiveness and rigidity of the actions against such a phenomenon, considered so far a purely street crime and which was certainly not considered in the original design of *41-bis*, would be enhanced directly hitting the entire criminal network and not just the single persecutor.

It is a shared opinion among organized crime experts, that the transnationalization of Nigerian mafia that, as already widely discussed, has been able to maintain relations with the motherland, has gone hand in hand with its "financialization", which has allowed it to circulate the proceeds of its criminal activities with fluidity. A dossier by the Machiavelli Center for Policy and Strategic Studies published in 2019, dedicated to assessing the spread of the Nigerian mafia, states that the latter has merged lawful and illicit activities into a "gray area" (De Bonis, 2019), since like local mafiosi, Nigerian mafiosi often find themselves having to work shoulder-to-shoulder with non-mafiosi and interact with the legal market so that profits can cross borders without arousing suspicion. Millions and millions of euros enter the global legal market every year, being the result of illegal activities such as prostitution, drug trafficking and smuggling. This further illustrates how sprawling the Nigerian mafia landscape is and how difficult it is to uncover.

The Secretary General of the Union of Penitentiary Police Aldo Di Giacomo commenting on the operation on the Nigerian criminal association dedicated to trafficking, enslavement, extortion, robbery, injury, sexual assault and exploitation of prostitution, recalled the need to start refresher courses for penitentiary staff in order to have a deeper knowledge of Nigerian cults that he considers

³¹ Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul fenomeno della criminalità organizzata mafiosa o similare – Resoconto stenografico della 53esima seduta, martedì 20 Aprile 2004, available at: https://www.parlamento.it/application/xmanager/projects/parlamento/file/commissione_antimafia_14leg/stenografici/se_duta53.pdf

³² The sentence 45782/2009 refers to two judicial proceedings of the Tribunal of Turin n.21741/03 RGNR and n.13122/04 RGNR

the most widespread in our territory right after the local mafias and the most able to weave networks and international business relationships³³. Opinion is therefore increasingly homogenizing on the true nature of Nigerian crime, or rather its development globally.

1.2 Major profit-making sector: the trafficking in migrants

Human trafficking is a highly lucrative crime that brings huge profits to criminals. The annual profit from human trafficking worldwide is estimated to be thirty billion euros (Save the Children, 2020)³⁴, while the total cost of trafficking in the European Union in a single year is estimated to be approximately three billion euros (Report from the Commission to the European Parliament 2020)³⁵. Criminal organizations have perceived in the huge movements of ethnic masses from their countries of origin to Europe, an unprecedented investment opportunity. As known, this phenomenon presents a multitude of irregularities due to poor border control from which criminal organizations have taken full advantage. According to the estimates of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, more and more people are today forced to flee their country due to persecution or internal conflicts. These people are particularly vulnerable since, to realize the hope of living a better life elsewhere, they are willing to do anything, even the worst compromises. It is precisely on this basic weakness of the migrant that organized crime bases its global market of "new slavery"³⁶.

The Nigerian mafia promptly entered this business, being able to count on the advantage represented by the origin of the flows, Nigeria and neighboring countries such as Ghana or Niger. If based on the distinctions contained in the Additional Protocols to the Convention against Transnational Crime signed in Palermo in 2000³⁷, Nigerian criminality would be involved in both the business of

³³ Sindacato Polizia Penitenziaria (S.P.P.), 18 luglio 2019. "Mafia nigeriana: Di Giacomo, servono sezioni speciali all'interno delle carceri". Available at: <https://www.sindacatospp.it/blog/index.php?id=8xkqzbyy>

³⁴ "I minori vittime di tratta e sfruttamento: chi sono, da dove vengono e chi lucra su di loro", 16 July 2020, available at: <https://www.savethechildren.it/sites/default/files/files/uploads/pubblicazioni/piccoli-schiavi-invisibili.pdf>

³⁵ REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL, Third report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings (2020) as required under Article 20 of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/system/files/2020-10/third_progress_report.pdf

³⁶ This term is the most used to describe the exploitative conditions to which immigrants are forced during their journey to Europe and once they enter it. The International Labor Organization used this term in a 2019 report after investigations activated throughout Europe related to human trafficking; International Organizations and Non-Profit Organizations use this term to emphasize the urgency of action on a global scale to stop this phenomenon; the Department of Public Safety used this term in the Focus on Human Trafficking published in 2021. The focus is available on: https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2021-04/focus_la_tratta_10mar2021_10.30.doc1.pdf

³⁷ The Palermo Convention is the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime at the Palermo Conference that lasted from 12 to 15 September 2000. The Convention first defines the meaning of organized criminal group and then implements a distinction between smuggling and trafficking in human beings, two concepts separated by

trafficking in migrants and the business of smuggling migrants: the first refers in fact to "the recruitment, transportation, transfer of persons by means of the use or threat of the use of force or other forms of coercion [...] to obtain the consent of a person having authority over another for the purpose of exploitation"; the second includes "procuring, for the purpose of obtaining, directly or indirectly, a financial or material benefit, the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident". Hence, most of the time the migrants' journey to the country of destination does not end once they reach foreign soil, conversely, once arrived migrants can become victims of trafficking. In the specific case of the Nigerian mafia, the business of trafficking and smuggling of migrants is linked to other collateral activities such as the production of false documents necessary for the illegal stay in the territory, the exploitation of prostitution or the same drug trafficking in a kind of criminal loop from which it is not easy to escape (Savona, 1997).

The relationship with the criminal organization does not cease once migrants reach their destination. It can also happen that the same migrant who undertakes the journey by regular means, then slips into a condition of clandestinity when it encounters the mafia organization operating in the territory (Ciconte, 2003).

In essence, the clandestinity is undoubtedly a crucial factor in fueling the criminal circuits of the "ethnolandscapes" (De Luca, 2013). This is true not only for the Nigerian mafia, but in general for all foreign mafias settled in Italy. In the '90s the Albanian and Romanian mafia occupied a leading position in the operations of illegal stay in Italy and still today most of the smugglers who illegally conduct the landings of immigrants are Albanians. As well as the Chinese mafia that since the early 2000s has been exploiting the labor of immigrants by availing themselves of their illegal status.

The biggest difference is that the Nigerian mafia manages not so much the entry of the illegal immigrant as his illegal stay for the purpose of exploitation. If the Albanian criminal groups manage the traffic through the hulls and the cross-bordering activities, the Nigerian mafia deals mainly with what happens once the border is crossed.

According to the seasonal report on foreign mafias published by the DIA, the illegal immigration routes managed by the Nigerian mafia arrive in Italy from North Africa. To be precise, the link with the motherland is already evident in the pre-departure phase, that is, in the phase of "recruitment" or selection of the people who are destined to be used in the illegal market. This initial step of the process takes place in Nigeria, specifically in Benin City capital of the Edo State, where the Nigerian mafia

the very purpose and ways the crime is carried out. The Palermo Convention is available on: <https://uif.bancaditalia.it/normativa/norm-antiricic/convenzioni/conv-palermo.pdf>

makes use of the work of some compatriots in charge of selection who have the task of convincing individuals in danger or particularly vulnerable to undertake the long journey to Europe. In the Green Bible, reference is also made to these figures among which the one of the *maman* stands out. This is a female figure of particular importance: she is usually an ex-prostitute with the task of convincing young Nigerians to leave the country with the promise that in Europe they will find the well-being and happiness they seek (Di Liddo, 2019). The girls are indeed unaware of the fact that once they arrive in Italy, or other European countries, they will instead be inserted into the market for sex for payment. The ritual and tribal element here returns to play a crucial role. The *maman* uses the *voodoo* ritual to force the girls to leave their homeland, threatening them that otherwise demonic presences will torment their lives or their families. During “Operation Balance”³⁸ of the Provincial Command of the Carabinieri of Messina implemented on December 25, 2019, it was discovered that the *ju-ju* ritual, consisting of the use of bones, amulets and magical objects, had driven as many as 15 girls to leave Nigeria for Messina between 2015 and 2017 with the prospect of a job and a decent life. Instead, the Command has discovered that the Nigerian mafia settled in Messina forced the young women to prostitute themselves to repay the debt of their transfer, which in Nigerian is called "balance", from which the operation takes its name. To redeem their freedom, the girls also owe the proceeds of their prostitution to the *maman* to pay the rent of their workplace.

Therefore, the role of the *mamans* is not to be underestimated. It is by no means a marginal or supportive role, nor is it a merely psychological role in convincing young women to become prostitutes. The *maman* has a significant organizational function, as she participates heavily in decision-making, manages the trafficking routes and handles finances. In addition, very often the *maman* is bound to other members of the group by family ties and thus arouses in them a feeling of reverence and deep respect like that felt for a mother (Mancuso, 2014). This too is an element of strong assonance with the role of the woman in other mafia associations characterized by strong family ties such as the Camorra or the ‘Ndrangheta.

Together with the recruitment phase of prostitutes in Central Africa, the recruitment of new victims of criminal circuits takes place once they arrive in Italy and, specifically, within the reception centers for migrants³⁹. In 2019, the Anti-Mafia District Directorate of the Bari Public Prosecutor's Office conducted a vast international operation investigating the criminal activities of two Nigerian clans operating throughout Europe, in which it emerged that most of the illegal activities were managed

³⁸ Carabinieri Messina: Operazione “Balance”, 25 January 2019, https://www.stelladitalianews.com/ultima-ora/2019/01/25/75970_carabinieri-messina-operazione-balance/

³⁹ Direzione Centrale della Polizia Criminale – Focus sulla mafia nigeriana in Italia, 2020, available at: https://www.poliziadistato.it/statics/41/focus_la_mafia_nigeriana_in_italia_dicembre_2020.pdf

from within the CARA reception center in Bari-Palese. This is what was revealed by an investigation of the Carabinieri of Rome, carried out in collaboration with the S.C.I.P., the Albanian and German police, which led, thanks to an order issued by the Gip of the Court of Rome at the request of the District Anti-Mafia Directorate, to the arrest of 23 Nigerians. All were accused of having transformed the SPRAR reception center in the capital into a real recruitment center for "couriers" to transport drugs to the continent⁴⁰. These were mainly compatriots or individuals of Maghrebi origin, also convinced by the weapon of coercion and intimidation to enter the international drug trafficking circuit.

The Nigerian mafia proved hence to be particularly adept at creating its own channels of supply of drugs (almost exclusively cocaine and heroin) as the motherland is not a producer of drugs, nor is the product intended for local consumption. The modus operandi used by the Nigerian mafia for transportation is particularly strategic and it consists in the parcelling out of traffic. The couriers therefore have a fundamental role in these trafficking routes. The ones chosen from the reception centers have the most dangerous role, that of ovulatory couriers. Their immigrant status, despite the possession of certifications and false documents, would risk arousing suspicion if they found themselves transporting the cargo in vehicles. This latter task is instead up to other types of couriers, most often Westerners, as they are less likely to catch the attention of the Police Forces. The priority of this strategy is to make the flow of transportation continuous through what is known as "cluster transportation" of drugs (Servizio Analisi Criminale, 2020). This would happen through the movement of very small quantities of drugs per courier so that first, in case of search, only a small part of the load is lost, then so that it is more difficult for the Authorities to trace the network (*ibidem*). As will be explored in more detail in the second chapter, this is the sector in which the link with other mafias is most evident, above all because of the flair of the local mafias for the profits that could be made from the management of contracts and subcontracts and from the use of low-cost labor.

In the words of Sergio Nazzaro in the documentary "Black mafia", the first documentary dedicated to the scope of the Nigerian mafia and its roots in the Italian territory, the trafficking of migrants is the glue of this vicious circle in which prostitution feeds the drug market and drugs feed the prostitution market. Drugs and prostitution are inevitably intertwined as the importation of drugs most often occurs through the laundering of large sums of money in drugs proceeds of prostitution. The commander of the III department of the Carabinieri's special operative grouping, Rubino

⁴⁰ The operation was launched following the inspection of the Bicameral Schengen, Europol and Immigration Committee, at the Cara of Bari-Palese, which in recent times has been at the center of serious criminal episodes linked to the Nigerian mafia in Italy.

Tomassetti⁴¹, states that compared to the strongest mafia in drug trafficking, namely the 'Ndrangheta, the Nigerian mafia has managed to renew the traffic on certain routes, transforming the trafficked victims into carriers for the importation of cocaine. This method drastically reduces transaction costs and ensures a continuous and steady flow of cargo (Dadone, 2017).

As witnessed by the results achieved by the Anti-Mafia Investigative Directorate, a part of the proceeds of illegal activities remains in our country, while most of the proceeds are sent in the country of origin where the local mafias reinvest it in illegal activities especially related to sexual exploitation⁴². The Bari Police Command investigated on December 3, 2019 about some prostitution racketeering proceeds sent to Nigeria through couriers or "hawala" systems or reinvested in drug trafficking⁴³. Other investigations later confirmed the systemic nature of these operations commonly exercised by cult members. This allows the Nigerians to ensure the fluidity of drug flows from Asia and to maintain close associations with their South American namesakes.

The drug trafficking business of the Nigerians is certainly older than the migrant trafficking business. Already in the early 80's, the Nigerian mafia has in fact been able to build its supply and demand channels starting from Central Asia and South America and finally reaching the United States of America. It is from the particularly profitable proceeds from trafficking to the United States that the Nigerians finance operations related to the trafficking of migrants (Jones, 1993).

Drug trafficking and human trafficking are then often linked from a logistical and operational point of view. The same routes used to transport people often coincide with those used to transport heroin and cocaine. The jeeps and boats that arrive in Europe with migrants inside them are thus loaded with small loads of drugs.

The Nigerian mafia exploits the poor system of border controls in the countries of the ECOWAS area, which enjoys a certain freedom of movement of people and capitals, where the major meeting hubs between migrants and their smugglers are located (UNODC, 2020). To manage this affair in the most effective way, Nigerian criminality adopts, as defined in the DIA Report sent to Parliament in 2017,

⁴¹ Sitting of October 12, 2015, hearing from the Commander of the 3rd Department of the Carabinieri Special Operations Group, Rubino Tomassetti, stenographic record.

⁴² <https://direzioneeinvestigativaantimafia.interno.gov.it/semestrali/sem/2019/1sem2019.pdf>

⁴³ Hawala is a very old system of money transfer. This consists in fact in a submerged banking system that allows, through the informal passage of money between intermediaries, to totally conceal the source of the illegal proceeds. In some countries this system is still considered legal, as in the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan and India. In all Western countries Hawala is instead considered an illegal system of money transfer also because it is considered inextricably linked to the financing of international terrorism and especially that of Islamic matrix. As emerged in fact from the investigations of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF) this system would have allowed to finance the terrorist attacks of 2015 in Paris. The same Task Force had recommended in 2001 with the IX Special Recommendations to all member states to provide administrative and criminal sanctions for those who use this system. <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/reports/FATF%20Standards%20-%20IX%20Special%20Recommendations%20and%20IN%20rc.pdf>

business tactics, which provide that the market of human beings is modified according to international dynamics⁴⁴. It is so that the international trafficking routes will never pass through those countries that mark agreements with European countries for greater control of these routes⁴⁵.

It is necessary to imagine the two routes as originally distinct: the drug trafficking route originates in Southeast Asia, from countries such as Malaysia, or from Latin America, mainly Colombia, and its destination is mainly the United States of America and Europe⁴⁶. The route used for trafficking migrants, on the other hand, starts in the Horn of Africa and reaches Europe, passing through the ECOWAS region. It is here that the two routes cross and the two businesses often overlap. The junction of the two routes is Agadez, the most important hub in the region where products are smuggled, above all cannabis and cocaine bound for North Africa and Europe. From here, the product is transported by truck across the desert to Libya. From Libya, a large part of the cargo is then loaded onto barges carrying migrants bound for Europe. Agadez is also the hub where the so-called "connection houses" are located, the houses in which Nigerian women who have already undertaken part of the journey are forced to prostitute themselves to finance its continuation (Beretta, 2016). In 2016, the Sienese police launched Operation Agadez⁴⁷ by executing seven precautionary measures at the request of the DIA of Florence, which led to the arrest of six Nigerian prostitutes who claimed to have been forced into prostitution in connection houses in Agadez by compatriots and individuals of Ghanaian origin whose activities were linked by a partnership. Nigerians are aware of the possibility that once women arrive in Libya they may disperse or attempt to escape, so they prevent this from happening by selling some of them to Libyan men. Only in this case the Nigerians let the remaining part of the journey including the entrance in the destination territory to be managed by someone else, profiting from this simple sale (*ibidem*). This happens very often also between Nigerian and Albanian mafia when not only women, but migrants in general are transferred in the hulls to land then

⁴⁴ "Relazione su mafie, migranti e tratta di esseri umani, nuove forme di schiavitù" p.31, approved by the committee at its meeting on December 4, 2017, to emphasize the link between the trafficking of arms and drugs and human trafficking, which are also considered commodities and sources of enrichment. Available at:

<https://www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/BGT/1066856.pdf>

⁴⁵ Cfr. Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the phenomenon of mafias and other criminal associations, including foreign ones, "Relazione su mafie, migranti e tratta di esseri umani, nuove forme di schiavitù"; rapporteur On. Dadone; approved by the committee at its meeting of December 4, 2017; Communicated to the chairs on December 14, 2017, pursuant to of section 1(1)(o) of Act 87 of July 19, 2013

⁴⁶ In 2018, an investigation was launched from an intelligence activity developed by the Sassari Investigative Unit with the close collaboration of the Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services at the Ministry of the Interior, Drug Enforcement Administration (D.E.A.) Liaison Officers and International Cooperation Offices in Malaysia, on a series of postal packages containing narcotics that were leaving from the latter country with destination Italy. It was discovered that part of the contents also came from Holland and that the shipment was entirely managed by Nigerian clans.

⁴⁷ The State Police of Siena executed 7 precautionary measures of the 12 issued by the Gip of the Court of Florence, at the request of the Anti-Mafia District Directorate, at the end of the investigations conducted by the State Police, with the Agadez Operation.

permanently in the regions of Southern Italy. This is where the relationships between Nigerian cults and *passseurs*, those who transport immigrants to Libya, come in. In the case of Africa, these *passseurs* are almost always improvised (Palidda, 2001), brutal and very expensive (in the case of the girls, these are repaid through prostitution; in the case of the men, the debt is incurred that they must repay with manual labor once they have entered the underpaid labor market).

A finding of UNODC reveals that, in Italy, two are the hubs for the junction of business related to prostitution: Turin and Castel Volturno in the province of Caserta. The latter is an interesting case because, in addition to being certainly the most popular, it is where the relationships between the Nigerian mafia and the Camorra are evident. Turin, however, can be considered the main hub because the most populous community of Nigerians has been living there for fifteen years for a total of 5,000 people, most of whom are women (2,678) (Grillone, 2019). These are also the points where business unwinds and where orders leave for the rest of Europe. According to a 2016 IOM estimate, 59% of migrants destined to be sold into the sex-for-pay market were young Nigerian women⁴⁸. Most of them were received by their compatriots and forced into street prostitution in Italy, others were accompanied by their *maman* to the Netherlands⁴⁹ (Campana, 2015). These two, together with Spain, are still the main destinations for the future prostitutes⁵⁰. In addition to the countries just mentioned, the U.S. State Department, in its 2015 annual report on human trafficking, also lists Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, and Switzerland as countries affected by trafficking in Nigerian women⁵¹.

The fate of men is different. They are destined for underpaid labor or begging, for drug dealing, ovulators, or they are instigated to join the organization itself, but only after a long process of training already discussed in the previous section. Regarding the first possibility, local mafias are particularly

⁴⁸ IOM, “La Tratta di esseri umani attraverso la rotta del Mediterraneo centrale: dati, storie e informazioni raccolte dall’Organizzazione Internazionale per le Migrazioni”, 2016, available at:

https://www.osservatoriointerventitratta.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/RAPPORTO_OIM_Vittime_di_tratta_0.pdf

⁴⁹ In 2006, the Amsterdam police launched an investigation at the request of the Netherlands Centre of Expertise on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling (EMM) who suspected the existence of a trafficking network of Nigerian women in the Netherlands. The investigation revealed that from 2005 to 2006 many aliens, most of them minors, had entered the country accompanied by their mothers. The Netherlands was used as a transitional country to transport the girls to Spain, their final destination. The Police Forces have since traced the full number of victims, a total of 180. The investigation, known as “Operation Koolvis”, was one of the first operations conducted on Dutch territory concerning the development of the transnational Nigerian mafia. The case was reported by the European Commission and is available on: https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/koolvis-case_it

⁵⁰ The choice of destination countries occurs according to market price-demand dynamics. In 2017, some Nigerian women, after years of exploitation in Turin, were transferred to some northern countries where there was a second-hand market for Nigerian girls. Here some witnesses told that given their greater age compared to other female colleagues their price of was significantly lowered. The transfer from Italy to countries where sexual services were better paid was necessary so that the girls could earn the necessary amount of money to continue to pay the debt with the exploiters.

⁵¹ US DoS, 2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria, 27 July 2015, pag. 77

cooperative. The exploitation of Nigerian labor is more widespread in Northern Italy. In September 25, the Bergamo Labor Inspectors and the Carabinieri of the Clusone Command conducted a joint activity aimed at combating the use of illegal labor. The blitz led to the detection in a shed of Chinese workers and three Nigerians, the latter guests in a shelter in the area, who were paid piecework, about 200 euros per month, to fold and stuff sheets for 8-10 hours of work per day⁵². This would suggest a partnership between Nigerian and Chinese criminality in the exploitation of illegal labor. Here, however, the partnerships are more evident with indigenous mafias, who, if they are not interested in the management of the sex-for-pay market, are interested in unpaid labor. This will be discussed more comprehensively in the next chapter.

The begging business makes hundreds of millions of euros a year through the employment of thousands of individuals on the black market. According to the investigations of the Milanese police in the context of the operation "baseball cap" only in Milan operate 200 beggars all under thirty years old, who to repay their debt to the Nigerian mafia, are forced to beg receiving from 50 to 70 euros per day (dalla Chiesa, 2020).

The business of trafficking of migrants does not discount anyone. Trafficking and exploitation have unfortunately also ended up actively involving almost 15,000 minors, who are often involved in drug dealing and prostitution. In 1 out of 2 cases, these minors are between 16 and 17 years of age and are mostly Italian (10,990, including 1,167 female minors) and come from some African countries (1,551, including 73 females)⁵³.

The solicitation of girls in trafficking occurs precisely through acquaintances and neighbors, or family members who have already arrived in Europe. Once recruited, the girls swear through the rites of *ju-ju* or *voodoo* that they will commit to honor the debt with their exploiters and with the *maman* who for the minors also provides for the purchase of clothes and, which is between 20,000 and 50,000 euros (Save the Children, 2016). The crossing of the Mediterranean Sea and the arrival in Sicily constitute the main transit corridor used by traffickers to transfer Nigerian minors to Europe, through a land route that touches Kano (Nigeria), Zinder (Niger), Agadez (Niger), el-Gatrun (Libya), Sebha (Libya), Brach (Libya), Tripoli (Libya) Zuara (Libya), Sabratah (Libya) and then from Libya to Sicily through a sea route through the smugglers⁵⁴. There is also possibly an air route that transports traffic

⁵² Ispettorato Nazionale del Lavoro – *ITL Bergamo, migranti impiegati come manodopera clandestina*, 29 September 2017, available at: <https://www.ispettorato.gov.it/it-it/media/Notizie-vigilanza/it-it/Pagine/ITL-Bergamo-migranti-impiegati-come-manodopera-clandestina-29092017.aspx>

⁵³ OIM - Report on victims of trafficking in the context of migratory flux by sea (April 2014 - October 2020), available on https://www.osservatoriointerventiratta.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/RAPPORTO_OIM_Vittime_di_tratta_0.pdf

⁵⁴ (European Asylum Support Office, EASO. Informazioni sul Paese di Origine. Nigeria. La tratta di donne a fini sessuali, Ottobre 2015), available on https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1305206/1226_1457689194_bz0415678itn.pdf

victims directly from Lagos to major European destinations including London, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, or Paris. From Nigeria the victims are then taken to Lagos where the smugglers provide them with false documents. In the absence of the latter, the strategy suggested by the smugglers is to apply for international protection immediately upon entering the European country of transit or destination in order to be transferred to centers from which it will be very easy to get out.

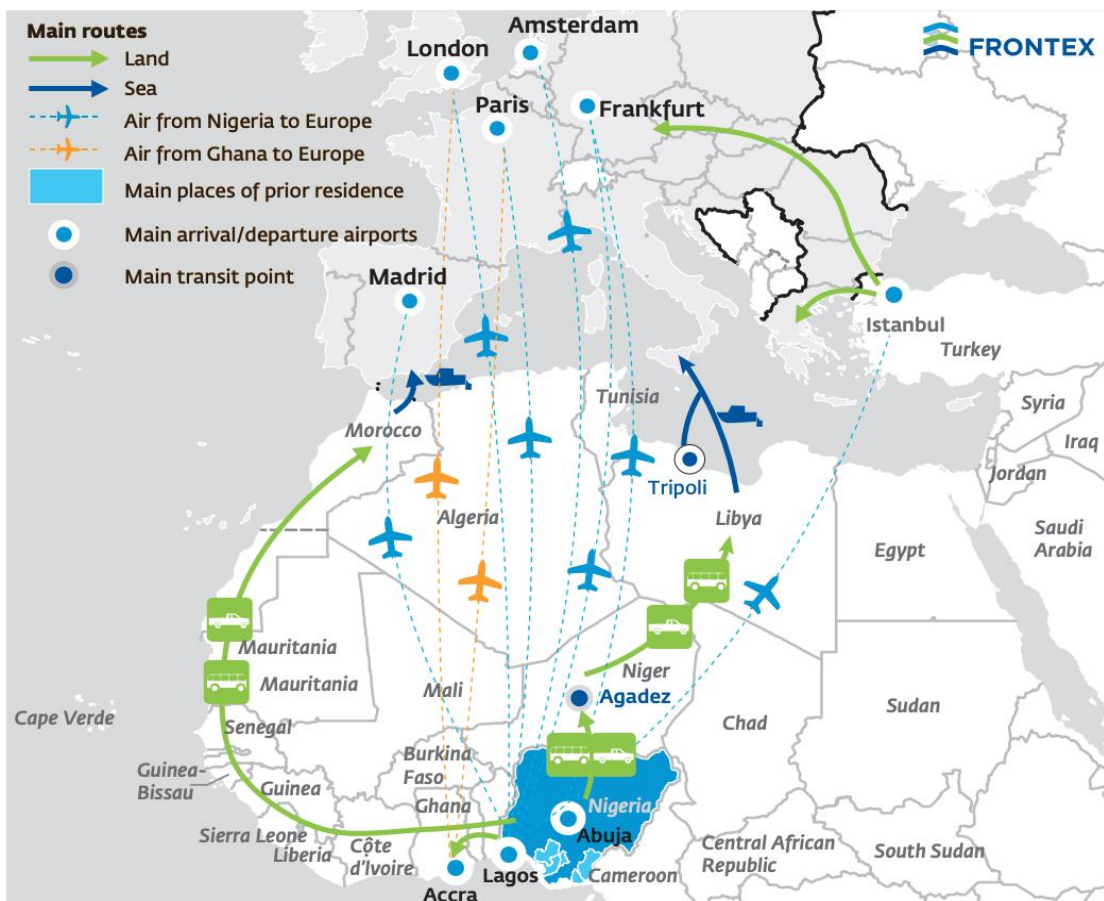


Figure 1: The main migrant trafficking routes

Source: Frontex, Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings, 2015

Despite the magnitude, fruitfulness and systematic nature of this international illicit activity, human trafficking is by no means a risk-free, cost-free business for Nigerian cults. As mentioned above, a first risk is the possibility that trafficking victims will disperse or attempt to escape. Clans are therefore forced to monitor victims for an extensive period that can extend from one to three years (Okojie, 2003). Victims are then released only when they have fully repaid their debts through exploitative activities to reduce any losses. Since the trafficking of migrants follows dynamics that are to all intents and purposes entrepreneurial and are based not only on organizational capacity, but

also on a network of different people and organizations, the greatest risk is to lose the element on which the rules of the market are based: trust. The mechanism that cults use to deal with others involved in such business is therefore the classic mechanism to follow before undertaking an investment: contact, offer, partnership. It is partly for this motive that the Nigerian mafia prefers by far to do business with its compatriots or that it has structured itself over time according to family logics, these obviously represent from the fiduciary point of view a considerably lower rate of risk.

Since 2008, sex trafficking has been by far the most prevalent form of human trafficking. From 2000 to 2009, the Nigerian Mafia occupied a top position in the ranking of *ethnoscapes* related to prostitution trafficking. The top position refers as much to the presence of ethnic groups involved in the management of prostitution as to the nationality of the victims in percentage terms.

Table No. 1 Countries of origin and number of the victims of trafficking (adults and minors) registered by the social services (ex art. 18) – 2000 - 2003 (Calls for proposals No. 1 and No. 4) (Fluctuations in absolute value and %)						
Countries	Call No. 1 (2000)		Call No. 4 (2003)		Fluctuations – January, 2000 – 2003	
	a.v.	%	a.v.	%	a.v.	%
Nigeria	1,440	51.7	588	31.7	-852	-59.2
Morocco	77	2.8	-	-	-77	-100
Albania	566	20.3	129	7	-437	-77.2
Moldavia	134	4.8	141	7.6	+7	-5.2
Romania	127	4.6	485	26.2	+358	281.9
Ukraine	141	5.1	138	7.4	-3	-2.1
Russia	54	1.9	84	4.5	+30	55.5
Others	246	8.8	288	15.5	+42	17.1
Total	2,785	100	1,853	100	-932	-33.5

Figure 2: Countries of origin and number of victim of trafficking (adults and minors)

Source: <https://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/23515.pdf>

Table No. 5
Estimated figures on the national groups most involved in forced street prostitution (a.v. and % fluctuation)

Country	Estimated figures based on nationality (2000 - 2001)			Estimated figures based on nationality (2004 - 2005)			Estimated figures based on nationality (Spring 2008- Spring 2009)		
	%	Min	Max	%	Min	Max	%	Min	Max
Nigeria	50.6	5,288	6,451	30.9	5,469	7,091	41.2	8,116	10,176
Morocco	2.7	282	344	3.6	637	826	-	-	-
Albania	20.9	2,185	2,665	6.9	1,221	1,583	5.1	1,006	1,260
Moldavia	5.2	543	663	7.5	1,327	1,721	4.3	847	1,062
Romania	4.9	512	625	27.8	4,920	6,380	25.8	5,028	6,295
Ukraine	4.9	512	625	7	1,239	1,606	3.6	709	890
Russia	1.9	198	242	4.4	778	1,009	3.1	610	765
Others	8.9	930	1,135	11.9	2,109	2,734	16.9	3,330	4,174
Total	100	10,450	12,750	100	17,700	22,950	100	19,700	24,700

Figure 3: Estimated figures on the national grounds most involved in forced street prostitution

Source: <https://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/23515.pdf>

In 2016, the IOM estimated that as many as 80% of immigrant women were destined for the prostitution market. Also in 2016, 59% of women who entered Europe illegally of Nigerian nationality were induced to sell themselves in the sex-for-hire market, each earning about 127 thousand euros for the Nigerian mafia for a total of tens of billions of euros (Presidency of the Council, 2016).

In 2020, the pandemic certainly curbed these numbers. Crimes by the Nigerian mafia have obviously dropped in parallel with illegal entries into the country due to port closures and mobilization restrictions. Compared to the 2018-2019 biennium, reports to Nigerian nationals dropped 17% with 9,816 reports compared to 13,000 of the previous year (Polizia di Stato, 2020). In an effort to mitigate losses, during the Covid-19 pandemic, sexual exploitation-related activities also shifted to online or home-based sexual services or off-limits areas (Relazione della Commissione al Parlamento Europeo, 2020).

The lockdown did not affect the drug and narcotics trafficking market, which instead benefited from the crisis to attract even more people into its network and seized the historic opportunity to exploit the difficulties of merchants to take over commercial activities at reduced prices and thus make them perfect tools for laundering money from illegal activities⁵⁵. The police in Trento noted that during

⁵⁵ This is the opinion expressed by Massimo Kulne D'Accordi, jurist, researcher and immigration consultant, born in Nigeria and Italian citizen, is an expert on Nigerian criminal organizations.

this pandemic, drug dealers continued their activities almost undisturbed, despite the travel bans on people aimed at containing Covid19 infections⁵⁶. For drug trafficking, criminal groups have sometimes used pregnant women, hoping they would be less subject to police checks.

As difficult as it is to extricate from the criminal vortex from which trafficking victims are dragged, the victims' lives are not without consequences should they manage to find a way out. As mentioned above, the period in which traffickers exercise their tight control over the victims is a period as long as necessary in order to ensure that the victims remain totally ensnared by this business, at the risk of losing their lives. It is also the time when traffickers ensure that victims do not fall into the sights of law enforcement. Once trafficking victims are caught by the police, two paths open up: the first is that of voluntary repatriation of the trafficking victim to the country of origin. This is a measure that the Ministry of the Interior, through the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration, makes available to all migrants who are unwilling or unable to remain in Italy, offering them the opportunity to return to their country and be supported in the process of reintegration. This process includes a series of assistance measures including support and coverage of expenses necessary to issue the travel document, medical accompaniment to the final destination, economic contribution in goods and services in the country of origin to facilitate reintegration. The second possibility is that of so-called forced repatriation⁵⁷. The Protocol on Trafficking in Persons⁵⁸, in the section dedicated to the return of victims of trafficking, Article 7 states that:

"Each member state shall consider adopting legislative or other appropriate measures to enable victims of trafficking to remain in its territory, either temporarily or permanently, as appropriate. In implementing the provision, each State Party shall give due consideration to humanitarian and charitable factors. According to Article 8 of the Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, in returning persons to their countries of origin, the repatriation of such persons shall be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Protocol. In returning persons to their countries of origin, repatriation shall take place with due regard for the safety of that person and the status of any legal proceedings". As stated in Article 33 of the Geneva Convention, this last instance is known as the principle of *non-refoulement* and is a fundamental principle of international law. However, most victims from Nigeria

⁵⁶ Operazione "Sommo Poeta" of Direzione Distrettuale Antimafia in Trento
<https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/20155df0a55897110369889525>

⁵⁷ National Guarantor of the rights of persons deprived of their liberty - Thematic report on the activity of monitoring the operation of forced repatriation of foreign nationals (January 2019 - June 2021), available at:
<https://www.garantenazionaleprivatiliberta.it/gnpl/resources/cms/documents/d5a4d5aa5e4e7fc7fccff55b1005765.pdf>

⁵⁸ The Protocol is a legally binding instrument adopted by the UN in November 2000 as part of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. It provides for measures of prevention against deportation, instruments for the suppression of trafficking in persons and punishments.

who were repatriated in 2017 were not granted trafficking victim status, let alone political refugee status, being treated instead as irregular immigrants (CNN, 2017).

Whether voluntary or not, for Nigerian trafficking victims their vulnerable status does not dissolve with the return to their country of origin. Victims indeed may be subject to re-trafficking. This occurs, deductively, when the returned victim is trafficked a second time back into the same or similar criminal circles⁵⁹. According to Kokunre A. Eghafona, an expert from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Benin in Benin City, re-trafficking can occur for a variety of different reasons and factors that the expert defines as "impulse". These can include cultural or image factors such as the attitude of the families of trafficking victims or the community to which they belong. Aware of the activities carried out in Europe, the family in fact generally disowns their daughters out of dishonor and shame, while society discriminates against them. Victims in this way voluntarily end up contacting the same traffickers again in an attempt to return to Europe and then escape from the criminals, a fact that almost never happens. The other two reasons are certainly more realistic because they assume that the trafficking victim has no intention of being drawn back into the vicious and violent circle of the Nigerian mafia, but s/he encounters it against her/his willing. This can occur primarily because the Nigerian government is unable to safeguard the lives of victims, offer them refuge, or direct them to protected areas in the country. Many of the repatriated girls, once released by their escorts, are bewildered, very often they have not been able to recover their belongings or their money, they are not registered, but most importantly they are without protection from the authorities. This makes them vulnerable to re-trafficking or being tracked down again by their former exploiters. In fact, it is not unusual that if girls are repatriated or forcibly repatriated before their debt to traffickers is exhausted, they may be harassed by telephone to remind them of their oath or threatened through *voodoo* ritual and *ju-ju*.

According to some estimates by the IOM in 2010, not all victims of re-trafficking were directed to the same criminal activities, some of them were involved in "low-level criminal activities". Some re-trafficking victims appeared to have undergone a turn-over from one criminal type to another, such as from prostitution to begging, but there is not enough data to define whether or not this is a systematic approach. In general, re-trafficking is an area that is still poorly investigated and there is insufficient data from 2010 onwards to present a complete picture of the problem.

⁵⁹ The official definition of "re-trafficking" appears in the Palermo Protocol of the United Nations adopted in Italy in November 2000 together with the other additional protocols to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

What is certain is that as long as there is uncontrolled illegal immigration, the assets of the Nigerian mafia are destined to grow, and for this the local mafias are also responsible.

CHAPTER II

2. Forms of co-partnership with autochthonous mafias

According to the Ministry of the Interior, about half of all immigrants who enter Italy see their asylum applications denied. The asylum data from 2017-2018, registered that the majority of asylum seekers in Italy were of Nigerian nationality and that of the 25,964 Nigerian asylum seekers, only 6,336 had a positive response⁶⁰, which is about 24% of them. Only a relative small part of Nigerian migrants was therefore able to regularize its status and was then destined for transfer to reception centers, while a large part lived in a condition of clandestinity. With reference to territorial distribution, the Nigerian community in Italy, in this same two-year period, was characterized by a higher-than-average presence in the South, 19.4% compared to 14.4% for non-EU citizens⁶¹, most of whom therefore live in a condition of irregularity. Southern Italy is indeed the pole of diffusion of reception centers for immigrants and the development of the integration projects funded by the Ministry of Interior in collaboration with Arci Aps accompanying migrants through the first steps of integration in Campania, Basilicata, Calabria, Puglia, Sicily, Sardinia⁶². Yet, although supportive in the early stages of the integration process, the projects have an expiration date and after three or maximum five months of assistance, the immigrants are considered sufficiently autonomous and are therefore left to continue their independent journey. Many of them do not actually manage to achieve this independence and, especially since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, many families of political refugees have expressed their difficulty in entering the labor market, despite the support they initially received from the operators of the integration projects. In this context of profound uncertainty, the transition from a form of legal assistance to the so-called “criminal welfare”⁶³, characterized by real forms of support by organized crime towards deprived subgroups, is fast.

In the previous chapter, the modalities through which the Nigerian mafia is able to deviously appropriate the lives of victims in shelters have already been reviewed. Those in reception centers are

⁶⁰ Comparison of Asylum Requests submitted Year 2018 / Year 2019 detected by Country of Origin – Ministry of Interior http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/confronto_dati_2018_-_2019_0.pdf

⁶¹ Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali – La Comunità Nigeriana in Italia, Rapporto annuale sulla presenza dei migranti, available at: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/documenti-e-norme/studi-e-statistiche/Documents/Rapporti%20annuali%20sulle%20comunit%C3%A0%20migranti%20in%20Italia%20-%20anno%202020/Nigeria-rapporto-2020.pdf>

⁶² Official website dedicated to Arci's regional projects: <https://www.arci.it/campagna/compasso/>

⁶³ Report 4/2020 – Organismo Permanente di Monitoraggio ed Analisi sul Rischio di Infiltrazione nell'Economia da parte della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso, available at: https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2021-03/report_4_2020.pdf

the categories of victims who, as already mentioned, initially enjoy a regular status and are waiting for a residence permit, but are the most susceptible to a slide into the condition of illegality. This possibility increases proportionally to the time the immigrant has to wait to have his or her status of political refugee and residence permit recognized. The Nigerian mafia takes over exactly at this delicate moment, raising the stakes and offering something far more promising than the assistance of welcoming operators. Between immigrants and Nigerians, therefore, the contact is direct. Sometimes it is necessary, because as already widely discussed, in the case of compatriots, ethnic and cultural proximity is a determining factor: even those who have not been forced to leave their country but have voluntarily decided to undertake the journey to Europe, can be convinced in reception centers to enter the criminal circuits through intimidation and cursing rituals such as *voodoos* and *jujus*. This contact never occurs between immigrants and the local mafia.

If the Albanian criminal groups manage the traffic through the supplying of hulls and the Nigerian mafias mainly manage the exploitation of the immigrant once inserted in the territory, the local mafias are not strictly and directly interested in the business of illegal immigration (Surace, 2001)⁶⁴. Raffaele Rio, president of Demoskopika, explains that the direct business related to migrant trafficking, although lucrative, is “too manifest” for ‘Ndrangheta, Cosa Nostra or Camorra⁶⁵. Rather, the criminal pact takes place afterwards: transnational groups manage the traffic and the reception; local mafias deal with the sorting in Europe of the loads of drugs arriving on boats and the management of contracts and subcontracts using low-cost labor.

Local mafias are thus interested in illegal activities related to illegal immigration such as labor, drugs, arms trafficking, obtaining contracts and subcontracts, but they do not directly handle the flow of migrant trafficking.

This is what emerged from one of the largest investigative operations that the anti-mafia investigative system has ever carried out, the so-called Mafia Capitale or “Operation of the Middle World”⁶⁶, which unmasked the deep collusion existing between local mafias and public administration and exposed the pervasive organized crime infiltration in the migrant reception system⁶⁷. The investigations also

⁶⁴ Dipartimento di Scienze Psichiatriche e Medicina Psicologica – Giuseppina Maria Patrizia Surace, “Immigrazione e Criminalità. Percorsi tra esperienze formative e dati ufficiali”, available at <http://fudepa.org/Biblioteca/recursos/ficheros/BMI2006000381/criminalitat.pdf>

⁶⁵ Rio at BGR Calabria. "There is a pact between the ndrangheta and traffickers". 11th May 2017, available at: <https://demoskopika.it/2017/05/11/rio-a-bgr-calabria-esiste-un-patto-tra-ndrangheta-e-trafficienti/>

⁶⁶ Mafia Capitale, Sentenza primo grado N. Reg. Sent:11730/2017, available at: https://www.archivioantimafia.org/mafia-capitale/mafia_capitale_primo_grado.pdf

⁶⁷ The matter concerned the nomad camp of Castel Romano, consisting of nine reception centers for 491 refugees and asylum seekers located in the municipalities of Anguillara Sabazia, Tivoli, Ciampino and Marcellina. A new order of June 4, 2015 shows that Salvatore Buzzi, a Roman criminal and entrepreneur, would have brought votes to the former mayor of Rome Gianni Alemanno in view of the 2014 European Elections with the help of the 'Ndrina Mancuso, in exchange for running the center.

speak of cases in which the local mafia systematically imposes *pizzo* on the cooperatives that manage the reception centers.

Yet, investigations have shown that occasionally the local *cosche*, if not directly involved in the trafficking, have favored the landings. According to the Semi-annual Report to the Parliament issued by the Anti-Mafia Investigative Directorate (DIA) relative to the first semester of 2020⁶⁸, since the 90's a sodality between Nigerian and Albanian criminality has been constituted so that the coasts of Puglia are used as a point of disembarkation of boats loaded with migrants and narcotics trafficking from the Albanian coast. Following to the rules of this association, the Sacra Corona Unita would have been dedicated to the organization of the logistic aspects of the traffic by providing dinghies, boatmen and docking points, while the Albanian criminality, by now rooted in Italy, would have provided for the supplying and the sorting of drugs in the various drug markets, as well as shipments to Northern Italy and abroad (Familiari, 2021). Concurrently, the Public Prosecutor's Office of Rome, in April 2021, obtained the arrests of 52 members of the Nigerian-Albanian pact, after having ascertained that the Albanian criminality had also made an agreement with the Nigerian criminality for the trafficking of tons of drugs from Eastern Europe⁶⁹ which, arriving in Puglia, would then be transferred to the drug markets of Rome, to be then sorted throughout Italy.

In short, the local mafia must keep on one hand its "grey zone" (Colombo, 2021) intact through the interaction between illegal and legal markets. This is what its strength and pervasiveness is based on. On the other hand, it must keep integer its ancient moral code that would never allow it to undertake a business such as prostitution, which although highly rich, is considered shameful and would harm the image of a mafia that relies on traditional family values and in which the woman is not a bargaining chip, but most often the very pivot of the internal structure of the association (Taub, 2017). With regard to this business, the local mafias offer more of a logistical support by asking the Nigerian mafia the rent of the neighborhood in which to exercise the exploitation of prostitution and then the payment of a fee more or less high depending on the size and centrality of the neighborhood. Often, the presence of Nigerian clans in certain areas serves almost as a lookout for local clans, especially during open-air operations (Contieri, 2019). According to President Rio, this business would yield as

⁶⁸ Relazione del Ministro dell'Interno al Parlamento, DIA, Attività svolta e risultati conseguiti, January – June 2020, available at: <https://direzioneeinvestigativaantimafia.interno.gov.it/semestrali/sem/2020/1sem2020.pdf>

⁶⁹ Osservatorio sulla criminalità organizzata, Università degli Studi di Milano – Quarto rapporto sulle aree settentrionali per la Presidenza della Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sul fenomeno mafioso (2017), available at: <https://cross.unimi.it/wp-content/uploads/Quarto-Rapporto-sulle-aree-settentrionali.pdf>

much as 4 billion euros to local mafiosi alone, simply by allowing Nigerian clans to manage the supply chain⁷⁰.

Drug trafficking linked to human trafficking is certainly the business of greatest interest for local mafias, since it allows to benefit from more extensive international networks. The deputy prosecutor of Palermo, Leonardo Agueci, described the contribution of the Nigerian mafia to drug trafficking as fundamental to the process of commercialization⁷¹. It was amply discussed in the first chapter how, compared with the transport and sorting channels traditionally used by the native mafias, the *modus operandi* adopted by the Nigerians is the epitome of a greater knowledge of transnational networks, but also of the trafficking hubs located in Central Africa. From the partnership with the Nigerians, the local mafias would derive then a double profit: the Nigerian leaders purchase drugs *en masse* from the mafia itself, then pay *pizzo* and the right to do business.

On the occasion of the investigative operation "Showdown" of the Mobile Squad of the Foreign Crime and Prostitution Section⁷², Agueci added that the rules to which the Nigerian mafia must adhere remain stringent. Among these is the absolute prohibition of drug dealing without the consent of the trusted man of the territory and there also seems to be an order from the native mafia not to use firearms, or to use them only if strictly necessary.

Yet, it is assertable that there is a shared *placet* of the local mafias towards the Nigerian mafia who enjoys a certain level of protection from the former. There is also a certain benevolence towards this new entrenched criminal group that the most fearsome bosses have had no difficulty in expressing. In the words of the bosses of Porta Nuova, the Nigerians "must not be touched" as long as they are indispensable to their business⁷³. If peace relations are kept strong, hence, it is own to a clear delimitation of spheres of influence, a fair distribution and subdivision of competencies, but always with a certain penchant for the already solid business of local mafias, and the boost that Nigerian business implicitly gives to local business. As well as a broader transnational investment plan with the possibility of portfolio diversification.

⁷⁰ The study was published by Demoskopika in 2014 and is available at the following link:

<http://www.demoskopika.eu/index.php/it/news/68-ndrangheta-spa-stesso-giro-affari-di-deutsche-bank-e-mcdonald-s>

⁷¹ Antimafia Duemila – “Blitz contro la mafia nigeriana: a Ballarò uno stato parallelo”, 19th November 2016, available at: <https://www.antimafiaduemila.com/home/mafie-news/254-focus/63077-blitz-contro-la-mafia-nigeriana-a-ballaro-uno-stato-parallelo.html>

⁷² Questura di Frosinone - “OPERAZIONE SHOW DOWN” - Spari due mesi fa contro un’auto a Cassino: identificati gli autori del blitz criminale. 14th July 2021, available at:

<https://questure.poliziadistato.it/it/Frosinone/articolo/248160ee96a01af1b114051490>

⁷³ The testimony is that of Alfredo Geraci, a collaborator of justice who was part of the Porta Nuova clan.

In extreme synthesis, what had already been defined by Prosecutor Federico Cafiero de Raho and Giuseppe Lombardo as an "integrated criminal system"⁷⁴, a term used to define the widening of criminal networks and the partnerships between Camorra, Cosa Nostra and 'Ndrangheta for the pursuit of a common goal, has evolved hand in hand with the emergence of new forms of criminal association and with the very extension of transnational networks including new subjects and new forms of illegal activities.

2.1 The Black Axe's dome in Palermo and the association with Cosa Nostra

A police operation, coordinated by the District Anti-Mafia Directorate of Palermo, discovered in 2016 the existence of a formal agreement between the Black Axe and Cosa Nostra, established in 2008⁷⁵. The agreement stipulated that the Italian mafia would put up with the Nigerian one until the latter kept within its "perimeter of belonging". In exchange, Cosa Nostra would have offered the Nigerian clans full protection, especially regarding the business of prostitution and street dealing. It is from this premise that the Nigerian mafia has managed, since 2010, to carve out an autonomous space, according to the DIA⁷⁶ investigations, freeing itself from the authority of the main Italian mafias. The Black Axe was the first supranational and transnational criminal organization, as well as the first Nigerian clan to settle in the Sicilian territory. From the beginning, its most evident ability was to divide its territory into "Zones" and to branch out into districts called "Forums"⁷⁷. Based on the investigations of the Mobile, these small districts have turned into real squares for Nigerian business, from drug dealing, prostitution and extortion, a safe space in which to indiscreetly exercise their activities. Among these, primarily figure the district of Ballarò in Palermo that, in a short time, has earned the name of "Republic of Ballarò", a semi-presidentialism with the Nigerian mafia as the Prime Minister and Cosa Nostra as the President. Cohabitation is always assured.

Why Cosa Nostra has decided to tie itself to the Nigerian business is more out of self-preservation instinct than power cravings. In the 1990s, Cosa Nostra experienced what the National Anti-Mafia

⁷⁴ Giorgio Bongiovanni, "Il sistema criminale integrato esiste", 27 luglio 2017, available at:

<https://www.antimafiaduemila.com/rubriche/giorgio-bongiovanni/66600-il-sistema-criminale-integrato-esiste.html>

⁷⁵ The investigation was named by the Palermo Police, Operation "Black Axe" because it was the first investigation to have discovered the existence and extent of this Nigerian cell in Sicily.

⁷⁶ BBC World Service – The ultra-violent cult that became a global mafia, 13th December 2021, available at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59614595>

⁷⁷ Centro Studi Politici e Strategici Machiavelli – La mafia nigeriana in Italia: elementi per una corretta valutazione – Dossier del Machiavelli n.20, 25 September 2019, available at: <https://www.centromachiavelli.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Dossier-20-La-mafia-nigeriana-in-Italia.pdf>

Directorate defined as a phase of "submersion" of the proceeds of illegal activities into licit activities, greatly extending its gray area (Sergi, 2016)⁷⁸. On the one hand, this activity has greatly restricted Cosa Nostra's portfolio, and on the other, it has limited its international network. The Nigerian mafia can overcome both problems. The business related to migrants gives Cosa Nostra the possibility to diversify and increase profits extending them throughout Europe (Grillone, 2017)⁷⁹, since it could no longer rely only on the proceeds from tenders and on an international drug market now totally managed by the homonymous 'Ndrangheta (*ibidem*).

In Ballarò, the Nigerian clans, and in this case mainly the Black Axe, get their hands dirty and manage the activities that Cosa Nostra is reluctant to exercise. In exchange, Cosa Nostra earns its share by remaining behind the scenes and simply favoring the activities most in contact with the immigrants.

In 2017, the DIA published a report referring to June-December 2016 in which Sicily appeared as the Italian region with the highest number of Nigerians involved in organized crimes such as mafia-like or criminal association⁸⁰. Questor Guido Longo, who has been accompanying Prosecutor Leonardo Agueci in the investigation into the activities of the Nigerian mafia in Palermo, and in particular the criminal dynamics of the Ballarò district, explained that human trafficking is totally managed by the Black Axe and that, after the landings, many immigrants are directly sucked into their criminal network without going through the reception procedures. This priority is reserved especially for women who are immediately handed over to the *maman* who accompanies them through the alleys of Ballarò in dilapidated and abandoned houses that are used as prostitution centers. According to the data of the Quaestor and those of the Palermo Police, 90% of the prostitutes in Palermo are of Nigerian nationality⁸¹.

The latest investigation "Showdown" conducted by the investigators of the Squadra Mobile of the Foreign Criminality and Prostitution section and coordinated by Vice-Premier Silvia Como in April 2020⁸², allowed the investigators to discover that mutual assistance between Cosa Nostra and

⁷⁸ Research paper available at: https://www.academia.edu/27527069/Nigerian_gangs_partner_with_the_Sicilian_mafia

⁷⁹ Università degli Studi di Palermo – Grillone Carmela (2017), "The Slave Coasts. Transnational Sexual Exploitation from Nigeria to Italy. From human trafficking to human rights", Academic year 2016/2017, available at: https://iris.unipa.it/retrieve/handle/10447/270607/841295/TESI%20SU%20IRIS_final7.pdf

⁸⁰ Centro Studi Internazionali, "Le capacità italiane di contrasto alla criminalità organizzata come strumento di stabilizzazione in Africa Occidentale", April 2019, available at: <https://www.cesi-italia.org/contents/Analisi/le%20capacit%C3%A0%20italiane%20di%20contrasto%20alla%20criminalit%C3%A0%20organizzata.pdf>

⁸¹ According to the Report of the House of Representatives Assembly held on July 8, 2020, the Caritas diocesan of Cagliari, through the counter anti-racket, reported that 90 percent of Nigerian girls landed in Italy end up in the circles of prostitution racket, available at: https://www.camera.it/leg18/410?idSeduta=0368&tipo=atti_indirizzo_controllo

⁸² Redazione ANSA – "Mafia nigeriana a Palermo, undici ordinanze di custodia", 4th February 2021, available at: https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cronaca/2021/02/04/mafia-nigeriana-a-palermo-undici-ordinanze-di-custodia_e507da6e-7888-49dd-ada2-d3ae28e388f4.html

Nigerian mafia is possible thanks to a clear subdivision of the borough: via Angelo Musco, Piazza Casa Professa, Piazza Brunaccini and then straight ahead to Piazza Colajanni and back on Via Albergheria are reserved for the business of Nigerians, again mainly Black Axe, but to which have been joined over time also by Maphite, Vikings and Eiye, attracted by the returns of the illicit in Ballarò⁸³. Via Nunzio Nasi and the lower part of the neighborhood belong to the Italians. The activities in the neighborhood are marked by the day/night cycle: during the day Ballarò is a large market, a center of dynamic city activities and apparent daily life. From eleven o'clock onwards, the district is empty and dark, and it is then that sentries lurk at the doors of the run-down houses and the activities of drug dealing and prostitution begin (Costa, 2017)⁸⁴.

The operation "Ballarò", conducted by the carabinieri of the San Lorenzo company between 2019 and 2020, which unmasked the huge business related to prostitution of Nigerian clans⁸⁵, has also allowed to arrive at a second important discovery. To maintain the *placet* of Cosa Nostra on the Nigerian business, contributes not only a careful division of areas, but also a very precise division of products. In the international drug trade, the Nigerian mafia is responsible for the traffic of heroin and the Cosa Nostra for that of cocaine. First, because the cocaine trade is favored by the balance of supply and demand in the market, while the heroin trade is a less profitable business. Secondly, because the sale of heroin concerns the lower and more turbulent segments of the consumers that also include immigrants and gangs with whom the Nigerian mafia deals more comfortably, while cocaine is sold in the well-off quarters of society and remains an exclusive business of Cosa Nostra (Gratteri, 2015). This is a further attempt by the Italian mafia to free itself from a type of business considered "filthy". It should also be added that the absolute predominance of Cosa Nostra on the international traffic of heroin, which in the past had assumed a monopolistic physiognomy, has progressively weakened to the point of assuming the features of a mere "profit-sharing"⁸⁶, as mentioned above, leaving space above all to the 'Ndrangheta and to adjacent criminal groups in the real management of the business.

⁸³ Ufficio Stampa Ministero dell'Interno – Palermo: colpita la mafia nigeriana, 8 arresti, 04/02/2021, available at: <https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/38601bf09502e3a686537017>

⁸⁴ Università di Bologna – Costa, Victor Braga (2017) "Dalla Nigeria in Italia: rapporti criminologici fra il fenomeno migratorio e la Mafia Nigeriana a Palermo", Bologna 2017, available at:

https://www.academia.edu/39751242/Dalla_Nigeria_in_Italia_rapporti_criminologici_fra_il_fenomeno_migratorio_e_la_Mafia_Nigeriana_a_Palermo

⁸⁵ Among the various convicts also the head of the Italian base of the organization, called "Head of the Zone", first formal charge of the national association, supreme summit of the group, captured in Padua, in constant contact with the Nigerian summit and with the most authoritative members of the other national, European and worldwide articulations.

⁸⁶ Parlamento Italiano, Commissione Parlamentare Antimafia – "Il ruolo delle mafie italiane nel narcotraffico", available at: <https://web.camera.it/bicamerale/leg15/commbicantimafia/documentazionetematica/31/116/schedabase.asp>

The division is also logical from an organizational and logistical standpoint. In fact, since 2005 the heroin trafficking routes have remained almost unchanged. Most of the production arrives in Europe via Turkey and through the Balkan countries, which would explain the close ties between the Italian mafia and the Nigerian mafia and the Albanians. But one of the most used trafficking routes also includes direct passage from South Asian countries such as Malaysia to Central African countries, or from Pakistan to West African countries. From here, heroin is sorted and follows the route described in the previous chapter, intersecting with the migrant routes.

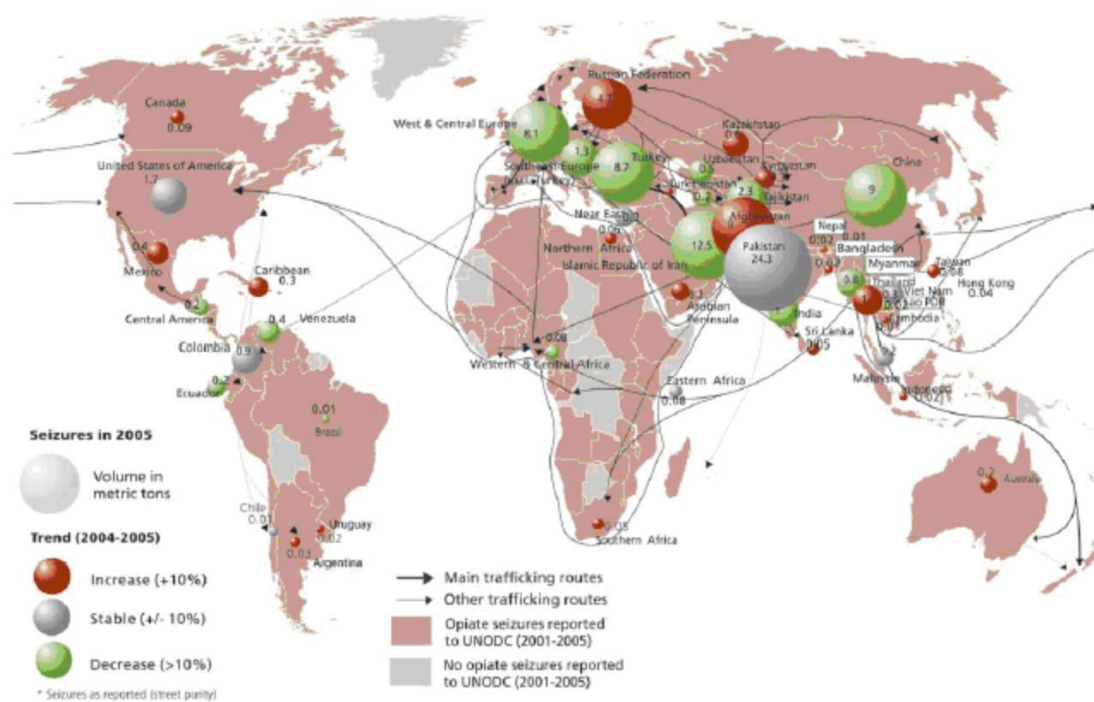


Figure 4: Main trafficking routes of narcotics

Source: World Drug Report 2007 <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-2007.html>

Exemplary were the recent investigations of the Operation "Golden Eggs"⁸⁷, part of the investigations of the Gup of Palermo on the max international drug trafficking since 2011, which traced the journey of some ovulators, both men and women, who were forced to swallow small amounts of heroin and were forcibly transported from Nigeria to Palermo where the drugs were then sorted in the main

⁸⁷ Ufficio Stampa Ministero dell'Interno – Droga: Palermo capolinea del "Golden Eggs", 30/09/2011, available at: <https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/droga--palermo-capolinea-del--golden-eggs>

districts of the city including Zen, Ballarò and Vucciria, under the protective wings of Cosa Nostra. The operation led to a total of 67 arrests between Palermo's clans and Nigerians.

The Sicilians, on the other hand, continue to get their supplies from the clients *par excellence*, the Colombians, maintaining the historical partnership and using the ancient channel of direct transportation of cocaine from Colombia to Sicily⁸⁸. As anticipated in the previous section, if the Nigerian mafia is also interested in dealing or transporting cocaine, Cosa Nostra obliges clans to buy it from the Sicilians and then to pay *pizzo* to conduct this business.

Essentially, the Nigerian ascent in Sicily does not translate into a decline of Cosa Nostra which, although financially weakened mainly due to the replacement in drug trafficking by 'Ndrangheta and foreign mafias, still maintains a monopoly on illicit activities in the territory. Even in the business considered to be the exclusive competence of the Nigerian clans that have settled in Palermo, Cosa Nostra has not descended to an equal relationship but still maintains its superiority. This is the only way in which Cosa Nostra can exploit the resources deriving from the thousands of women and men who every year land on Lampedusa and are then sorted in the various Sicilian reception centers. The strategy is to get rich through the trafficking of migrants without coming into direct contact with the victims, leaving the dirty work to the Black Axe and other groups established in the territory and eventually offering logistical support and protection. From Operation Boga, carried out by the Palermitan Fiamme Gialle on the whole Sicilian territory and beyond, it emerged that in 2016 the Black Axe would have recruited Nigerian girls at the reception center Villa Sikanìa in Catania to deliver them to the Head of the association with the task of transporting them from Sicily to Reggio Calabria. Based on the investigations, once again the role of Cosa Nostra would have been detectable in the protection offered to the Head of the association during the transport of the victims, leaving the rest of the traffic management in the hands of the Nigerians.

⁸⁸ Commissione Parlamentare Antimafia – Il ruolo delle mafie italiane nel narcotraffico, available at: <https://web.camera.it/bicamerale/leg15/commbicantimafia/documentazionetematica/31/116/schedabase.asp>

2.2 The Black Axe-Casalesis' business in Castel Volturno

Based on the processing of ISTAT data for the year 2019⁸⁹, foreigners residing in the municipality of Castel Volturno are 3,855 equal to approximately 15% of the resident population. Of this number, most come from Africa with a clear majority of foreigners of Nigerian nationality who, indeed, make up 29.3% of all foreigners in the area.

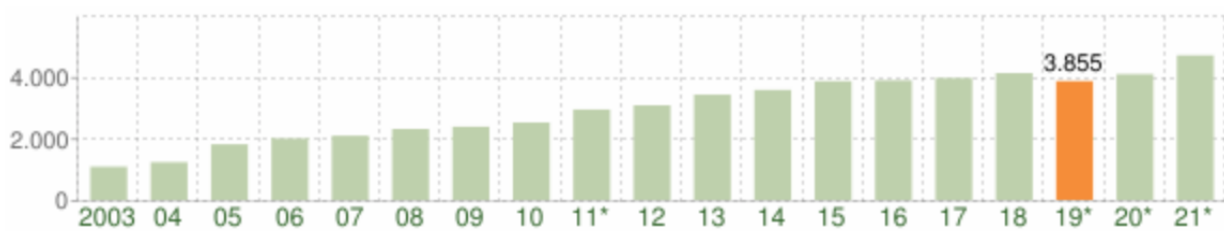


Figure 5: Percentage of foreigners residing in Castel Volturno in 2019

Source: ISTAT 2019 <http://dati.istat.it>

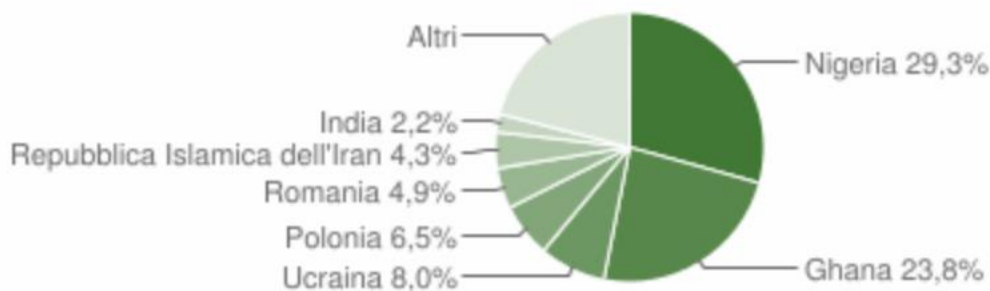


Figure 6: Percentage of Nigerians in the category of foreigners residing in Castel Volturno in 2019

Source: ISTAT 2019 <http://dati.istat.it>

What strikes more than this small town located in the province of Caserta, is its urban structure that is the result of a wild speculation started in the 70s (Mosca, 2012). Today, what was once considered a favorite destination of the Domitian coast for weddings and vacations, counts more than 40 thousand abusive houses. Crumbling neighborhoods and out of compliance that have become, especially since

⁸⁹ ISTAT Statistiche Report – Cittadini non comunitari in Italia | Anni 2019-2020, available at: https://www.istat.it/it/files/2020/10/REPORT_CITTADINI_NON_COMUNITARI_2019.pdf

2010, the residences of illegal immigrants. An example of this is the episode of Parco Lagani (Petrarca, 2016)⁹⁰, initially an affluent neighborhood of villas, transformed over the years into a ghetto of vacant houses that illegal immigrants had bought at low market prices. This triggered, as early as 2008, a clash between reception centers and local authorities, who accused the former of attracting immigrants to the municipality and encouraging the spread of illegal immigration. Many reception centers were closed the same year, including the largest center of Castel Volturno, Centro Fernandes, which unleashed an immediate reaction of the immigrant community that protested along the entire Domitian Road.

A good part of the migrants who arrive in Castel Volturno are the ones who enter Italy through the Mediterranean routes crossing Libya and ending up in Lampedusa. Some of these are immediately destined to Castel Volturno already during their stay in the centers of identification and expulsion (CIE) (Caruso, 2014)⁹¹. After the closure of the Lampedusa CPSA (Savino, 2017)⁹², Castel Volturno has thus become the major center of attraction for immigrants from Africa. Data from the Ismu Foundation⁹³ suggest that Castel Volturno is close to becoming the first town with a black majority, most of whom do not obtain a residence permit with around 20.000 abusive individuals. Even some law enforcement agencies describe the municipality as a safe "non-place" for immigrants: these immigrants, who most often land on the Italian coasts without documents, know that in Castel Volturno they will not be subjected to strict controls, they risk less deportation, but because of their illegal status they are forced to live in conditions at the limit of survival. Here the illegal immigrants find a refuge, but are undoubtedly more exposed to the sights of organized crime.

⁹⁰ Research paper available at: <https://www.ageiweb.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/1.-DAscenzo-Disfunzioni-migratorie.-Africani-di-Castel-Volturno-2016.pdf>

⁹¹ Research Paper available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Francesco-Caruso-3/publication/309195246_La_porta_socchiusa_tra_l'Africa_Nera_e_la_Fortezza_Europa_l'hub_rururbano_di_Castel_Volturno/links/5804cea708aee314f68e053a/La-porta-socchiusa-tra-l'Africa-Nera-e-la-Fortezza-Europa-lhub-rururbano-di-Castel-Volturno.pdf

⁹² Research paper available at: https://d1wqtxts1x7le7.cloudfront.net/53143908/Savino_Volume_crisi_migratoria_Indici_e_Introduzione_Aprile_2017_-with-cover-page-v2.pdf?Expires=1650446918&Signature=IkHQDXEOeD~P6fje6kKUnCfWi6T0VrokuzoCPxjPMHGj0Wi~76DOtXCgJ6jnVusKrA-7bmeGN3Yw215F7xD7pqTGfGDihE9J4h5-jQtvMC6maqwyCkpbBYWplW4Ky8JNB7mCkAVmCJRDIyciayu32MKVrdbIKysr6zdNfS2eJFPC-PEVqpIRqsm3X4-pnwZaoCHqgeXXmSti88l-Rw8NeiP9aB6hOXod0f1eu5JZrYmq9mUZhVNNH5RtNUUF64Uje2lpT5UkZibPGqTYNemFbo0Oslhzw6EXt3RMPvCf7gHZ-QUeu18MHtJWLnHabs8yoakNkAVJRbq9QNUHwh~Gfw_&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA

⁹³ International Journal of Migration Studies – Laura Zanfrini, “Un mare di Speranza. Migranti forzati alle porte dell’Europa”, Atti della VII edizione della Summer School “Mobilità umana e giustizia globale”, Lampedusa (AG), 18-21 luglio 2016, available at: <https://www.ismu.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Studi-Emigrazione-n.-205.pdf>

In spite of the frequent actions of contrast, Castel Volturno hosts the deepest rooting and operativity of the main consortia in the cartel of Casalesi at the top of which are the families Schiavone, Zagaria and Bidognetti who try to preserve control of the territory by resorting to new ways of action for the management of typical illegal activities including extortion, usury, drug trafficking, gambling and illegal betting (Viella, 2012). Like Cosa Nostra, at the beginning of the new millennium, it has also experienced a phase of drainage of the huge resources of the legal economy, succeeding in infiltrating contracts, subcontracts and obtaining public offices functional to the criminal business.

Already in the first report of the DIA on the Nigerian mafia in 2003⁹⁴, it was stated that next to the Casalesi, for the first time in Italy a new mafia had arisen that not only flanked the one traditionally operating in the territory, but more than ever coexisted with it, without being subordinate or secondary. On the contrary, after the downsizing of one of the most ruthless clans in the Caserta area, that of the Bidognetti, the maneuvering space available to the Nigerian mafia to cover the holes in the illicit business has greatly expanded (Flaccovio, 2019), allowing the Black Axe, and Eiyé above all, to take possession of the business of heroin dealing.

Since the 1990s, Nigerians have settled along the Domitian coastline, beginning to build their business as street pushers. They have never bothered Camorra, who did not consider Nigerians as potential competitors. In fact, apart from rare exceptional episodes, among which the most striking is the massacre of Pescopagano already mentioned in the first chapter, there has always been a certain exchange of favors between the two criminal organizations (Caretta, 2015). From the first years of 2000 the Camorra has begun to form the first partnerships with the Nigerian mafia asking the members of the clans to act as sentinels to have in exchange the possibility to sell a certain quantity of drugs directly to the consumer (Becucci, 2016). Over time then, the good intentions of the Camorra towards their new colleagues became more and more apparent. In August of 2008, the Fernandes Center became the protagonist of one of the most heinous Camorra blows against a group of different ethnicities. Since May of the same year, the center had hosted about 7000 immigrants, most of whom came from Nigeria (Mosca, 2012) and since then the center had not remained undisturbed by frequent infiltrations by members of the Nigerian clans for the recruitment of ovulators and women destined for the sex-for-hire market. On August 28th, in what was later mediated as the "San Gennaro massacre" (Baratto, 2008), the Camorra fired Kalashnikov shots at the headquarters of the Nigerian Association, with the intent of killing Teddy Egonwman, interpreter for the Police. Egonwman was fighting in the front line for the protection of Nigerian compatriots in Castel Volturno, most of whom he said had

⁹⁴ Camera dei Deputati XVIII Legislatura – Focus: Criminalità nigeriana in Italia, Doc. LXXIV n.3, 2nd semester 2018, available at: https://www.camera.it/dati/leg18/lavori/documentiparlamentari/indiceetesti/074/003_RS/00000034.pdf

fallen into the vicious circle of Nigerian racketeers cooperating with the Casalesi clan. With this atrocious act, the Camorra first made clear the relationship between Casalesi and Nigerian bosses, then pointed out that any interference by police and collaborators to stop the Nigerian business related to trafficking would be severely punished.

Unlike Cosa Nostra, Camorra is not afraid to take the field and promises migrants a home and a decent job as long as they commit to honoring the debt. The author Mario Luise reveals in his book that the role of Camorra in aiding immigration was of real relevance only long before the Nigerian Mafia settled in the territory, that is, in the 1960's, the year in which the building boom required low-cost labor in construction (Louise, 2001). The trafficking of non-EU workers for this purpose would have been managed by the Camorra (*ibidem*). In fact, even today this is an area of full competence of the local mafia that handles the exploitation of the immigrant masses in the construction sector or in street trading, in agriculture. Gianluca Castaldi, coordinator of the immigration area of Caritas of Caserta, explained that the Camorra exercises a form of *caporalato* along the entire Domitian area recruiting in the squares and in the reception centers, the men destined to black labor in the yards and in the vast fields dedicated to agriculture⁹⁵. According to Castaldi⁹⁶, unlike what happens in other cities of Southern Italy, in Castel Volturno there are no harvesting seasons, the presence of exploited labor is therefore permanent. The laborers work 15 hours a day every day and are paid no more than 25 euros⁹⁷. The CGIL found that more than 50% of the farms in Castel Volturno are illegal and that more than 30% of the workforce is irregular⁹⁸. Of course, the greater the mass of illegal immigrants living in the shadows in the illegal apartments of Castel Volturno, the greater the possibility that this percentage will increase.

The proceeds from the exploitation of migrants, arrive in the hands of the Camorra also thanks to begging and drug dealing that takes place in the squares or in the same houses perched and abandoned of the Domitian coast, even though these deals are not run directly by the Camorra. In 2000 the police station of the State Police of Castel Volturno, carried out the informative "Restore Freedom"⁹⁹, an

⁹⁵ Relazione 2217 E 2119-A, Gatti 22/07/2016 [Ddl caporalato] Disposizioni in materia di contrasto ai fenomeni del lavoro nero e dello sfruttamento del lavoro in agricoltura approvato con il nuovo titolo "Disposizioni in materia di contrasto ai fenomeni del lavoro nero, dello sfruttamento del lavoro in agricoltura e di riallineamento retributivo nel settore agricolo", available at: <https://parlamento17.openpolis.it/atto/documento/id/256034>

⁹⁶ "Kalifoo ground" Castel Volturno – Viaggio dentro Gomorra: il racconto della strage è su YouTube (video) L.M. - 30 Maggio 2011

⁹⁷ Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali – Protocollo Quadro OIM-INL 12/03/2021, available at: <https://www.ispettorato.gov.it/it-it/notizie/Pagine/-Protocollo-Quadro-OIM-INL.aspx>

⁹⁸ Osservatorio Placido Rizzotto FLAI-CGIL – Bilongo, Carchedi (2020) "Agromafie e caporalato" V Rapporto, available at: <https://cgiltoscana.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Agromafie-e-caporalato-quinto-rapporto.pdf>

⁹⁹ Camera dei Deputati XVIII Legislatura – Focus: Criminalità nigeriana in Italia, Doc. LXXIV n.3, 2nd semester 2018, available at: https://www.camera.it/_dati/leg18/lavori/documentiparlamentari/indiceetesti/074/003_RS/00000034.pdf

operation that began to document the presence of the Nigerian mafia in Italy, several years before the official investigations on Nigerian criminality in Turin were started. In 2008, magistrate Giovanni Conzo coordinated Operation Viola against the African mafia and, with the cooperation of the District Anti-Mafia Directorate of Naples, concluded that the Nigerian mafia is on the rise in the Castel Volturno criminal scene in terms of international drug trafficking, human trafficking and enslavement. Among the latter crimes, enslavement in relation to forced prostitution is the most profitable business for the Nigerian Mafia in Castel Volturno. The gain from the prostitution of Nigerian girls alone is 150 million a year, a share that is also taken by the Camorra which, although not directly involved in the management of the sex-for-hire market, like Cosa Nostra, provides the territories to exercise this profitable business in exchange for a "rent" on the streets.

The unmasking of this association between Camorra and Nigerian clans was then possible during Operation Viola¹⁰⁰, carried out not only in Italy, but simultaneously with Colombia, Venezuela, Australia, France, and Spain. It was not easy to circumscribe this network of traffics that could extend, according to the ROS, even beyond Holland, Spain and France, the three European countries where the presence of both the Nigerian mafia and the Camorra is preponderant.

The transnational link is most evident in drug trafficking. Here the relationship between the Camorra and the Black Mafia is peer-to-peer (Angeli, 2013). The Nigerian mafia of Castel Volturno has had the ability to create the same networks as the 'ndrine in a very short time and to earn a place all on even in the traffic of cocaine, where in Sicily cocaine remained a business mainly managed by Cosa Nostra. The cocaine transported and sold throughout Europe is theirs, bought directly from the Colombians and not from the local mafia. In the interceptions advanced by Conzo in 2011, however, it almost seems that the relationship has been reversed: when the camorristas have supply problems or have experienced a seizure of cargo, they turn to the black namesakes to buy some batches of drugs at market price, or in some cases, favorable prices (Nazzaro, 2019).

What is most tragic is drawn from this spiral of degradation and violence is more than ever a matter of pure social racism, but sometimes also judicial. Carmelo Burgio, commander of the Carabinieri in the province of Caserta described Castel Volturno as a legal black hole, in that the effectiveness and full applicability of the law are made almost impossible by the so-called "ethnic bias": the criminal networks are so dense that it is not easy to distinguish who is the victim and who is the perpetrator of the illegal activities. The community of Castel Volturno as well as its police forces, tend to place

¹⁰⁰ Ministero dell'Interno – “Mafia nigeriana: 66 arresti nell’Operazione Viola”, 15/01/2008, available at: <https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/mafia-nigeriana--66-arresti-nell--operazione-viola>

individuals of the same ethnicity all in the same criminal category, not allowing victims of illegal business to free themselves from liability for the wrongdoing.

In terms of the distribution of presences, what happens in this area is a process known in the field of migration studies as "heterolocalism", an intrametropolitan phenomenon characterized by the dispersion of immigrants from the center of large cities to peripheral areas (Zelinsky, 1998). Among the main causes of this phenomenon are the industrial decline of the advanced countries, the lack of employment and the prohibitive prices of housing. Castel Volturno presents the totality of these factors (Petrarca, 2016). This *sui generis situation* of Castel Volturno, according to Giuseppe Borrelli, the current assistant prosecutor of the Anti-Mafia District Directorate of Naples, is fed by the lack of aggregation structures that would allow foreigners to enter a local circuit, but above all a legal system. Castel Volturno represents the emblem of the flaws of this system, not just failing to prevent immigration, but at the same time placing barriers to the regularization of immigration which created a network of "invisibles" that on the one hand are removed from any control, on the other are forced to engage in all kinds of illegality. According to Luca Gino Iannotti, Commander of the Carabinieri Company of Mondragone, even the town planning of Castel Volturno is a catalyst for crime: the communication between the Camorra and the Nigerian Mafia is facilitated by the presence of narrow alleys, wrecks of houses where drug dealing, prostitution and the lynching of those who resist and try to escape are conducted. Many of these, despite the presence of tenants, are used as real connection houses. The lack of public lighting makes possible even the most obvious outdoor operations. In addition, it is particularly impressive, from what has emerged from the investigations of the Caserta Police, that these activities and mainly the drug dealing or prostitution of young Nigerian women, take place a few meters from Caritas of Castel Volturno. However, organizations cannot be asked to replace, on their own, the organs of the State that have abandoned Castel Volturno for many years now.

2.3 The partition of the traffic routes between Maphite and 'Ndrangheta

The commander of the III department of the ROS of the Carabinieri, Rubino Tomassetti, held in the session of October 12, 2015 the following statement: "there are two criminal organizations in the world stronger from the point of view of the drug trafficking: the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta and the Nigerian organizations. All the capitals acquired through drug trafficking are reused in the trafficking of human beings, in aiding illegal immigration and in laundering, technically speaking, that is in the

purchase of investments"¹⁰¹. The 'Ndrangheta is the most deeply rooted mafia in the national territory, but also the one that has managed to internationalize first and best, expanding its criminal networks around the world. According to a Demoskopika survey of 2014¹⁰², it is the only mafia present in all five continents of the world and has a global turnover of 53 billion euros. The 'ndrine have a monopoly on international drug trafficking, both heroin and cocaine, and are the top of the class also in most of the illegal activities co-managed by other local mafias, such as illegal waste trafficking, extortion, usury, embezzlement, gambling. This analysis therefore starts from the assumption that the Nigerian mafia, at least currently, can in no way replace the currently most powerful mafia in Italy. Nor, unlike Cosa Nostra, does the 'Ndrangheta need the support of a foreign mafia to act as the collider between local and international affairs. Certainly, an osmotic process between the two mafias has taken place in the way the Nigerian clans have organized themselves in the territory drawing from their Calabrian namesakes a model of inspiration: the Third Section of the Court of Turin, in the first Italian sentence to judge the Nigerian one as a mafia-type association, had compared the Maphite clan involved in the trial as a "classic fresco of a 'ndrina" both in methods and structure¹⁰³.

The association between these two mafias has been favored rather by the fact that the chain of migrants trafficking has as its terminal in Calabria places already inserted in the routes of drug trafficking (Centorrino, 2013). Gioia Tauro, town in the province of Reggio Calabria, is recognized as the largest transshipment terminal in Italy and one of the most important container traffic hubs in the Mediterranean basin¹⁰⁴. Every day, tons and tons of cocaine pass through the port of Gioia Tauro and are transported hidden in container ships from South America that cross the Atlantic to reach the port of Calabria from which they are then sorted throughout Europe. Gioia Tauro is, thus, the main entrance for cocaine destined for Europe (Nicaso, 2019). In an interview with Al Jazeera, Vincenzo Caruso, Colonel of the Guardia di Finanza in charge of supervising the security of the Port, asserted that 90% of the cocaine that passes through the port of Gioia Tauro is pure cocaine from South

¹⁰¹ Camera dei Deputati XVII Legislatura – On. Rosy Bindi, “Commissione Parlamentare di inchiesta sul fenomeno delle mafie straniere e sulle altre associazioni criminali, anche straniere” - Relazione conclusiva approvata dalla Commissione nella seduta del 7 febbraio 2018, available at:

https://i2.res.24o.it/pdf2010/Editrice/ILSOLE24ORE/QUOTIDIANO_ENTI_LOCALI_PA/Online/_Oggetti_Correlati/Documenti/2018/03/27/La_relazione.pdf?uuiid=fe6c3fea-3109-11e8-8398-6275159a4914

¹⁰² Demoskopika – ‘Ndrangheta spa, stesso giro aggari di Deutsche Bank e McDonald’s, 26th March 2014, available at: <https://demoskopika.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CS-Ndrangheta-Spa.pdf>

¹⁰³ The sentence issued by the GUP at the Court of Turin on October 9, 2007 (Cass. Sez. L.m. 16353 of 01/10/2014) and referring to OCCC n.21741 /03 RGNR-28434/03 RGGIP of March 22, 2006, recognized the Maphite clan as a mafia-type association with a variable structure: some clans, especially those established in Northern Italy, would maintain the traditional top-down structure inherited from the internal organization of roles within the cult; others, established instead in Southern Italy, have assumed methods and internal structure very similar to those of the Calabrian 'ndrine. The latter are not characterized by a pyramidal internal structure, but by horizontal relationships due to family ties between the members who constitute them.

¹⁰⁴ Autorità di Sistema Portuale dei Mari Tirreno Meridionale e Ionio, official website: <https://www.portodigioiatauro.it>

America and that about 80% of this¹⁰⁵ is sold by ‘Ndrangheta. On January 27, the Guardia di Finanza of Reggio Calabria and the Customs Service seized 72 kilos of cocaine hidden in a container carrying fuel gas and in another containing sacks of vegetables¹⁰⁶. And on February 6, in synergy with the Customs Agency, another 55 kilos of pure cocaine divided into 51 bricks were blocked, hidden in a container arriving from Argentina¹⁰⁷. At the beginning of the year 2022 three tons of cocaine were found by the Provincial Command of Reggio Calabria and the Customs office of Gioia Tauro for a total of one billion euros ended up directly in the pockets of organized crime¹⁰⁸.

The cooperation between anti-drug police, financial guards and anti-crime police forces in synergy with international agencies such as Europol are not enough to counter this massive phenomenon which, to have a pragmatic implication, should translate into a control of every single container ship, which would mean blocking or slowing down transport in the main port of Europe¹⁰⁹.

The undisputed monopoly of the Calabrian clans on the most important port of sale of drugs, leaves little room for a fair division of responsibilities and turnover. In fact, the drug trafficking pact leaves the Nigerians to manage the drugs only and exclusively on the routes under their jurisdiction, which correspond to the routes used for the trafficking of illegal immigrants, that is, the routes from West/Central Africa to Italy. Some of the ‘Ndrangheta’s narcotics consignments coming from South America are stored in Africa, where the Nigerian clans have the duty to monitor them, but the prohibition to sell them¹¹⁰.

The port of Gioia Tauro is located in the province of Reggio Calabria, which since 2017 has turned into the first non-Sicilian port for the landing of immigrants (Minniti, 2019)¹¹¹. During the same year, according to AGI estimates¹¹², there were 5,606 landings in Reggio Calabria and the element considered interesting in comparison with landings in previous years, was a clear predominance of

¹⁰⁵ AlJazeera – Alberto Mucci, “Smuggling tonnes of cocaine through an Italian port”, 10th June 2015, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2015/6/10/smuggling-tonnes-of-cocaine-through-an-italian-port>

¹⁰⁶ This information is contained in the Finance Guard Annual Report for the Year 2015, Ente Editoriale per il Corpo della Guardia di Finanza Viale XXI Aprile, 51 - 00162 Roma

¹⁰⁷ Guardia di Finanza Press Office, Reggio Calabria Provincial Command – Progetto I-Can (Interpol Cooperation Against ‘ndrangheta), November 24, 2020, report available at: <https://www.gdf.gov.it/stampa/ultime-notizie/anno-2020/novembre/progetto-i2013can-interpol-cooperation-against-2018ndrangheta>

¹⁰⁸ Guardia di Finanza Press Office, Reggio Calabria Provincial Command - Record seizure of cocaine the port of Gioia Tauro, November 14, 2019, report available on: <https://www.gdf.gov.it/stampa/ultime-notizie/anno-2019/novembre/sequestro-record-di-cocaina-al-porto-di-gioia-tauro>

¹⁰⁹ Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Antidroga Annual Report 2021 – Unprecedented cocaine seizures carried out by the law enforcement agencies, 8th October 2021, available at: https://antidroga.interno.gov.it/en/author/wp_7532387/

¹¹⁰ Camorra e ‘Ndrangheta soci in affari. L'intervista ad Antonio Nicaso: dal suo libro è nata Bad Blood, in antimafiaduemila.com, 5 January 2019.

¹¹¹ https://i2.res.24o.it/pdf2010/Editrice/ILSOLE24ORE/QUOTIDIANO_ENTI_LOCALI_PA/Online/Oggetti_Correlati/Documenti/2018/03/27/La_relazione.pdf?uuid=fe6c3fea-3109-11e8-8398-6275159a4914

¹¹² AGI - Vincenzo Castellano, “La mappa dei porti dove sbarcano i migranti”, 01/07/2017 https://www.agi.it/cronaca/mappa_sbarchi_migranti_porti-1918365/news/2017-07-01/

African immigrants rather than Kurds or Sinhalese. Based on the investigative units of Reggio Calabria, this data could suggest the opening of a new route in the flow of illegal migration to facilitate new revenue for organized crime. Since their arrival in Calabria, at the beginning of the year 2000, the Nigerian mafia has been attracting compatriots who landed between Reggio Calabria, Vibo Valentia and Palmi, to exercise the business of prostitution of young Nigerian women. According to Giovanni Bombardieri, prosecutor of the city of Reggio Calabria, who led in 2014 the intense investigations on the Nigerian presence in the Calabria that led to the arrest of Favour Obazelu boss of the Vikings, this phenomenon is new for the police forces operating on the Strait¹¹³. Prior to 2014, the DDA of Reggio Calabria had never investigated similar matters unaware that the presence of a Nigerian criminal network was growing within the city. A business in which no trace of the ‘Ndrangheta was found, which, like other mafias, considers the favoring of prostitution a scabrous activity. In fact, it was detected that there is a huge discrepancy between the turnover obtained by the Nigerians through the management of street prostitution and that of the ‘Ndrangheta, which, although it earns huge amounts of money by charging the traditional tax for renting the streets to foreign clans (370 million euros), is not however comparable to the revenue that the Nigerians earn directly through the debt collection of young escorts, which is around one billion euros.

‘Ndrangheta makes money from immigration in every single step other than prostitution, but above all on the most fruitful activity permitting to exploit the large number of cultivable hectares of the plain of Gioia Tauro, the *caporalato*. The clans make their money from the land they often own, from the trucks and the percentage they demand on the fruit they pick and the handling of the boxes of fruits and vegetables that go to the markets in the big cities (Ciconte, 2012)¹¹⁴. Some investigations currently in progress documented a link between the landings organized on the coasts of Calabria and the placement of immigrants in fruit and vegetable markets, taking place after the phase spent in reception centers. Quoting the words of Paolo Cassani from the non-profit organization Cooperativa Lotta Contro l’Emarginazione, there are immigrants who are already working and who are used as bait to recruit other unfortunate compatriots or cases in which, once out of the centers, these people already have in their pockets phone numbers ready to call to be recruited in the cooperatives of

¹¹³ Redazione Ansa – “Voodoo per farl a prostitute, arrestato boss mafia nigeriana”, 25th February 2022, available at: https://www.ansa.it/calabria/notizie/2022/02/25/voodoo-per-farla-prostitute-arrestato-boss-mafia-nigeriana_54b97318-9655-4ceb-ad33-d43b9313fle5.html

¹¹⁴ For years, the "caporalato" (forced labour) practiced in the Gioia Tauro Plain has fed the supply of products to the Milan Ortomercato. In March 2021, the military with the support of the local police and the multi-agency task force 'Alt caporalato' (composed of officials of the Territorial Labour Inspectorate of Milan-Lodi and cultural mediators of the International Organization for Migration) have intervened in the spaces of the fruit and vegetable market as part of a series of initiatives aimed at the protection of legality in the workplace and the fight against caporalato and illegal immigration.

logistics and portage¹¹⁵. This activity reaches its maximum terms in the Plain of Gioia Tauro and especially in the town of Rosarno of which the former mayor speaks highlighting the growth of an agricultural sector largely influenced by the illegal activity of 'ndrine that have alternated over the years and often also clashed for the hegemony on territories of common influence.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the workers already exploited by the 'Ndrangheta in the cultivated lands of the Gioia Tauro plain have been replaced by immigrant laborers who represent a far greater source of profit for the local mafia than laborers from the south (Leogrande, 2013)¹¹⁶. As mentioned previously, African immigrants live in a condition of clandestinity both upon arrival, since they are not in possession of identity documents, and during their subsequent stay in Calabria since it is the 'ndrine that provide them with false documents to permeate their illegal status. Generally, to a pay already insufficient to ensure the minimum welfare (reiterating about 20 euros per working day for twelve hours of work per day), are subtracted the transport costs that the 'Ndrangheta must support for the transfer of illegal laborers from the port of disembarkation, in the case of Calabria one of the ports already mentioned between Palmi, Reggio Calabria to Vibo Valentia, to the Plain of Gioia Tauro and Rosarno (Dedalus, 2012). Denouncing this exploitation is not even an option for the slaves of the *caporalato*, who in doing so would run the risk of revealing their illegal status. Therefore, illegal immigrants are subjected to the hyper-oppression exerted on them by the 'ndranghetist corporals, very often assisted by so-called "ethnic corporals" or corporals of the same ethnic group as the exploited workers¹¹⁷. In February 2003, the DDA of Reggio Calabria has defined, through the operation Lion, that the 'ndrangheta directly paid the escorts and the boatmen to transport masses of migrants in Calabria and to exploit the labor through *caporalato*. Therefore, the 'Ndrangheta was not only responsible for the exploitation of the migrants who arrived in the territory, but it also interfered directly in their transport, encouraging smuggling (Palmer, 2019). The 'Ndrangheta then has a clear role in the logistics of arrivals, exercising a capillary control of the coasts both on the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian sides.

This situation has caused discomfort and anger to both the African community and the local community of Rosarno, which is experiencing the degradation of the city. It was indeed the setting for what has been described as a real civil war lasting two days between the African community and

¹¹⁵ Università degli Studi di Firenze – Paolo Cassani, “Sfruttamento lavorativo e stranieri: prove di dialogo interdisciplinare”, 19th December 2014, available at: <https://www.dsg.univr.it/documenti/Iniziativa/dall/dall131337.pdf>

¹¹⁶ Alessandro Leogrande, Il caporalato e le nuove schiavitù, in "Parolechiave" 1/2016, pp. 103-108, doi: 10.7377/84339

¹¹⁷ Antonio Commisotto, “Aspetti socio-criminologici dell’immigrazione: il caso di Rosarno”, 5th May 2018, available at: https://www.meltingpot.org/app/uploads/2018/05/tesi_definitiva.pdf

the local community. On the afternoon of January 7, 2010, two laborers of African origin were shot to death. The reaction of the African community living in the tent cities or in the dilapidated apartments in the ghettos of the city was immediate and violent. For two days, the African community indulged in acts of vandalism in the streets, setting fire to cars or breaking store windows. On the other hand, they faced an increasingly indignant local community with the clear objective of advancing an "ethnic cleansing" of the city¹¹⁸. The "Rosarno revolt" had a very strong media echo that did not contribute at all to present a realistic and detached analysis of the phenomenon. Many oriented newspapers and politicians in their turn have defined a phenomenon upside down, talking about an uncontrolled illegal immigration that feeds mafia circles, where instead the opposite is evident. The Mayor Tripodi throws light on the local reality and on the negligence of the administrations hiding behind the management of immigration¹¹⁹: where the lack of collaboration between the Region and the municipalities has left this area in a regime of self-management¹²⁰ in which the lack of funds has not allowed to guarantee the regularization of the immigration policies.

The situation becomes more intricate and unhealthier if even those figures who should be at the service of the exploited, are sucked into the criminal vortex. Criminal association and fraud against the State the crimes charged to eleven people belonging to the consortium of non-profit organizations that from 2014 to 2018 won tenders for the management of migrants from the prefectures of Lodi, Parma and Pavia for over seven million euros. The Pm Gianluca Prisco, who together with Ilda Boccassini coordinated the investigation that led to the operation of the Guardia di Finanza of Lodi, confirmed that there is a link with multiple convicts belonging to the 'Ndrangheta who would have exploited the non-profit organization to obtain for prisoners, through false documents, the granting of the alternative measure to detention by the magistrate of surveillance¹²¹.

¹¹⁸ In January 2010, the "Rosarno revolt", considered in the media as a real civil war that lasted two days, showed Italian and European public opinion the dramatic working and living conditions of farm workers, especially migrants, in Rosarno and made clear to the whole world the ways in which migrants are exploited by the 'Ndrangheta and other mafias in the area. In the same year, the Calabrian writer Mimmo Perrotta, published his book, "Rosarno, the revolt and after. Cosa è successo nelle campagne del Sud" (Rosarno, the revolt and after. What happened in the countryside of the South), in which he explains the dynamics of caporalato in Southern Italy and how the fruit of this exploitation has for years constituted the supply base for the Italian vegetable market.

¹¹⁹ The opinion and description of the phenomenon by the former Mayor of Rosarno, Elisabetta Rosa Tripodi, is placed in writing in the end of term report n.149 published on September 6, 2011 and available at the following link: [file:///Users/maiasacchetto/Downloads/Relazione%20fine%20mandato%20%20Sindaco%20Elisabetta%20Rosa%20Triodi%20\(1\).pdf](file:///Users/maiasacchetto/Downloads/Relazione%20fine%20mandato%20%20Sindaco%20Elisabetta%20Rosa%20Triodi%20(1).pdf)

¹²⁰ Profoundly interesting is the testimony of Prosecutor Giovanni Bombardieri who explains that the degree of absorption of Nigerian laborers into the criminal dynamics was so intense as to compromise the social dynamics within the same slums built around the fields of Rosarno, where Nigerian laborers live in conditions of extreme degradation. It would seem, in fact, that members of the same ethnic community have taken on mafia attitudes towards their fellow countrymen through, for example, the imposition of a real "protection money" to use electricity or other limited resources within the slums.

¹²¹ Qds.it – "Migranti, a Lodi Onlus legate alla 'ndrangheta", 3th July 2019, available at: <https://qds.it/migranti-a-lodi-onlus-legate-alla-ndrangheta/>

In 2017, the Anti-Mafia District Directorate of Catanzaro advanced the operation "Jonny"¹²² and arrested Leonardo Sacco, president of the Calabria and Basilicata section of the Confraternity Misericordia and also the parish priest of the country, Don Edoardo Scordio, historical founder of the Misericordia, both accused of mafia association. The two had set up a millionaire business for the management of the Cara of Isola Capo Rizzuto, one of the largest in Europe, shared between the various families of 'ndrangheta in the area, all "thanks" to the migrants crammed into the Cara. The affair would have been so productive for the 'ndranghetist clans, more than 100 billion euros, that it would not have been necessary to fight to ensure its management, since the copious proceeds could have been divided by the *cosche* in equal parts. The General of the Ros, Giuseppe Governale, during the press conference had defined the reception center and the Misericordia "the ATM of the Ndrangheta"¹²³. Of the approximately 103 million euros of European funds that ended up at the CARA Sant'Anna di Isola between 2006-2015, at least 36 million ended up in the hands of the Arena clan.

A little more than a year after the Rosarno revolt, the then mayor of Reggio Calabria Giuseppe Scopelliti put forward the project to transform the former cement factory confiscated from the Bellocco clan into a training center for immigrants that could accommodate the 150 laborers agglomerated in the tent cities around the orange harvest of San Ferdinando (Fanizza, 2018). For the renovation of the "Beton Medma", this was the name of the former cement factory, a total of 20 million euros would have been set up, 3 million of which were allocated directly by the Italian state 16 European funds. The construction of the houses had been suspended after an anti-mafia interdiction on the company that was building them and during the period of detention, the citizens of Rosarno have occupied the structure as a manifestation of their indignation towards a state that reserves its attention to immigrants instead of citizens who live a state of indigence.

The inhumane shantytown of San Ferdinando, where more than two thousand people lived, was dismantled on March 6, 2019 and, after ten years, the clandestine and exploited laborers of Rosarno have found themselves again in a state of disarray.¹²⁴

¹²² Press Office of Polizia di Stato – “Catanzaro: con “Johnny arrestate 68 persone”, 15/05/2017, available at: <https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/1559196ad4cfa10088126985>

¹²³ <https://video.repubblica.it/cronaca/ndrangheta-maxi-operazione-contro-la-cosca-arena-controllavano-il-cara-di-crotone/275788/276355>

¹²⁴ After the visit of the Special Rapporteur in Italy <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/226/55/PDF/G1922655.pdf?OpenElement>

In conclusion, in its territory the 'Ndrangheta maintains firm control and direction of illicit affairs. The Nigerian mafia is marginal or, as explained, limited to activities that the 'Ndrangheta is not interested in. With regard to the aiding and abetting of illegal immigration, it appears that the 'Ndrangheta occupies an important managerial position because it feeds its army of underpaid laborers to be employed in the Gioia Tauro Plain and to do so openly favors illegal immigration. The situation is different in the North of Italy, particularly in Turin, where the 'Ndrangheta and the Maphite clan share the city and equally govern the criminality. In the DIA report published in 2019, there are no traces of Camorra, Cosa Nostra or Sacra Corona Unita among the criminal circles in Piedmont. Instead, the sprawling presence of the 'Ndrangheta and Nigerian clans had resulted massive. Piedmont, almost like Lombardy, is the place where the 'Ndrangheta runs the most premises, about 14 located in 9 different provinces. The province of Reggio Calabria, with the Plain of Gioia Tauro and that of Vibo Valentia are the areas from which the main clans active in the Turin hinterland originate. In the city of Turin there is the highest level of collusion between regional authorities and the Mafia, and where speculation on building activities has ensured the 'Ndrangheta the management of a large number of contracts since the '60s. This is what has been revealed by the operations supported by the Turin DDA together with the Guardia di Finanza for the last 60 years.

Turin is also the city where the first Nigerian clans, mainly the Eiyè and Maphite, have settled beginning first to profit from drug dealing and then from the street prostitution of their fellow countrymen. This was what had been discovered by the infamous Operation Atheneum, already deepened in the first chapter. From the recent investigations of the DDA of Turin, it is evident that the 'Ndrangheta nevertheless left to the Nigerian namesakes a space in which to act autonomously and also on a large scale, simply by carrying on the international trafficking that they were already managing. In some and few cases, the police discovered the involvement of some Italian subjects acting as front men in the rental contracts of the apartments used for the exercise of prostitution, but in illicit affairs considered of paramount importance coexistence is peaceful.

CHAPTER III

3. Law enforcement actions and awareness enhancement at the national, regional and international level

3.1 The stance of the European Union

Antonio La Spina explains that the history of mafia has always been marked by a changing synthesis between the control of the territory and the creation of partnerships with the external economic reality (La Spina, 2013), this is what still distinguishes all the mafias in the world from Yakuza to Organizacija. The Nigerian criminality is the first to have broken this paradigm. Nigerian mafias act in Nigeria as Italian mafias act in Italy (Adeoye, 2009)¹²⁵: they are infiltrated into the legal economy and institutions and act by influencing the political environment and compromising the normal functioning of institutions and the political/administrative life of the country, they have strong ties with terrorist groups such as Boko Haram to which they finance the purchase of weapons and aim to create a condition of political instability in order to annihilate the actions of the state and gain power and money through contamination in the market (Okoli, 2022)¹²⁶. Nevertheless, Nigeria is not the center of decision making of the Nigerian Mafia, the very territory in which it comes to settle is. Spain, France, Italy, Germany and Holland are the epicenters of the decisions from which the operations of the Nigerian mafia start. This partially explains why the Nigerian mafia is so hard to fight as it is a mafia "on the move", chameleon-like and capable of adapting instantaneously to new concussions that arise (Wilde, 2003)¹²⁷. This makes any operation against the Nigerian mafia even more intricate because not often the police are able to intercept the point of origin of the crimes and all the people involved and even more complex than those against the 'Ndrangheta, Camorra or Cosa Nostra, which, although now evolved to the point of being categorized as transnational mafias, have not abandoned their decision-making centers, whether regional or local¹²⁸.

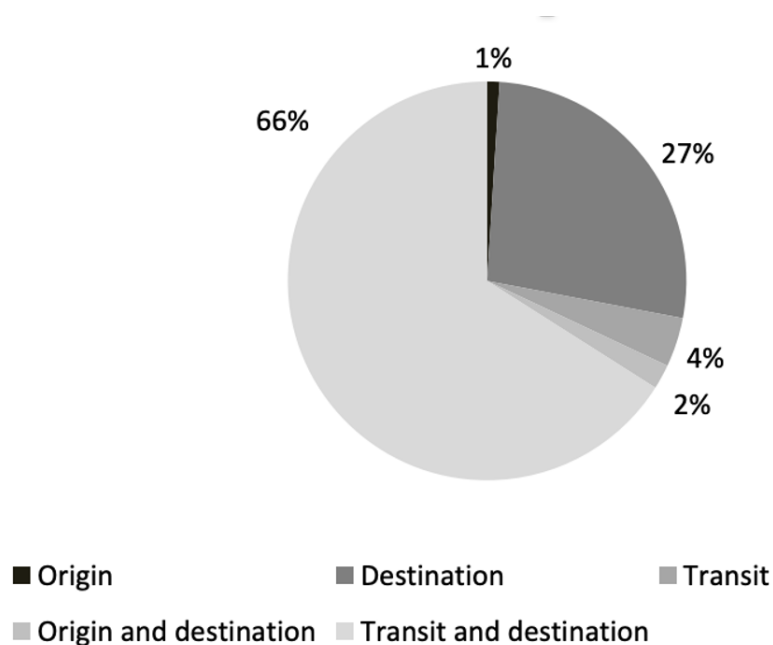
¹²⁵ Adeoye, O. (2009). Godfatherism and the future of Nigerian democracy. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3, 268-272, available at: <https://academicjournals.org/journal/AJPSIR/article-full-text-pdf/AED570C31547>

¹²⁶ Okoli AC, Nwangwu C. Organized Crime–Terror Nexus: Interrogating the Linkage Between Banditry and Terrorism in Northern Nigeria. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. January 2022. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/00219096211069650>

¹²⁷ Oscar Wilde (2003) Terrorism, Organized Crime, and Social Distress, *Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness*, 12:1-2, 41-62

¹²⁸ The center of the decision-making processes of the 'Ndrangheta, for example, remains Calabria, from where the illicit business starts and develops in the branch offices in every part of the world. The point of transit, control and sorting of narcotics trafficked by 'Ndrangheta must first pass through Calabria and then be sold around the world (the striking case of the port of Gioia Tauro highlighted in Chapter 2 is a clear demonstration of this process). From what we have been

The effect of subsequent aiding and abetting illegal migration and exploitation of migrants in the national territory, the prime activity of Nigerian clans, thus primarily depends on how deeply rooted these groups are in the territory of final destination (Di Nicola, 2014)¹²⁹ and their ability to take advantage of the protection or support of more or less stable alliances in the regions of transit or establishment. Italy has long been an essential stage in the international traffic of people, representing the bridge between Africa and Europe, in close connection with the spread of transnational organized crime and part of the usual routes used by traffickers and branched criminal organizations. Among these trafficking, that of migrants for sexual purposes is one of the most developed in Italy as it is carried out exactly by the mafias most present in the area: the Slavic and Nigerian matrix. For this type of traffic, Italy is in fact a country of transit (European Commission, 2014) (and in this research the sorting of Nigerian women mainly from Northern Italy to Northern Europe has been tackled) as well as of destination (and this research has been dealt with the connection houses of Castel Volturno and the alleys of Ballarò).



able to understand up to now from Italian and international investigations, the trafficking of substances and people conducted by the Nigerian mafia originates in Nigeria in the recruitment phase of the victims (whether they are young women destined for the prostitution market or future ovulators or laborers), but the trafficking routes instead develop vertically, from Nigeria to Europe. The decision-making process of the Nigerian mafia is not centralized, it is spread throughout West Africa and then throughout Europe with a massive presence of clans where partnerships with other mafias are strongest. It is precisely from this type of "governance" that is not circumscribed, not determined and from this flexibility and multiplicity that the Nigerian mafia is characterized by its own distinctive signs. Neither a small and scattered type of criminality, nor a mafia now deeply rooted in its territory of origin, but a mafia on the move that disperses and dissolves throughout Europe, but without ever dispersing its criminal networks.

¹²⁹ Andrea Di Nicola (2014), *Criminalità violenta degli stranieri nelle province italiane: uno studio esplicativo*, N.3 (2010), available at: <https://ojs.pensamultimedia.it/index.php/ric/article/view/680/660>

Figure 7: Percentages of times in which Italy is a country of destination of trafficking, transit of trafficking, origin of trafficking, both origin and destination, both transit and destination

Source: Transcrime elaboration on questionnaires filled in by some police officers of the Arma dei Carabinieri of two Italian cities.

The more inclusive and stable these alliances between mafias in the market of international illicit activities become, the more the danger of criminal expansion "in stages" on a planetary scale increases (*ibidem*).

From this point of view, although the business of trafficking is, in some cases, an indirect affair of the Italian mafia, the performance of illicit activities in the Italian territory, whether it is representing a territory of transit of illicit trafficking or a territory of destination with the intent of exploitation, requires a multilevel coordinated action of contrast by the Italian police forces.

Trafficking in migrants is an atypical criminal case (Trevisanut, 2012) which requires a different approach than other types of trafficking. In practice, this criminal case includes all three possible forms of migrant smuggling: the coercion to leave one's homeland, the transportation of the migrant through the production of false documentation, and the exploitation of the migrant once he/she has reached his/her destination (*ibidem*). It goes beyond the normative distinction between trafficking and smuggling and can be used to describe both phenomena. This typological differentiation is fundamental first to understand the objective, the vastness and the plurality of actors involved in this trafficking and then to identify the tools and institutions suitable to counter the phenomenon and on which level, whether national or international. Mafia is now extended from a territorial and sectorial point of view and incorporates a plurality of actors in which the line of distinction between the legal and the illegal and between the various criminal cases is increasingly blurred. Without flexible assessment tools suitable for interpreting the dynamic and transnational nature of the new mafias, it is not possible to combat the phenomenon of international human trafficking (Tinebra, 2004).

From the point of view of the actors involved, this case requires a further distinction between what UNODC has defined as "full packet solution" and "locally based opportunists" (UNODC, 2010). The former would be those who manage the trafficking in its entirety, from the recruitment of the victim to their transfer, up to their exploitation once in the territory of destination. This typology includes Nigerians, or other transnational criminal organizations such as Albanians or Romanians. The second type includes local mafias which, as described in detail in the second chapter, although they rarely participate in the smuggling phase, facilitate the irregular stay of the illegal immigrant in the territory through the exploitation of the latter, through the operational support, logistics and delivery of hulls

to foreign criminal organizations. This is especially true in cases where the condition of clandestinity arises after the entry into the territory. If we consider that the victims, even if exploited for a considerable period of time within the territory of first destination, are then sold in different European countries at a later date, this phenomenon reaches an extent that cannot disregard the coordinated action of all countries involved in this traffic.

Vincenzo Musacchio, Associate at the Rutgers Institute on Anti-Corruption Studies (RIACS) of Newark (USA), has well represented the vastness of the transnational mafia, mentioning the Nigerian one several times, as an ensemble of multiple and differentiated underlying activities and coordinated subsystems that are part of a more general system that encompasses them all¹³⁰. In fact, considering that most of the time the international trafficking of migrants is intertwined with the international trafficking of narcotics, the picture becomes increasingly complex and the actions necessary to counter this phenomenon of increasingly large dimensions can only be multipolar.

In the panorama of research on transnational organized crime and on ethnically specialized crime, which are two intrinsically linked phenomena, the need for an evolution of European security policies is gaining ground. The latter have so far been aimed at protecting the financial interests of the Union, with the help of the Guardia di Finanza and the Ministries of the Interior of individual member states, aiming primarily at the confiscation of assets belonging to Mafia and the fight against money laundering and financing of illegal activities (Scuderi, 2004). This intent has provided the basis for the establishment and operations of Eurojust as well as Europol, which still represent the European agencies dedicated to the fight against illegal activities operating within the economic area of the Union. Both institutions represent a type of vertical coordination to member states by providing them with guidelines for conducting investigations at the national level and on the request of member states for legal or intelligence advice¹³¹. From the operational point of view, both Eurojust and Europol are limited to the collection of data, leaving the task of actively combating mafias to the discretion of penal institutions on the basis of national regulations on the fight against organized crime.

¹³⁰ Antimafia Duemila - Le nuove mafie. Intervista al criminologo Vincenzo Musacchio, 13/12/2021, available at: <https://www.antimafiaduemila.com/home/di-la-tua/239-parla/87233-le-nuove-mafie-intervista-al-criminologo-vincenzo-musacchio.html>

¹³¹ Precisely, Europol has as main objectives the collection of data and the organization of investigations with vertical coordination; Eurojust has as main functions the collection of data and legal advice to member states. The approach so far followed by the two agencies is a bidirectional approach that takes place between the institutions and the member states, each of which adapts the guidelines of Europol and Eurojust to the specific national internal order.

On December 4, 2017, the European Commission adopted a communication aimed at strengthening EU action against transnational mafias¹³². As a primary objective, it appeared to strengthen coordination and consolidate the response of member states through the exchange of information, cooperation in investigations and between judicial authorities, including with third countries. Basically, the idea that an effective action against criminal networks could only be possible through the synergic intersection between vertical and horizontal cooperation of member states has become widespread among European institutions. Underlying the Council's decision is the realization that organized crime is now a transnational phenomenon that encompasses a range of multilateral threats to citizens, businesses. The "new" mafias, taking advantage of the de-regulation of the market and the borders of the European Union, operate across borders and are now present in more than three Member States¹³³. This is enough to make the spread of cross-border mafias a European security issue. With this in mind, the idea has been put forward that the functions of Europol and Eurojust, focused on the fight against tax fraud and money laundering, could be extended, according to a recent decision of the European Council, to include all those offences that can be categorized under the heading of transnational organized crime. Europol in particular could become, according to some scholars, the European Public Prosecutor's Office (La Spina, 2016) and with a focus on ethnically organized associations.

In the context of this increased awareness of the European institutions about the evolution of this phenomenon, the main project of the Union concerning the fight of transnational organized crime is the EMPACT. In May 2021 the EU adopted its priorities on combating organized and serious crime for the next four years, which will be implemented between 2022 and 2025 as part of the "European Multidisciplinary Platform for Combating Threats of Crime" (EMPACT). By mutual agreement, EU countries have decided to make EMPACT a permanent tool in the fight against organized crime on which member states, agencies and other EU partners work synergistically through joint operational actions aimed at dismantling criminal networks, their structures and economic models¹³⁴. The project would be a declination of the EU Action Plan already launched by the European Union in 2005 to strengthen law enforcement and judicial cooperation, funded by the European Commission which

¹³² To read the European Commission's communication read the following publication available at:

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2018-000937-ASW_IT.html

¹³³ European Council and Council of the European Union - La lotta dell'UE alla criminalità organizzata, available at:

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/policies/eu-fight-against-crime/>

¹³⁴ To read about EMPACT's actions, priorities and goals, as well as recent project results, visit the following official Project website: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-statistics/empact>

foresees a series of reforms to favor the creation of a common legal space for transnational crimes and a system of rules aimed at breaking the national limits of the fight against organized crime¹³⁵.

As part of the operations of the Action Plan, EMPACT has set as a strategic priority for the years 2018-2021 the fight against human trafficking and all forms of exploitation, including sexual exploitation, related to this traffic¹³⁶. Since 2006, Italy is, together with Austria, the co-driver of EMPACT operations with the aim of maintaining constantly updated strategic data on migration flows and cross-border crime¹³⁷.

The centrality of this project lies in the focus of the investigations on foreign crime, with the main aim to uncover the transnational networks that have taken root throughout Europe. The level of interoperability between EU information systems can only increase with Europol playing a key role by developing international law enforcement action in two ways: first by cooperating together with EU agencies in charge of border surveillance, including primarily FRONTEX¹³⁸, in conducting investigations; second by organizing the so-called "common action days"¹³⁹, in which law enforcement agencies from all countries cooperate through robust action to intercept or capture criminals. On this last point, the proposal for a "European arrest warrant" initiated by Europol itself has long been part of the debate on the common European legal area¹⁴⁰.

On the regulatory framework, the transition towards the targeted fight against the trafficking of migrants managed by the transnational organized crime had a development in 2000 with the adoption of the Palermo Protocols to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Of particular interest for the development of this research are the first two: the United Nations

¹³⁵ Parlamento Europeo – Note tematiche sull'Unione Europea: Cooperazione giudiziaria in materia civile, available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/it/sheet/154/cooperazione-giudiziaria-in-materia-civile>

¹³⁶ Consiglio dell'Unione Europea – Il ciclo programmatico dell'UE per contrastare la criminalità organizzata e le forme gravi di criminalità internazionale, available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37348/20185274_qc0418775itn_pdf.pdf

¹³⁷ Camera dei Deputati - XVIII LEGISLATURA, Attachment B, Sitting of Wednesday, July 8, 2020, available at: https://www.camera.it/leg18/410?idSeduta=0368&tipo=atti_indirizzo_controllo

¹³⁸ Until now, Europol and Frontex have in fact carried out two distinct tasks that did not provide for cooperation between the two institutions, since border control and the fight against organized crime or terrorism were considered two phenomena that were unlikely to be intertwined. The EMPACT project starts from the assumption that the two crimes are inevitably connected and that the coordinated action of these two agencies is consequently necessary for an effective and large-scale fight against the phenomenon.

¹³⁹ Europol Joint Action Days – 34 countries fighting organised crime, October 1 2020, available at: <https://cscwb.info/2020/10/01/joint-action-days/>

¹⁴⁰ The Prüm Treaty, signed on May 27, 2005 by seven member states of the European Union (Germany, Spain, France, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg), aims to strengthen police cooperation in the fight against terrorism, cross-border crime and illegal immigration. Amendment 18 to the Treaty states that this Framework Decision is directly linked to the European Council Decision of 13 June 2002 on the European arrest warrant. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52007AP0228&from=DE>
The European Arrest Warrant is a request from a judicial authority of an EU Member State to arrest a person in another Member State and to surrender him/her to the first Member State for the purpose of prosecution or execution of a custodial sentence or detention order. The mechanism is based on the principle of mutual recognition of judicial decisions. https://e-justice.europa.eu/90/IT/european_arrest_warrant

Protocol on the Prevention, Suppression and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. Both protocols are implemented by the United Nations Office on Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODC), which is also responsible for providing member states with the necessary tools, practical aids and strategies to combat trafficking. Conceptually, migrant trafficking and slavery overlap. This is why the Palermo Protocol includes a section dedicated to the protection of migrant workers with particular reference to the exploitation of illegal immigrants in the territories of destination. The International Labour Organization actively participates in this context to safeguard the equal treatment of migrant workers and fights against the abusiveness of clandestine labor.

The Protocol has two main goals: the first is to dismantle a legal regime that treats victims on a par with traffickers, instead putting their rights first. Hence, it has already been discussed how often victims of trafficking in Nigeria and in general those of African ethnicity are subjected to a type of legal racism, considered conscious accomplices of the criminal circuits of the mafias. This research has already shown that trafficking victims are forced or see no alternative but to honor the debt of moving from Africa to Europe through the earnings of their labor, on pain of their own or their family's death or a lifelong curse. The second is to combat the regime of impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of the crime, whose penalties and sentences are not commensurate with the real seriousness of the crime, since they still depend heavily on the different judicial penal regimes of member states.

An important point of the UN Convention is the one concerning the fight against transnational organized crime through the control of territorial borders. The traditional role of FRONTEX as guarantor of border security is in this context corroborated by the synergic action of the EUROSUR¹⁴¹ surveillance system as a progressive replacement of national surveillance systems at land and sea borders. A multilevel action is thus necessary, but also considering the country of origin of illegal immigrants. Together with the obligation of states to criminal judicial cooperation, the Protocol recalls that the states from which immigrants depart are to be held responsible if they do not fulfill their international obligations to prevent the smuggling of migrants.

The consolidation of partnerships between the Union and the countries where human trafficking originates is the first strategy to be implemented. As emphasized at the session of the Parliamentary Committee on monitoring of the implementation of the Schengen Agreement, monitoring of the

¹⁴¹ Regulation (EU) No 1052/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Border Surveillance System (Eurosir), available at: https://publications.europa.eu/resource/ellar/a80accf5-ff5b-417b-92d8-c5120fe4c5dd.0014.03/DOC_1

activity of Europol, monitoring and surveillance in the matter of immigration of January 30, 2020¹⁴² by Tony Chike Iwobi, Senator of the Italian Republic, most of the most sensitive and vulnerable illegal immigrants in Europe come from Nigeria. The Senator raised the urgency of a single free information exchange system between Europe and Nigeria as the problem of Nigerian illegal immigration and exploitation of the latter involves equally all member states. The lack of an operational agreement between Europe and Nigeria, which the Senator considers to be at the forefront of operations to combat Nigerian organized crime, is the missing piece for the realization of a fully effective coordinated plan of contrast. This does not preclude Europe from coordinating with actions conducted at the national level by the Nigerian authorities. In this regard, in October 2015 law enforcements authorities and non-governmental organizations from 17 European countries participated in a conference held in Amsterdam and chaired by Europol, organized with the goal of establishing common approaches with Nigeria in the area of counter-trafficking. The conference was attended by the Minister of Justice, representatives of the police force and NGOs operating in Nigeria¹⁴³.

These partnerships are of fundamental importance to prevent the phenomenon of *re-trafficking*, which is closely linked to the decision of states to readmit an illegal immigrant or not and of the host state to expel him or her or not¹⁴⁴. This must be decided unanimously by both states, the one that welcomes and the one from which the migration starts, but to date there are no formal agreements for readmission by the states of origin. These agreements are traditionally known as "repatriation conventions"¹⁴⁵ and are based on the assumption that readmission is advanced only when the requesting state expects that there has been a violation of the regulations on entry, stay, permanence of domestic law, but does not provide that it is voluntarily the subject to decide to return home or not. Indeed, very few Nigerian women decide to voluntarily repatriate if they have not paid their debts or

¹⁴² Parliamentary Committee for monitoring the implementation of the Schengen Agreement, for surveillance of the activities of Europol, control and surveillance of immigration matters - Cognitive Investigation 10. Sittings of thursday, 30 january2020, available at:

http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/resoconti/commissioni/stenografici/pdf/30/indag/c30_migranti/2020/01/30/leg.18.sten.comm.data20200130.U1.com30.indag.c30_migranti.0010.pdf

¹⁴³ Europol supports the fight against Nigerian human trafficking networks, available at:

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/europol-supports-fight-against-nigerian-human-trafficking-networks>

¹⁴⁴ In fact, it is recalled that the phenomenon of re-trafficking occurs when the victim manages to temporarily free himself from his condition of exploitation in the country of destination and manages to repatriate. As discussed above, Nigeria does not have the tools to accept and reintegrate those who decide to repatriate and very often they are not registered by the country or do not receive the protection they should as victims of trafficking. In fact, it is not uncommon for these same people to fall back into the hands of organized crime who manage to intercept, threaten and kidnap them in order to reintroduce them into the circuits.

¹⁴⁵ Eur-lex - Accordi di riammissione tra la Comunità europea e alcuni Paesi terzi, available at:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3A114163>

if they cannot return with ample funds to support their families (EASO, 2015)¹⁴⁶. In addition, as previously mentioned, if the debt is not paid, they may fear the harmful effects of *voodoo* and *ju-ju* rituals and the violation of the agreement with traffickers and *maman*. In short, it denotes a deep distrust of Nigerian women in the Nigerian authorities and their ability to protect them from re-trafficking or to provide them with the sustenance necessary to reintegrate into the territory. This aspect will be explored further below.

In the context of the progressive development of a common legal space, it is the JHA Council Framework Decision¹⁴⁷ that establishes the rules for the establishment and operation of Joint Investigation Teams (JITs)¹⁴⁸. This is momentarily, in the opinion of Prosecutor Giovanni Bombardieri, the most effective instrument together with the European Investigation Order, which allows the transnational acquisition of investigative acts in a single judicial title, to combat the crime at a European level. This would allow the conduct of parallel investigations in the member states through the mutual recognition of the methods of investigation and would in fact make unnecessary a re-evaluation of the investigations carried out by another member state with a consequent considerable streamlining of investigative procedures (Pastrana, 2017)¹⁴⁹. It is precisely thanks to the coordinated action of the Joint Investigation Team set up at Eurojust that in 2018 the police forces of Italy, the Netherlands and Germany joined forces to conduct "Operation Pollino"¹⁵⁰, a strenuous Europe-wide investigative effort (involving all three nations) to counter cocaine trafficking at the hands of the 'Ndrangheta that reached Italy from Colombia and then spread throughout Europe. The investigation was coordinated by the Italian National Anti-Mafia Directorate and the DDA of Reggio Calabria led by Prosecutor Bombardieri. This, according to the Prosecutor, is the road to take now and in the future in the fight against the spread of the Nigerian mafia in Europe and the associations with the Italian mafia and other foreign mafias.

Something that comes close to a coordinated operational plan are the aforementioned common action days called by Europol. On June 11, 2014 the first common action day lasted until the morning of

¹⁴⁶ EASO – Informazioni sui paesi d'origine: Nigeria, la tratta di donne a fini sessuali, Ottobre 2015, available at: https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1305206/1226_1457689194_bz0415678itn.pdf

¹⁴⁷ Council Framework Decision of 13 June 2002 on joint investigation teams. Official Journal No L 162 of 20/06/2002 p. 0001 – 0003, available at: http://publications.europa.eu/resource/ellar/8f163aaf-2c9a-45d3-bdb7-489369c80be9.0008.01/DOC_1

¹⁴⁸ Council Framework Decision 2002/465/JHA on joint investigation teams, available at: http://publications.europa.eu/resource/ellar/7cb7ffe4-0fea-43e8-a7df-a89d0508ef31.0008.02/DOC_2

¹⁴⁹ Angel Tinoco Pastrana, "L'ordine europeo di indagine penale", Fascicolo 2 – 2017, Giappichelli, available at: <http://www.processopenaleegiustizia.it/ordine-europeo-di-indagine-penale>

¹⁵⁰ Redazione Polizia di Stato – Maxi Operazione "Pollino", 15/01/2019, available at: <http://www.mensilepoliziadistato.it/maxi-operazione-pollino/>

the next day and involved 15 European countries in a coordinated action to dismantle the Nigerian criminal networks operating across Europe for the purpose of sexual exploitation. This was the second European pan-operation to combat trafficking in human beings from West Africa that made it possible to foil a criminal ring worth more than 60,000 euros per victim¹⁵¹.

The European Commission also, for some years, has been advancing international police cooperation projects dedicated to deepening and monitoring the phenomenon, including the project called "ETUTU" aimed at combating trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation by members of criminal syndicates of Nigerian extraction (European Commission, 2014)¹⁵². This project is part of the cycle of EU policies to combat organized crime and, in particular, as part of EMPACT operations and began in 2012 with a particular participation of Germany, but extends to all member states under the coordination of Europol. Recognizing the vastness and pervasiveness of the phenomenon, member states commit in the project to extend the fight against trafficking to the fight against drug trafficking, the production of false documents and money laundering from trafficking-related business. In 2017, Europol initiated visits to Nigeria aimed at strengthening cooperation between member states and Nigerian authorities in advancing the ETUTU project, while EU support in West African regional projects to combat organized crime and trafficking continues and grows¹⁵³.

In this regard, a series of new regional projects have just been launched, such as, "Organized Crime: West African Response to Illicit Trafficking"(OCWAR-T)¹⁵⁴ with a focus on drug and arms trafficking and human trafficking, while an EU action against human trafficking and migrant smuggling in Nigeria was launched in July 2018. The project is based on a multi-level approach that strengthens instruments at regional and national levels with cooperation between the EU and ECOWAS member states to combat transnational organized crime operating in the region, with the main objective of protecting victims of trafficking and increasing knowledge of the phenomenon.

The monitoring of border movements is in any case the priority to counter this process that by its nature sees in the absence of border controls or their circumvention, the main strategy to spread internationally. The action of Frontex is traditionally to coordinate and provide guidelines to the authorities in charge of monitoring national borders in the various member states and to facilitate its

¹⁵¹ Europol - Joint Action to Tackle West African Human Trafficking Networks, 12 June 2014, available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/joint-action-to-tackle-west-african-human-trafficking-networks-1>

¹⁵² https://www.transcrime.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/THB_CoopToFight.pdf

¹⁵³ Europol – Europol supports the fight against Nigerian human trafficking networks, 05 October 2015, available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/europol-supports-fight-against-nigerian-human-trafficking-networks>

¹⁵⁴ ICMPCD - Organised crime: West African Response to trafficking (OCWAR-T), December 2019 to December 2023, available at: <https://www.icmpcd.org/our-work/projects/organised-crime-west-african-response-to-trafficking-ocwar-t>

tasks, it collaborates with other European institutions or agencies such as the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. In this context, even Frontex cannot disregard the partnerships with the countries from which the smuggling, whether related to illicit products such as narcotics, or to trafficking in persons, originates (Lutterbeck, 2006)¹⁵⁵.

With the intention of providing a common framework in which ECOWAS countries, but also other countries in West and North Africa, could coordinate and cooperate in the fight against African-based international crime, Frontex launched the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community (AFIC) project in 2010¹⁵⁶. This is presented as an attempt to "communitize" the monitoring of African and European borders through the exchange of information between African countries and European Union institutions on migratory movements between African borders in an attempt to block any form of illicit smuggling or forced movement of people destined for exploitation either in North Africa or Europe. The main purpose of the project is to protect the EU/Schengen area from frauds and to sanction those who help for profit a foreigner to enter or stay in the territory of a Schengen state. In fact, in 2013, 800 cases of document fraud in the area were detected, all linked to the Nigerian mafia, making it the second largest group for document fraud after the Moroccans¹⁵⁷.

¹⁵⁵ Derek Lutterbeck (2008), *Coping with Europe's Boat People. Trends and Policy Dilemmas in Controlling the EU's Mediterranean Borders*, ISPI, No.76, available at:

https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/publicazioni/pb_76_2008.pdf

¹⁵⁶ AFIC has at the top of its agenda the fight against the trafficking of migrants from West Africa to Europe through comprehensive monitoring of the entirety of the routes used to transport illegal immigrants. For this reason, the project is heavily represented by also involving the authorities of the countries of northern Africa which, as described in the first chapter and graphically reported through the maps, represent the first stages in the sale of illegal immigrants (especially prostitutes) or points of junction of the drug trafficking routes tied to the migrant smuggling routes. The countries of Northern Africa are also those in which the African mafias that manage the trafficking of migrants, led by the Nigerian mafia, enter into partnerships with the Libyan or Maghreb mafia or meet with the boatmen responsible for transporting the migrants on the last leg of the route to the European coast.

¹⁵⁷ Frontex, *Africa-Frontex intelligence community joint report*, Publications Office, 2016, available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/636930c7-c8b2-11e5-a4b5-01aa75ed71a1>

Detections of AFIC nationals presenting fraudulent documents, by nationality of the holder between 1 January 2014 and 31 May 2015

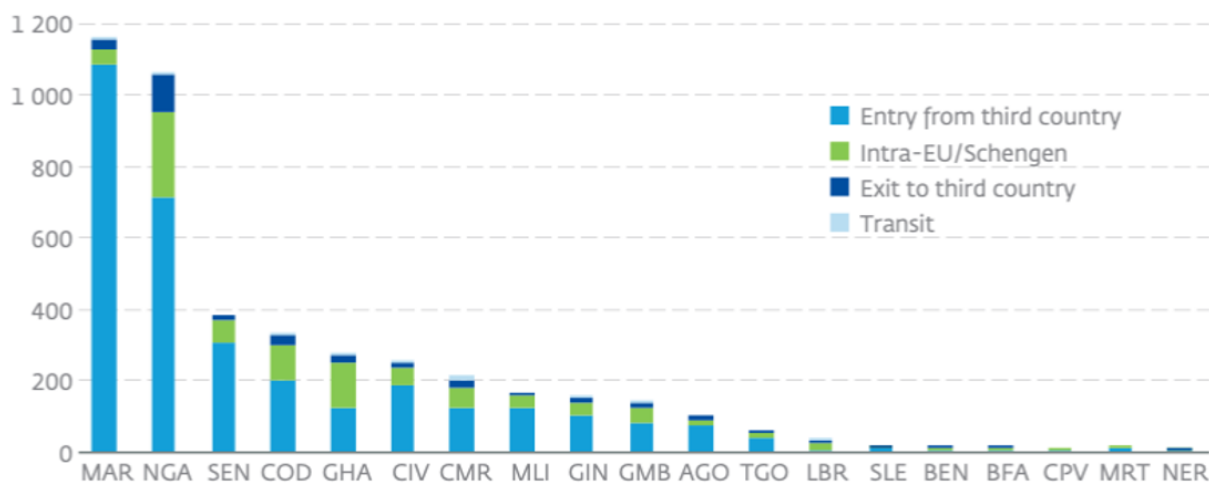


Figure 8: Detections of AFIC nationals presenting fraudulent documents by nationality

Source: Africa-Frontex intelligence community joint report (2015)

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/636930c7-c8b2-11e5-a4b5-01aa75ed71a1>

Most of the immigrants who held forged documents were found to come from Lagos and Istanbul, the main hubs of the trafficking routes of migrants from the Horn of Africa already described in the first chapter and represented by the attached trafficking map, i.e., those used primarily by the Nigerian mafia.

The ideological basis of the AFIC is that the cooperative fight against organized crime of African origin is a serious security problem that unites Africa and the European Union in equal measure and that can only be combated through cooperative action by the authorities on both sides. Recognizing the flaws in the police system of most African states, AFIC also provides training and refresher programs for police forces and has set up risk analysis cells as an intelligence tool for preventive analysis of Africa's exposure to the movement of criminal organizations between borders. As will be emphasized in the next chapter, Italy has adopted these two instruments as the main ones in its bilateral cooperation with Nigeria against human trafficking and their exploitation.

Substantially, considerable progress is being made in the recognition of a phenomenon that is not circumscribed, but which acts increasingly beyond the territorial boundaries of its origin, extending its business networks to an almost global level. Nevertheless, if the recognition of the existence of a

structured and solid organized crime spread globally and of ethnic matrix has reached a certain maturity, its connection with the phenomenon of illegal immigration is instead quite recent. In particular, the actions of contrast at European level have two flaws: the first is the deconstruction of a problem in which transnational crime and illegal immigration are considered two distinct and separate phenomena. In this case, the European policies are not very up-to-date on the matter and end up strengthening the phenomenon of transnational crime through policies of contrast distorting illegal immigration. More often, however, the actions of states still seem to be confined to one part of the phenomenon and do not have a long-range view of its vastness and extent. Indeed, the arrests of “scafisti” are much more common than the arrests of other foreign groups that facilitate illegal immigration or that manage trafficking for the exploitation of illegal immigrants. The second gap is represented by the scarcity of coordinated actions in the fight against transnational mafia linked to illegal immigration and compared to coordinated actions against illegal immigration as a phenomenon unrelated to the business of transnational mafias. In this framework, four actions would be necessary to effectively fight the new mafias and their associations: to create coordinated global strategies of prevention and repression; to favor the rapid exchange of information and experience between the law enforcement agencies and the judiciary of the various States by strengthening the role of Europol and Eurojust; to cooperate in the field of border security on illegal international trafficking and in particular on the trafficking of migrants; to inform public opinion on how dangerous the new transnational organized crime is.

The Resolution of the European Parliament on the impact of organized crime in Europe of December 15, 2021¹⁵⁸, declared the solemn commitment of member states to adapt and standardize European anti-mafia legislation to the continuous evolution of new mafias and the predisposition of the individual member states seems to want to push for a rapid adaptation of the rules to a European unicum. On the other hand, where this transition is still slow and has some loopholes, the fight against the transnational organized crime, and in particular the Nigerian mafia, seems to take mainly the form of bilateral agreements between states. International cooperation and forms of bilateral partnership are necessary to contrast the phenomenon of the spread of this transnational mafia, not only because of its very nature and the characteristics that have already been widely discussed and that make it a global threat but especially European, but also because the Nigerian authorities dedicated to the fight against this phenomenon are relatively new and not yet fully ready to address the issue alone.

¹⁵⁸ European Parliament resolution of 15 December 2021 on the impact of organised crime on own resources of the EU and on the misuse of EU funds with a particular focus on shared management from an auditing and control perspective (2020/2221(INI)), available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0501_EN.html

3.2 NAPTIP: the dilemma between increased sensitivity and structural deficits

Until 2015, Nigeria did not have proper anti-trafficking units. In general, trafficking was overlooked by crime prevention agencies and the phenomenon was generally not included in the development of migration management policies, although trafficking in persons was already an established problem throughout West-Africa¹⁵⁹. As early as 2003, the Nigerian police force has started to progressively equip itself with Anti-human trafficking units. Police Departments established an anti-trafficking unit in all their Divisions and, in the same year, Nigeria set up an agency to combat human trafficking through a highly specialized local task force working in collaboration and coordination with the new Migration Resource Centre set up by local authorities in Benin City. The agency in 2013 took the name National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and is still the flagship of the local police force today. Between January and June 2014, Naptip arrested 274 traffickers¹⁶⁰. Between April 2014 and March 2015, Naptip and NGOs identified 914 victims of trafficking; of these, there were 336 victims of sex trafficking¹⁶¹, an increase from the previous period.

NAPTIP actions are mainly focused on combating the trafficking of young Nigerian women destined for exploitation in European prostitution markets and who are mostly recruited within Edo State. This is still the most urgent area of intervention for NAPTIP, which in the analysis of the data recorded in June last year recorded that among the cases reported and fully investigated appeared among the highest percentages "Procurement of Persons for Sexual Exploitation" and "Foreign Travel which Promotes Prostitution".

¹⁵⁹ UNODC - Nigeria Takes Steps to Stop Migrant Smuggling, Abuja (Nigeria) 16 December 2021, available at: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/Webstories2021/nigeria-takes-steps-to-stop-migrant-smuggling.html>

¹⁶⁰ EASO – Informazioni sui paesi d'origine: Nigeria, la tratta di donne a fini sessuali, Ottobre 2015, available at https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1305206/1226_1457689194_bz0415678itn.pdf

¹⁶¹ US DoS, 2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria, 27 July 2015, pag. 266

S/N	Categories of Offences	Cases received		Fully investigated		No. of Suspected Traffickers		
		No.	%	No.	%	Male	Female	Total
1	Importation of persons for Prostitution	2	0.4	0	0	1	0	1
2	Exportation of persons for Prostitution	11	1.9	8	72.7	4	0	4
3	Procurement of Persons for Sexual Exploitation	85	14.9	18	21.2	52	6	58
4	Recruitment of Persons Under 18 years for Prostitution.	5	0.9	0	0	3	1	4
5	Recruitment of Persons Under 18 years for Pornography or Brothel	1	0.2	0	0	0	0	0
6	Foreign Travel which Promotes Prostitution	123	21.6	29	23.6	37	37	74
7	Organ harvesting	1	0.2	0	0	1	0	1
8	Buying or Selling of Human Beings for the purpose of exploitation	62	10.9	7	11.3	19	38	57
9	Forced Labour within Nigeria	27	4.7	8	29.6	8	11	19
10	Forced Labour outside Nigeria	34	6	13	38.2	13	9	22
11	Employment of Child as domestic worker and inflicting grievous harm	51	8.9	12	23.5	21	14	35
12	Trafficking in Slaves	1	0.2	0	0	0	0	0
13	Fraudulent Entry	4	0.7	0	0	1	0	1
14	Attempt to commit an offence under the TIPPEA Act	1	0.2	0	0	1	0	1
15	Obstruction of the Agency or its authorized Officer	1	0.2	0	0	1	0	1
16	Violence against persons	28	4.9	6	21.4	16	7	23
17	Abduction from guardianship	37	6.5	2	5.4	6	1	7
18	Missing Persons	7	1.2	4	57.1	0	1	1
19	Illegal Adoption	1	0.2	0	0	0	1	1
20	Sexual Abuse/Defilement	22	3.9	6	27.3	20	0	20
21	Child Abandonment	5	0.9	1	20	3	0	3
22	Child Abuse	46	8.1	26	56.5	16	17	33
23	Family Dispute	12	2.1	3	25	9	3	12
24	Aiding and Abetting	3	0.5	3	100	1	0	1
	TOTAL	570	100	146	25.6	233	146	379

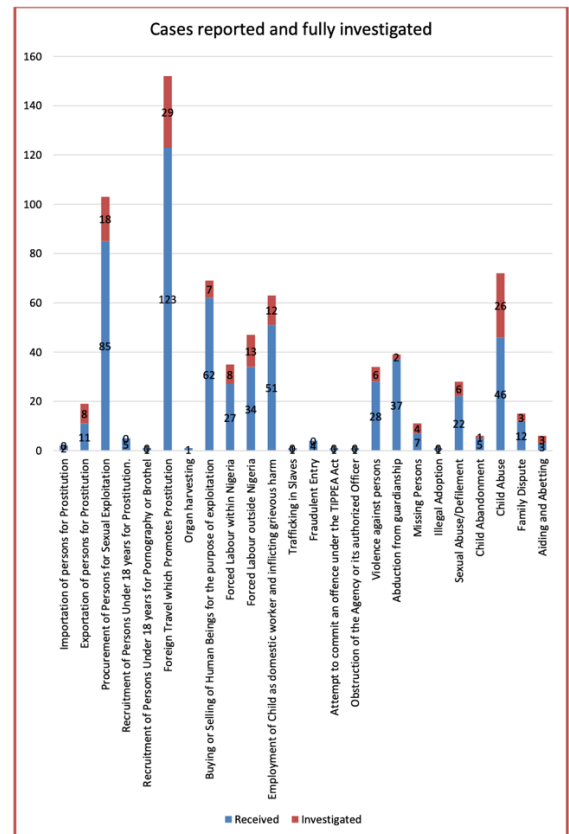


Figure 9: Cases reported, received and fully investigated by the NAPTIP

Source: NAPTIP Jan-Jun 2021 Data Analysis <https://naptip.gov.ng/download/2021-jan-june-data-analysis/>

Hence, the realization that Nigerian organized crime of transnational spread is developing hand in hand with the trafficking of migrants is progressively solidifying in Nigeria. For this reason, the Nigerian Federal Government made two moves in the same year: first, the ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary protocol on trafficking in persons, and then the enactment of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, amended in 2015 with the aim of toughening the penalties of persecutors of such acts. NAPTIP synthesizes these two efforts by fighting both to counter organized crime represented by Nigerian traffickers and to expand platforms for protection and assistance to victims of transnational trafficking leaving Nigeria. These two are the main objectives of the strategies included in the National Plan against trafficking which, like the Italian one, is divided into four strands: prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships. The latter are crucial since the main Nigerian criminal networks are located outside Nigeria, involving the entire ECOWAS and Europe. That of the ECOWAS is an area where, due to a lack of effective border control, Nigerian trafficking

can take place without restrictions. The junction of such trafficking, together with the meeting between traffickers and *maman*, takes place in fact undisturbed in this area along Benin, Ghana and Niger particularly. These are the precise geographical lines of development of illicit activities involving the entire so-called "Sahelian route" (Massoni, 2016)¹⁶², the hub of the illicit traffics towards Europe. Here over time, traffickers have organized themselves into a veritable cartel called the "Bureau des passeurs" (Di Liddo, 2018)¹⁶³. In this area the traffickers move almost completely undisturbed thanks to the almost total lack of control at the borders, but also and above all to a very high index of corruption of the police forces that should monitor them.

In Agadez, this situation is taken to extremes. The corruption of the police by traffickers is so intense that it is necessary to replace the entire police force and even the military¹⁶⁴: at each trafficking hub there is a paid police officer so that smugglers can conduct migrant trafficking from Agadez to Libya. To limit the passage of routes from this highly strategic region for the Nigerian mafia, the Niger authorities themselves have advanced in collaboration with IOM and other international partners EUCAP Sahel Niger, the civilian capacity-building mission in Niger launched by the EU in 2012¹⁶⁵ mainly dedicated to the control of the country's borders. In 2015, EU member states expanded the mission's mandate to include assistance to Niger in monitoring and combating irregular migration, tactical and technical interventions, training courses, assistance to internal security forces, support to law enforcement authorities on irregular migration and organized crime, and intelligence gathering on irregular migration. The main office and most of the mission's 169 staff are located in the capital, Niamey (ECA, 2018)¹⁶⁶. In 2016, the mission opened an antenna in Agadez in the Sahara Desert.

¹⁶² Marco Massoni (2016), La crisi e i conflitti dei Paesi dell'Africa Saheliana. La priorità per un'eventuale azione nazionale ed europea, Centro Militare di Studi Strategici, Codice SMD AL-SA-10, available at: https://www.difesa.it/SMD_/CASD/IM/CeMiSS/DocumentiVis/Rcerche_da_publicare/AL_SA_10_crisi_conflitti_pae_si_africa_saheliana.pdf

¹⁶³ Marco di Liddo (2018), La perdurante instabilità della regione saheliana, Osservatorio di Politica internazionale, available at: https://www.parlamento.it/application/xmanager/projects/parlamento/file/repository/affariinternazionali/osservatorio/ap_profondimenti/PI0083Not.pdf

¹⁶⁴ <http://www.halcia.ne>

¹⁶⁵ IOM - EUCAP Sahel Niger and IOM Reinforce Security Along the Niger-Nigeria Border, 12 October 2019, available at: <https://rodakar.iom.int/news/eucap-sahel-niger-and-iom-reinforce-security-along-niger-nigeria-border>

¹⁶⁶ European Court of Auditors Special Report - Il potenziamento della capacità delle forze di sicurezza interna in Niger e in Mali: i progressi sono solo lenti e limitati, n.15, 2018, available at: <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eca/special-reports/eucap-sahel-15-2018/it/#A11>

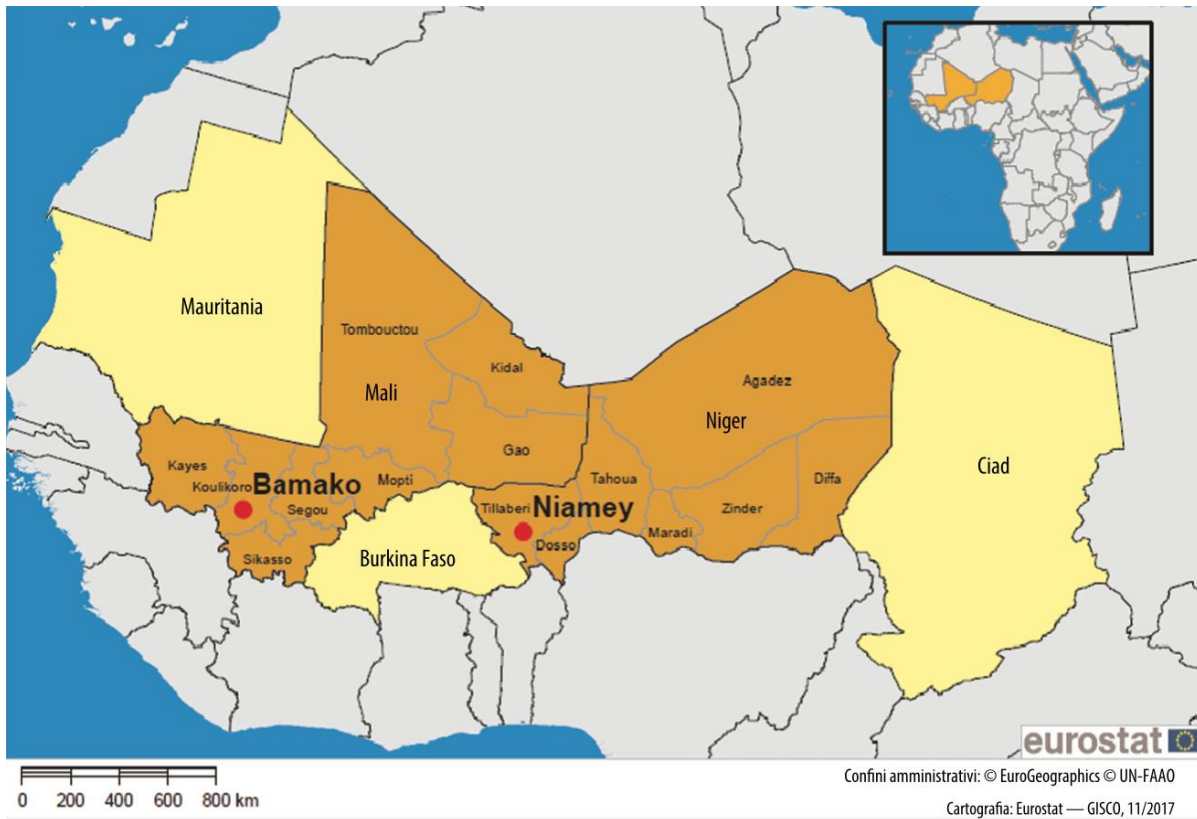


Figure 10: EUCAP area of intervention

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/gisco>

In this way, the region protects its internal security and at the same time interrupts the trafficking of migrants exactly in the middle, at its epicenter, where this traffic is intertwined with others, especially drugs¹⁶⁷.

Where police forces are not corrupt, they are poorly prepared and poorly trained to deal with specific problems such as the fight against trafficking in migrants and for this reason it is necessary the action of international police forces that offer the Nigerian police refresher courses and training on specific issues, such as those already operating in Italy or those that Germany offers on the occasion of the ETUTU project. The lack of funding for police operations obviously does not facilitate the functioning of the police apparatus and their missions and there is also a public perception about the

¹⁶⁷ In fact, it should be remembered, looking at the maps already attached to the previous chapters, that the traffic routes start from Nigeria, but basically extend outside its national borders, mainly involving the major countries of the Sahelian area and ECOWAS members, through which migrants are transported by caravans or buses. This explains why European forces are deployed throughout the area above Nigeria as far as Mauritania, in order to contain any expansion or movement of the Nigerian mafia as far as North Africa where victims are shipped to Europe.

ability of the police to prevent crime really low. In 2013 almost 50% of the population substance that the police force was not capable of preventing or fighting crime¹⁶⁸.

With the aim of countering such trafficking, the Federal Government has promoted in the context of the National Anti-Trafficking Plan from 2012 to 2017, the conclusion of bilateral agreements with the European states most involved in this traffic including Italy *in primis*, Spain, the Netherlands and Portugal that aim to facilitate the exchange of information between countries about the trafficking networks and the victims involved. From 2011 to 2012, the multilateral and coordinated participation of Nigeria and Europe has been implemented by the IOM project "Enhancing Multistakeholder Cooperation to Fight Human trafficking in Countries of Origin and Destination" which considers the problem of human trafficking at the root of irregular migration and aims to eradicate it through the dismantling of trafficking networks. This project starts from two assumptions: the first is that although its exponential growth and level of specialization, NAPTIP lacks the necessary funds to develop further and promote more complex operations. Dissemination of information, as well as access to and collection of information itself, is limited by the lack of adequate funding to serve NAPTIP. Of these, only a small portion is allocated to rehabilitation and reintegration programs for victims of trafficking (Zubair Oba, 2013)¹⁶⁹. The second is indeed that, having met the prevention and prosecution requirement of the National Anti-Trafficking Plan, Nigeria is not equipped with the structures to ensure the protection of victims of trafficking (Nwogu, 2014)¹⁷⁰ and has not yet reached a sufficient degree of effectiveness to ensure the reintegration of victims into the territory.

According to the experts, the NAPTIP fails in tackling the issue in various areas of intervention: a constraint in funding that hinders the agency in the information gathering and actual conduct of operations; a lack of equipment of agents; a lack of capacity of intelligence operations also due to poor digitization of information dissemination tools; and a limited spread of NAPTIP offices along the territory (Morka, 2014). To this end, UNODC has advanced a project for the biennium 2018-2020¹⁷¹ to enhance state and non-state multi-sectoral response towards combating trafficking in

¹⁶⁸ Daniel Flynn, Reuters, in Agadez, Mon 22, 2015, Corruption stymies Niger's attempts to stem flow of migrants to Europe, The Guardian, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jun/22/corruption-niger-attempt-stem-flow-migrants-europe-smugglers-sahara>

¹⁶⁹ Hanafi, Z.O. (2014). The Challenges faced by NAPTIP Officials in the Control of Child Labour and Human Trafficking in Lagos State, Nigeria. Available at: https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/74113/Zubair_Oba_Hanafi.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1

¹⁷⁰ Nwogu V., «Anti-Trafficking interventions in Nigeria and the Principal-Agent Aid Model», 2014, pagg. 41-63. Available at: <https://www.antitraffickingreview.org/index.php/atrjournal/article/view/64/74>

¹⁷¹ UNODC - Strengthen the capacities of state and non-state institutions to assist, support and protect victims of trafficking in Nigeria (2018 - 2020), available at: <https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/strengthen-the-capacities-of-state-and-non-state-institutions-to-assist--support-and-protect-victims-of-trafficking-in-nigeria-2018--2020.html>; A similar

persons in Nigeria with the aim of infusing NAPTIP police forces with technical expertise, capacity building and strategic, law enforcement support and victim protection in Edo State and Lagos. The Migration Resource Centre in Benin City aims at this stage to provide assistance to victims of trafficking in the case of assisted voluntary repatriation to safeguard them from re-trafficking and provide economic assistance packages for the first phase of reintegration in the country¹⁷².

At the federal level, external border control is the task within the Nigerian immigration Service built in 1963. Obviously, with the development of cults and their first diffusion in the ECOWAS area, the Immigration Service has extended its competences to the control of trafficking along the country's borders. Its monitoring actions should provide the support and the basis on which NAPTIP can conduct its operations against Nigerian organized crime, since the latter cannot deploy their patrols on the borders (Akpomera, 2014)¹⁷³. The problem that seems to be emerging, however, is that many of the routes used by traffickers are beyond the control of the monitoring authorities due to both logistical issues and lack of personnel (Hassan, 2015)¹⁷⁴. As a result, only specific spots within Nigeria's borders remain under the control of the Immigration Service and, reiterating that most trafficking routes are developed on Nigeria's external borders and not on its internal borders and that they change their routes and points of origin quickly and according to market needs, the monitoring services cannot keep up with the traffickers' pace. NAPTIP cannot step in to remedy this staffing hole because the new 2015 law gives this authority exclusively to the Immigration Service. Therefore, what should be synergistic cooperation and coordination between the two agencies ends up being an overlap of authority that causes decision-making gridlock and a slowdown in operations (in addition, the fact that NAPTIP deals with both victim reintegration and the prosecution of traffickers could be a potential problem. Victims do not always have the courage to seek assistance; holding them back is the fear of having to testify against traffickers (EASO, 2015). It is believed that it is possible that in its operations, NAPTIP prioritizes and allocates all its funds in the prosecution of traffickers over the prevention of human trafficking and the reintegration of victims.

project had already been advanced by UNODC for the years 2011-2018, viewable at:

<https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/promoting-better-management-of-migration-in-nigeria-project.html>

¹⁷² Osservatorio dei Diritti - Tratta delle donne: editto anti-vudù in difesa delle vittime nigeriane, 30 April 2018, available at: <https://www.osservatoriodiritti.it/2018/04/13/tratta-delle-donne-editto-vudu-vittime-nigeriane/>

¹⁷³ Olukayode, Olabanji & Urhie, Ese. (2014). Insecurity and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Development Studies*. Volume 6. 40-63, available at:

<https://unjpe.com/index.php/UNJPE/article/view/21/20>; see also: Akpomera, E., & Tonwe, D. A. (2021). Interrogating Nigeria's Evolving Legal Framework For Combating International Human Trafficking. *University of Nigeria Journal of Political Economy*, 9(1). Retrieved from <https://unjpe.com/index.php/UNJPE/article/view/21>

¹⁷⁴ Kigbu & Y.B. Hassan, *An Assessment of the Institutional Framework for Combating Human Trafficking in Nigeria*, 39 J.L. POL'y & GLOBALIZATION 90 (2015). Available at:

https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/jawpglob39&id=103&men_tab=srchresults

To this end, as a natural complement to the Europol's EMPACT project and the ETUTU project, Interpol has facilitated the creation of the West African Police Information System (WAPIS) which aims to establish a system of centralization and then sharing of information between all national law enforcement agencies of ECOWAS countries with Nigeria and with the states part of Interpol. The project is fully funded by the European Union and is based on the assumption that all Nigerian crime networks first originate and develop along specific geographical lines that include a number of ECOWAS countries (see again the map of drug trafficking and migrants used by Nigerian criminals) and then extend to North Africa where the victims embark for Europe. Therefore, the plan calls for a centralized regional information collection system to promote cooperation among ECOWAS states. The OCWAR-T project mentioned above and the cooperation between NAPTIP and the Ivorian Transnational Crime Unit (TCU) in the investigations concerning the trafficking of some victims transported from Nigeria to the Ivory Coast to be exploited in the sex-for-pay market are part of this regulatory framework¹⁷⁵. The victims are said to have transited there for initial exploitation before being sent back to North Africa and then sold throughout Europe. President Muhammad Buhari also urged the Nigerian Immigration Service to extend its reach by strengthening its border monitoring system and cooperating with international security organizations to that end¹⁷⁶. The international community catalyzes, facilitates, and cooperates in reaching bilateral agreements in the region and among the countries most involved in migrant trafficking. In this case, the project of coordinated police and investigations between Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire is supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) of the US Department of State, with the aim of improving the capacity building of NAPTIP especially in the state of Edo¹⁷⁷, which is recalled to be the point of departure of trafficking of Nigerian women, and increase public awareness of the intensity and magnitude of the phenomenon.

This research project focuses on actions to fight the Nigerian mafia and trafficking of migrants for exploitation in Italy and Europe, taking into account that the problem is recognized globally and that there are several institutions and transnational projects advanced beyond the European continent.

¹⁷⁵ UNODC - OCWAR-T supports Joint Operation by Côte D'Ivoire and Nigeria against trafficking network, available at: <https://www.unodc.org/westandcentralafrica/en/2022-03-31-ocwar-t-supports-joint-operation-by-cte-divoire-and-nigeria-and-cte-divoire-against-trafficking-network.html>

¹⁷⁶ <https://sicurezzainternazionale.luiss.it/2021/03/06/presidente-nigeriano-adotta-misure-contrastare-la-criminalita/>

¹⁷⁷ UNODC - Strengthen the capacities of state and non-state institutions to assist, support and protect victims of trafficking in Nigeria (2018 - 2020), available at: <https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/strengthen-the-capacities-of-state-and-non-state-institutions-to-assist--support-and-protect-victims-of-trafficking-in-nigeria-2018--2020.html>

Suffice it to mention the two main ones: the STARSOM project¹⁷⁸ funded by Canada with the aim of combating trafficking of migrants from South Asia (remember that some of the trafficking of Nigerian criminals originate in Malaysia) to Canada and which also includes training courses for local police; the projects funded by Japan and Switzerland or the already mentioned Support to the Fight against Trafficking in Persons in Nigeria Project valid for the three years 2015 - 2017¹⁷⁹.

In a few words, being the Nigerian mafia a global phenomenon having effects on the democratic balances and on the security of the entire international community, it is clear that the response to the threat must be global, however it is true that the primary response is required at the European level, where the trafficking intensifies, the routes wind and there is a more massive presence of Nigerian clans and partnerships with other mafias.

Cultural considerations should not be underestimated, considered irrelevant or even absurd, behind the actions to combat migrant trafficking. The magical element, represented by the *ju-ju* ritual or the voodoo ritual to which the *mamans* and traffickers subject the victims, is the most compelling push factor for the victims, especially young Nigerian women who are convinced to undertake the long and risky journey to Europe.

Recently, it has been proven that in Nigeria, no policy of deterring Nigerian women from embarking on the long journey has been more effective than the Oba's pronouncement in Edo State. On March 9, 2018, the Oba of Edo State, Eware II, summoned all native doctors and asked them to revoke the oaths already placed by trafficking victims, namely the promise to honor the debt, thus releasing the women from the curse of the rites performed. The event took the form of a veritable edict that prevents any form of ritual oath and thus frees women from the bond of debt, thus enabling them to denounce their exploiters. The use of this formula served to clarify the political message that the Oba of Edo State wanted to send to the federal government, manifesting the urgency to reinforce measures to combat the trafficking of migrants. According to testimonies of the Nigerian Network of University Legal Aid Institutions (NULAI) the Edict had overall immediate positive consequences: in Italy, the association "Women of Benin City" made up of former prostitutes now aiming to raise awareness of the issue, gathered in Palermo on April 14, 2018 to celebrate the promulgation of the Edict. In Nigeria, many women freed from the burden of debt bondage have begun to denounce their traffickers and *maman*. However, these effects lasted only a week, after which, according to these same testimonies, traffickers tightened their relationship with their victims, increasing abductions and violence.

¹⁷⁸ UNODC - STARSOM Goals and Actions, available at: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/migrant-smuggling/starsom-goals.html>

¹⁷⁹ UNODC - Support to the Fight against Trafficking in Persons in Nigeria (2015 - 2017), available at: <https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/support-to-the-fight-against-trafficking-in-persons-in-nigeria-2015--2017.html>

Currently in the state of Edo, six NGOs are working to combat the trafficking of migrants from Nigeria to Europe through awareness raising, relief and reintegration of victims, in a coalition called NGO Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons (Encatip) (EASO, 2015)¹⁸⁰, but clearly their support is not enough to stem this escalation of violence of the traffickers.

Nigeria was one of the first countries to ratify the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, just one year after its entry into force¹⁸¹. By signing the Palermo Protocol, Nigeria has also established an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Child Labor Trafficking that includes ministers of the federal government, the Nigerian police, the Nigerian Migration Service, the federal minister of justice, the National Planning Commission, the office of the secretary to the government of the federation to solidify inter-agency collaboration and coordination first, efficiency, capacity building. The country's authorities, thanks also and above all to the support of the international community, have from the outset recognized the urgency of an action that begins locally and then extends internationally. However, it must be considered that the problem of organized crime originating in Nigeria or in the entire western area of Africa is not a limited phenomenon, but is directly linked to a multitude of factors that bear witness to the profound vulnerability and instability of the democratic system. Poverty, corruption, terrorism, crime, are issues that inevitably end up being closely linked to one another. The Nigeria Security Tracker¹⁸² has detected the presence in Nigeria of a multitude and variety of organized groups aimed primarily at carrying out grievances directed at society or the state. These types of organized groups operate on the basis of ideology and with the tool of political violence to undermine the authorities. Boko Haram falls squarely into this category. The tracker has indeed found, and this fact is now known internationally, that Nigerian migrant smugglers and terrorist groups like Boko Haram have common business dealings especially related to the fact that the vehicles used by Nigerian clans to transport drugs or people are often used to transport weapons within the ECOWAS area. What distinguishes Nigerian clans from terrorists is their transnational scope, not aimed at ideological struggle, but at mere enrichment through the exploitation and trafficking of people across national borders. The a-territoriality of this organization makes it even more complex to combat than a terrorist group. It is

¹⁸⁰ https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1305206/1226_1457689194_bz0415678itn.pdf

¹⁸¹ CHAPTER XVIII PENAL MATTERS: 12. a Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime New York, 15 November 2000, available at:

https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtmsg_no=XVIII-12-a&chapter=18

¹⁸² Council on Foreign Relations – Nigeria Security Tracker, available: <https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>

therefore unquestionable that this phenomenon cannot be countered by Nigeria alone, but requires international collaboration, especially from the countries most involved in trafficking and affected by the problem.

3.3 The Italian countervailing capabilities: partnerships and efficiency

Having reached this point in the research, it is proper to assert that Italy is highly affected by the transnational organized crime. This derives first from its geographical position, which makes it the transit zone for a large part of illicit trafficking, both in terms of products and people, and then for the historical presence on its territory of well-established mafias also dedicated to an increasingly global trafficking and now more than ever connected to other international networks. As reported, Italy is the meeting point of a multitude of foreign mafias organized on an ethnic basis that exploit the geographical location of the country to conduct their business related to the trafficking of migrant compatriots and then exploit them in the Italian territory with the contribution of indigenous mafias.

The enforcement actions conducted by the Italian Police have so far focused on the confiscation of assets derived from illicit business and, through cooperation with the Guardia di Finanza, in operations against money laundering and infiltration into the legal economy¹⁸³. Nonetheless, lately the Italian law is evolving in view of the large-scale threat by adopting an increasingly all-encompassing approach to the investigation of the new illicit business of the mafias and progressing towards a type of fight that involves multiple sectors, technical expertise, intelligence through a coordinated action aimed at hitting the crime on multiple fronts. At the heart of this approach is now first and foremost the protection of trafficking victims. There is a growing and widespread awareness in the Italian domestic legal system that the indigenous mafias are fully inserted in this business and that, although not directly involved in the actual aiding and abetting of illegal migration, they could be punishable merely for systematically going to the places where the exploitation occurs, aware of the illegal activities that are exercised there (Tinebra, 2004).

Since 2003, trafficking in human beings has been severely punished in the Italian legal system thanks to the coming into force of law n.228 of 2003¹⁸⁴. Such is the law that rewrote the articles already

¹⁸³ Piano nazionale d'azione contro la tratta e il grave sfruttamento 2016-2018, (adopted by the Council of Ministers at its meeting on February 26, 2016), available at:

https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/7377/file/Italy_national_action_plan_trafficking_2016-2018_en.pdf

¹⁸⁴ Law no. 228 of August 11, 2003: "Measures against trafficking in persons", published in the Official Gazette no. 195 of August 23, 2003

present in the penal code relating to reduction to slavery (art.600, 601 and 602) in perfect line with the provisions of the Palermo Convention¹⁸⁵. The measure is aimed at introducing new penal dispositions and modifying the already existing ones to contrast the phenomenon of enslavement and, more in particular, of that form of enslavement deriving from the trafficking of human beings. The law on trafficking has also updated the crime of criminal association (art. 416 c.p.), stating that where the association is aimed at committing any of the crimes referred to in articles 600, 601 and 602 all relating to trafficking and enslavement, or participates in trafficking without managing the parts, the penalties provided will be more severe. This law is international in scope as, from the point of view of crime prevention and assistance to victims, it provides for special cooperation policies towards the countries involved in the crimes, to be implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the organization of "international meetings and information campaigns even within the countries of prevailing origin of the victims of trafficking in persons" (article 14)¹⁸⁶. With this perspective, in the last ten years the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has financed several projects and signed Protocols of intervention with some countries of origin of the victims of trafficking, in particular Nigeria.

In the same year that the law n.228/2003 was published, Italy established an "Anti-Trafficking Fund"¹⁸⁷ and a program to assist victims of exploitation and trafficking at the hands of organized crime. This is a fund intended to finance first programs of assistance and social integration in favor of victims of crime to ensure adequate conditions of housing, food and health care, later included in the objectives of the more general program of financing development and cooperation with African countries involved in migrant trafficking routes: the Africa Fund. The latter was set up with the 2017 Budget Law, art. 1 paragraph 621, in the estimate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) and provides 200 million euros in addition to those provided for ordinary development cooperation activities with the aim of launching "extraordinary interventions aimed at

¹⁸⁵ In the Convention, it is recognized that trafficking in migrants and the crime of slavery are equivalent from the point of view of harm to the fundamental rights of the person, while maintaining their own autonomy on an ontological level, and therefore, sanctions.

¹⁸⁶ The art.14 of the law n.228 /2003 at paragraph 1 reads: "In order to strengthen the effectiveness of the prevention action against the crimes of reduction or maintenance in slavery or servitude and crimes related to trafficking in persons, the Minister of Foreign Affairs defines the cooperation policies towards the countries involved in these crimes, taking into account the cooperation provided by them and the attention paid by them to the issues of human rights protection and organizes, in agreement with the Minister for Equal Opportunities, international meetings and information campaigns even within the countries of origin of the victims of trafficking in persons. In view of the same purpose, the Ministers of the Interior, Equal Opportunities, Justice and Labor and Social Policies shall organize, where necessary, training courses for personnel, as well as any other useful initiative".

<https://web.camera.it/parlam/leggi/032281.htm>

¹⁸⁷ Camera dei Deputati - Topics of parliamentary activity XVII Legislature - Trafficking in human beings regulatory framework, available at:

<https://temi.camera.it/leg17/post/la-tratta-di-esseri-umani-quadro-normativo-e-statistiche.html?tema=temi/tutela-delle-vittime-dei-reati>

relaunching dialogue and cooperation with African countries of priority importance for migration routes" (Boggini, 2017)¹⁸⁸. Specifically, it is a qualifying part of the set of measures established by the Italian government aimed at combating irregular immigration and human trafficking. In 2017, a large part of the funds were used to train police forces and finance routine police activities in the partner countries, i.e., 13 African countries involved in the trafficking of human beings, all of which are neighboring countries of Nigeria, including Niger, the importance of which is a strategy for the Nigerian mafia for the purposes of trafficking in human beings, where Agadez, it should be remembered, is the central point where drug trafficking is intertwined with the trafficking of migrants.

The protection of victims is also at the top of the National Program of Action against Trafficking and Severe Exploitation (NAP) for the biennium 2016-2018. The plan is developed according to a transversal strategy consisting of four domains: prevention, prosecution, protection and partnership in the fight against trafficking of migrants by mafias, not coincidentally the same guidelines of the Nigerian National Plan. The two channels in which these four directions are inserted are first the contrast and repression of the crime of exploitation of human beings entrusted to all the Police Forces and the second the peroration of the victims, entrusted to public and private social services¹⁸⁹. To be fully effective, the strategy is to be implemented according to the logic of multi-level governance and on the creation of interconnected networks and interdisciplinary coordination mechanisms, given the complexity of the phenomenon and the specificity of the target considered.

Italy would be in the position to lead this transition to a collective European response against illegal migration favored by the transnational organized crime. Especially after the shipwreck of migrants on October 3, 2013 in Lampedusa¹⁹⁰, Italy has become the catalyst par excellence for the process of "communitarization" of this fight (Zerback, 2020)¹⁹¹. Its positioning in this regard was evident during a meeting between Director Wainwright and Prefect Alessandro Pansa¹⁹², in the occasion of which Europol and Italy discovered common points of view for the analysis of the modus operandi of criminal organizations. They also agreed that national and international bodies such as FRONTEX should extend their functions to the surveillance of the external borders of the Union. According to

¹⁸⁸ Veronica Boggini (2017), *Il compromesso impossibile. Gestione e utilizzo delle risorse del Fondo per l'Africa*. ActionAid, available at: https://www.actionaid.it/app/uploads/2017/12/Fondo_Africa_Il-compromesso_impossibile.pdf

¹⁸⁹ https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/7377/file/Italy_national_action_plan_trafficking_2016-2018_en.pdf

¹⁹⁰ On October 3, 2013, 368 people died in front of the island of Lampedusa, including men, women and children who were being transported on a boat from Libya to Europe. This event shook the consciences of the whole continent and revealed the tragic consequences of the absence of a European policy on migration and the fight against the business of trafficking in human beings.

¹⁹¹ Catherine Francis Brooks, Brigitte Juanals, Jean-Luc Minel. (2022) Trends in Media Coverage and Information Diffusion Over Time: The Case of the American Earth Systems Research Centre Biosphere 2. *Journal of Creative Communications* 17:1, pages 88-107.

¹⁹² Polizia di Stato - 5th Europol convention on crime and terrorism, 25/09/2015, available at: <https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/5th-europol-convention-on-crime-and-terrorism>

this common view, FRONTEX should increase its capacity for investigations aimed at identifying the perpetrators and to this end, to create a fully effective law enforcement network, it would be necessary to combine the complementary maritime surveillance skills of FRONTEX with the intelligence skills of Europol¹⁹³. The Italian Presidency in the semester starting in July 2014, has repeatedly mentioned this need during meetings with the European institutions.

With a state-of-the-art intelligence service developed from the fight against domestic terrorism and an assiduous effort to counter local mafias, Italy is the recipient of numerous requests for technical assistance, professional training of magistrates and police officers, design and organization of enforcement institutions, renewal of regulatory frameworks and dissemination of the values of legality. This growing demand, aimed at knowing the anti-corruption, anti-mafia and anti-money laundering models adopted in our system, comes not only from developing countries. The Palermo Convention of the United Nations against Transnational Organized Crime and its recently approved revision mechanism are inspired by the Italian anti-mafia system. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Palermo Convention, the Conference of the Parties relaunched the mechanism for the revision of the Convention with the Resolution of October 16, 2020, which took the name "Falcone Resolution" (Orlando, 2021)¹⁹⁴, as a tribute to the magistrate who symbolized the commitment to justice and international cooperation. The Resolution proposed for the first time the use of tools to combat transnational organized crime as part of a comprehensive and versatile strategy that integrates economic-financial, digital, legal and political efforts (Balsamo, 2020)¹⁹⁵, bringing to the highest level the objectives of the Palermo Convention regarding the need for international cooperation in terms of the fight against transnational organized crime. The meeting was attended by the Italian delegation consisting of the Minister of Justice Alfonso Bonafede, the Italian ambassador to international organizations in Vienna, Alessandro Cortese, the legal advisor Antonio Balsamo, and the first secretary Luigi Ripamonti¹⁹⁶.

¹⁹³ Camera dei Deputati - XVII LEGISLATURA - DISEGNI DI LEGGE E RELAZIONI - DOCUMENTI - DOC. CXXXII, N. 2

https://documenti.camera.it/dati/leg17/lavori/documentiparlamentari/indiceetesti/132/002_RS/00000002.pdf

¹⁹⁴ Antonio Balsamo, "The international contrast to the economic dimension of organized crime: from Gaetano Costa's commitment to the United Nations "Falcone resolution"", *Sistema Penale*, November 12, 2020, available at:

<https://www.sistemapenale.it/it/articolo/balsamo-contrasto-internazionale-criminalita-economica-gaetano-costa-risoluzione-falcone-onu>;

Claudio Orlando (2021), "Crimine organizzato e pandemia: l'intervento programmatico della "Risoluzione Falcone"", *La legislazione penale*, ISSN: 2421-552X, available at:

<https://www.lalegislationepenale.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Orlando-Approfondimenti-1-1.pdf>

¹⁹⁵ Antonio Balsamo (2020), Twenty years later: the new perspectives of the Palermo Convention, *Cross Vol.6 N°3* (2020), available at: <file:///Users/maiasacchetto/Downloads/14727-Articolo-44069-1-10-20201223.pdf>

¹⁹⁶ OnuItalia.com Il Giornale italiano delle Nazioni Unite, Palermo Convention: UN in Vienna adopts "Falcone resolution" on fight against mafias, 17/10/2020, available at: <https://www.onuitalia.com/2020/10/17/convenzione-di-palermo-onu-a-vienna-adotta-risoluzione-falcone-su-lotta-alle-mafie/>

The approval of the Falcone Resolution, in addition to having a very strong symbolic value, is an important step on the path towards global Mafia unity. It is, indeed, the springboard for the new European strategy against transnational organized crime and human trafficking, already communicated on April 14, 2021 by the European Commission. The Strategy has a duration of five years starting from 2021 and has as its objectives the achievement of full judicial cooperation and the facilitation of the exchange of information, but above all the strengthening of Europol as a pivotal institution for the cooperation of states during investigations and in its relationship with third countries¹⁹⁷. Italy plays a central role also within the actions of contrast: on April 16, 2019, the Anti-mafia Directorate and Europol co-managed the first conference on strategies to be adopted in the fight against transnational organized crime in which Italy offered to share its technical expertise and skills with the other participating states¹⁹⁸.

Together with Frontex, Italy is the co-pilot of priority C of the EMPACT project, the objective of which is to dismantle organized crime networks dedicated to aiding and abetting illegal immigration from Africa into the EU and, in particular, towards the south¹⁹⁹. More specifically, in the stressful and assiduous fight against the Nigerian Mafia, the Ministry of the Interior continues to promote the ETUTU project to dismantle narcotics and human trafficking networks of Nigerian migrants to Europe²⁰⁰.

Italy is hence playing a key role in the long-term projects of the European Union against organized crime. It is, yet, true that, even in combating a problem that extends beyond national interests, the most effective formula for immediate action is the conclusion of bilateral agreements with the states that are closely involved. In 2009, Italy signed its agreement with Nigeria and Interpol in Abuja to intensify the fight against human trafficking and illegal immigration²⁰¹. The project was a two-year

¹⁹⁷ European Commission - Fight against organised crime: New 5-year strategy for boosting cooperation across the EU and for better use of digital tools for investigations, 14 April 2021, available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_1662

¹⁹⁸ Europol - Fighting transnational organised crime: Europol and the Italian Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate host first operational conference in The Hague, 16 April 2019, available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/fighting-transnational-organised-crime-europol-and-italian-anti-mafia-investigation-directorate-host-first-operational>

¹⁹⁹ DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS, Brussels HOME.E.1/AF, HOME-Funds/2021/30 COMMITTEE FOR THE HOME AFFAIRS FUNDS, Launch of the call for expression of interest for the 'Specific Action EMPACT' under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) – Reference ISF/2022/SA/2.2.1, available at: <https://fondoseuropeosparaseguridad.interior.gob.es/opencms/export/sites/default/pdf/Convocatorias/FSI/Call-for-interest-SA-EMPACT.pdf>

²⁰⁰ Camera dei Deputati, XVIII Legislatura, Allegato B, Seduta di Mercoledì 8 luglio 2020, available at: https://www.camera.it/leg18/410?idSeduta=0368&tipo=atti_indirizzo_controllo

²⁰¹ Joint Report of the 5th meeting of the Nigeria-Eu Dialogue on Migration and Development, Abuja, January, 2012, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/nigeria/documents/eu_nigeria/conclusion_migration_and_development_final_en.pdf

term and the agreement called first for the establishment in both countries of a Task Force to combat trafficking in human beings and the creation of mixed Italian and Nigerian police teams deployed at ports and airports in various cities. The Italian Central Directorate for Immigration would then organize training courses for Nigerian police officers in order to update their level of preparation in the field of countering trafficking by mafias²⁰². The agreement also provides for Italy to set up its own National Monitoring Centre to monitor activities at the border with the aim of sharing information for the creation of a database that would record the victims involved in trafficking (Borzoni, 2020).

Italy has conducted specific negotiations with Nigeria also to strengthen cooperation in the field of identification and repatriation, for the conclusion or renewal of existing technical agreements, for the sending of Nigerian officials on missions to Italy to collaborate with the Italian authorities in the identification procedures of irregular foreigners²⁰³.

Repatriation programs are funded by Italy, as well as other EU member states, even though obligations arising from such funding to ensure maximum safety for the victim and to avert the risk of further threats to the repatriated victim are generally not agreed upon with international organizations²⁰⁴. Hence, there is no guarantee that the aforementioned principle of *non-refoulement* is respected. As discussed in the first chapter, it is increasingly common for trafficking victims to be subjected to re-trafficking, the phenomenon that leads them back into criminal circuits since they are not adequately protected and treated as particularly vulnerable subjects to the possibility of being tracked down again. This is especially true for victims destined for the sex-for-hire market. In fact, it should be remembered that for Nigerian women forced into prostitution, the link with the traffickers does not end after repatriation. Conversely, it is increasingly common for the *maman* to track down the victims again, kidnap them, or threaten to exercise *voodoo* against them and their families if they refuse to follow them, and then deliver them to traffickers who readmit them to the market. The memorandum between Italy and Nigeria has therefore the specific purpose of monitoring the status of repatriated victims well aware that their repatriation to Nigeria may not respect the principle of *non-refoulement*. This situation is possible mainly due to the lack of protection and safeguard needed

²⁰² Polizia di Stato - Immigrazione clandestina: firmato l'accordo tra Italia, Nigeria e Interpol, 18/02/2009, available at: <https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/immigrazione-clandestina--firmato-l-accordo-tra-italia--nigeria-e-interpol>

²⁰³ Rif. Camera Rif. normativi, XVIII Legislatura, Comitato parlamentare di controllo sull'attuazione dell'Accordo di Schengen, di vigilanza sull'attività di Europol, di controllo e vigilanza in materia di immigrazione. Resoconto stenografico. Seduta n. 32 di Mercoledì 19 maggio 2021, available at: http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/resoconti/commissioni/stenografici/html/30/indag/c30_migranti/2021/05/19/indice_stenografico.0032.html

²⁰⁴ ASGI - evocare immediatamente il Memorandum Italia – Libia: Appello al Governo e a UNHCR e OIM, 2 Feb 2022, available at: https://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Appello_Memorandum_ITA.pdf

by the Nigerian authorities. The National Program of Action against Trafficking and Severe Exploitation (NAP) as well as the National Monitoring Centre promoted by Italy, would be necessary to compensate for the lack of internal procedures in Nigeria that allow for the recognition and registration of returned trafficking victims, who very often are not even registered upon their return home. Finally, the Memorandum between Italy and Nigeria signed in Abuja, aims to ensure that all victims of trafficking are granted their rights and that they are assured maximum protection in case of voluntary repatriation to escape their exploiters.

On December 14-16, 2010, the National Anti-Mafia Prosecutor, Pietro Grasso, visited Abuja²⁰⁵. On that occasion a Memorandum of Understanding was concluded between the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) and the National Anti-Mafia Directorate. In fact, the anti-trafficking section of NAPTIP collaborates with five official partners, including Italy through the Anti-Mafia Bureau²⁰⁶. The Protocol provides for cooperation between the two bodies in the fight against trafficking in persons and laundering of the proceeds of crimes committed by individuals and criminal organizations, particularly in order to combat transnational organized crime. The delegations from Italy and Nigeria also drew up a common map to dismantle the transnational migrant trafficking networks of Nigerian criminals from their junction in West Africa to Italy where they are intertwined with the business of local mafias. Also in this second phase, Nigerian authorities are called upon to collaborate with Italian authorities. During the series of meetings held before the stipulation of the agreement between the delegations of the NAPTIP and those of the Italian Law Enforcement Agencies, the Prosecutors of Palermo stood out for their assiduous and intense participation to the preparatory works of the agreement. The growing tension developed in Sicily, especially concerning the massive presence of Nigerians in the Ballarò district and the links with Cosa Nostra, has in fact acted as a catalyst for agreements between the Nigerian and the Italian police to combat the phenomenon of trafficking of migrants and their exploitation in Italian territory.

Of particular interest, from this point of view, is the recent introduction of the figure of the "liaison magistrate" on the basis of art. 18 of the Palermo Convention. Based on a project financed by Italy and Holland to combat illegal trafficking of migrants, a Nigerian magistrate has been employed by

²⁰⁵ Please find attached some basic information taken from the Italian Embassy website, available at: <https://www.ice.it/it/mercati/nigeria/indirizzi-e-link-utili>

²⁰⁶ Naptip Official Website: <https://naptip.gov.ng/intelligence-and-international-cooperation/>

the Italian authorities to facilitate mutual judicial cooperation (de Raho, 2020)²⁰⁷. A two-way cooperation relationship has been established. On the one hand, the Nigerian magistrate has transmitted to the authorities of his country the investigative methodologies learned by Italian colleagues, and the evidentiary material useful for the prosecution of criminal groups engaged in criminal activities related to those carried out and judged in Italy. On the other hand, thanks to the Nigerian magistrate, the Italian authorities have received a series of procedurally relevant information as well as a deeper knowledge of the social roots and operational methods typical of collective criminal phenomena originated abroad but which have become the protagonists of serious illegal conduct on Italian territory (Sabbatini, 2019).

In the specific fight against migration, Italy has only recently acknowledged the involvement of the autochthonous mafia in the logistic part and in the actual phase of transportation of the migrant or in the facilitation of prostitution of Nigerian women and, as mentioned above, is currently working on the text of the law n.228/2003 to provide, in line with the Palermo Convention, the punishment of those who support this traffic even if indirectly. The Italian actions of contrast against the autochthonous mafia are more than anything else those addressed to the phenomenon more evidently linked to the autochthonous mafia, that is the phenomenon of "caporalato". As mentioned in the first chapter, this phenomenon is now in the public domain and widely recognized by the Italian law enforcement authorities. The "caporalato" has caused multiple social distress to the communities of immigrants in Italy and to the local communities themselves, resulting in some contexts in real urban warfare, perfectly evidenced by the revolt of Rosarno which represents the apex of this social discomfort.

The fight against "caporalato", in the form of exploitation of illegal labor, is carried out first of all through awareness-raising activities by institutions and agencies. The Directorate General of Immigration and Integration Policies of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in collaboration with the Office for Italy of the International Labour Organization and the European Commission promote the call "Together for decent work in agriculture and in the fight against labour exploitation - Call for the reporting and proposal of potential good practices"²⁰⁸, to identify potential good

²⁰⁷ Federico Cafiero de Raho (2020), "The Palermo Convention 20 years after: celebrating its anniversary and unleashing its full potential through the implementation of the review mechanism", United Nations convention against transnational organized crime UNODC, 12 October 2020, available at: <https://www.dirittopenaleglobalizzazione.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Intervento-del-Procuratore-Nazionale-Antimafia-e-Antiterrorismo-per-il-ventennale-della-Convenzione-di-Palermo-UNTOC.pdf>

²⁰⁸ Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali - Lotta al caporalato in agricoltura: call per la segnalazione di potenziali buone pratiche, 5 novembre 2020, available at: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/notizie/Pagine/Lotta-al-caporalato-in-agricoltura-Call-per-la-segnalazione-di-potenziali-buone-pratiche.aspx>

practices for the protection and assistance to workers victims of labor exploitation in agriculture. To this end, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, which brings together all the institutional bodies involved at national and territorial level, the social partners and the main organizations of the Third Sector have established an ad hoc body, the "Operating table for the definition of a new strategy to combat *caporalato* and labor exploitation in agriculture" or the so-called "Tavolo Caporalato"²⁰⁹. The implementation of the Action Plan of the Caporalato Table is divided into three different phases: an initial phase of analysis of the phenomenon, followed by emergency interventions in the most critical areas, and then a system action that covers the entire national territory. The latter is structured on four priority axes concerning: 1. prevention, 2. vigilance and contrast to the phenomenon, 3. protection and assistance for victims, 4. their social and work reintegration. For the implementation of the Plan have already been allocated more than 700 million euros, resources that will be translated into concrete actions to prevent and combat *caporalato* especially in areas circumscribed and defined where the illegal labor is most exploited²¹⁰. The fight against this specific exploitation of illegal labor by mobsters is also included as a priority in "Mission 5 Inclusion and Cohesion" of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan that collaborates with the Directorate General of Immigration in the implementation of law enforcement interventions²¹¹. The Prefecture of Salerno has signed two memoranda of understanding with associations, trade unions and the town of Eboli, relating to projects funded by the European Fund Asylum Migration and Integration (FAMI) managed by the Ministry of Interior, the first related to new provisions for the integration of foreign workers and the second focused on intervention plans against the *caporalato*. This second document, in particular, identifies a model of socio-labor insertion of foreign workers, which provides for the recruitment of the same, the verification of health and legal requirements and the placement at farms in the territory adhering to the project²¹².

On the other hand, as far as law enforcement is concerned, Italy equipped itself in its legal and penal system with a proper law against *caporalato* in 2016, with the promulgation of Law no. 199 of 29 October 2016²¹³, which aims to ensure greater effectiveness in the action against the phenomenon.

²⁰⁹ To learn about the main activities of the Caporalato Table, see the dedicated page at the following link:

<https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/Tavolo-caporalato/Pagine/default.aspx>

²¹⁰ Piano triennale di contrasto allo sfruttamento lavorativo in agricoltura e al caporalato 2020 – 2022, available at:

<https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/Tavolo-caporalato/Documents/Piano-Triennale-post-CU.pdf>

²¹¹ PNRR Inclusion e Coesione <https://www.governo.it/it/approfondimento/inclusione-sociale/16706>

²¹² Ministero dell'Interno - Lotta al caporalato: white list di lavoratori stranieri nella piana di Sele, 24 Febbraio 2022, available at: [https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2022-](https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2022-02/protocollo_pref_sa_contrasto_caporalato_e_sfruttamento_lavorativo_in_agricoltura_piana_del_sele.pdf)

[02/protocollo_pref_sa_contrasto_caporalato_e_sfruttamento_lavorativo_in_agricoltura_piana_del_sele.pdf](https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2022-02/protocollo_pref_sa_contrasto_caporalato_e_sfruttamento_lavorativo_in_agricoltura_piana_del_sele.pdf)

²¹³ The article refers to any criminal organization that recruits labor for the purpose of assigning it to work with

The measure provides for the allocation to the anti-trafficking Fund of the proceeds of confiscation ordered following a sentence of conviction or plea bargaining for the crime of illegal brokering and exploitation of work pursuant to article 603-bis of the Italian penal code²¹⁴. The amendment also entails the allocation of the Fund's resources to compensate the victims of the crime of "caporalato". Operations to combat the exploitation of illegal labor by the police are underway in 11 Italian provinces. A first overall balance, at the end of the second phase of the operation of the State Police "High Impact-Freedom" against illegal labor, reports about 867 people controlled and 76 companies. In 2017 thanks to this operation 10 people were arrested, few about those suspected of belonging to the vast network of labor exploitation and those who certainly entered as a result of the increased demand for illegal labor at low prices following the Covid-19 pandemic. This number has in fact increased lately: control, detection and contrast services have been carried out, identifying 632 people (including employers and employees) and checking 50 companies²¹⁵.

Without dwelling too much on the migration policies implemented by the Italian government, which deserve separate research, it should, however, be reiterated that the growth of the black market and criminal networks is closely linked to the permanence of the illegal and irregular status of the immigrants present in the territory. Therefore, the migration policies promoted by the member states of the Union are as important as the pragmatic actions on the operational level of the police and investigative forces to counter the phenomenon of trafficking of migrants in the hands of the mafias. The measures and policies described so far are based on an overarching view of the phenomenon of trafficking in migrants and the actors involved in this business, with the main aim of monitoring trafficking routes and dismantling the trafficking business. However, the complexity of this issue also requires specific solutions depending on the target. Regarding the victims involved in the traffics, the distinction is always between victims who are sucked into the crime because they find themselves involuntarily in it, victims who are recruited even before the start of trafficking and then forced to undertake the trafficking routes and finally victims who, as already discussed, slip into a condition of illegality and criminality in the territory of destination. The latter are the ones most likely to yield to the forcing of local mafias, as well as those who are directly affected by the consequences of migration policies of the countries of destination. Restrictive migration policies have undoubtedly had the

third parties in conditions of exploitation, taking advantage of the state of need of the workers. If the facts are committed by means of violence or threats, the penalty is extended from six years' imprisonment to eight years' imprisonment.

²¹⁴ Camera dei Deputati - Il contrasto al caporalato nella legge n. 199 del 2016, available at:

https://temi.camera.it/leg17/post/OCD25-272.html?tema=temi/nuovi_reati_d

²¹⁵ Comunicato Stampa - "ALTO IMPATTO – FREEDOM". Attività di contrasto al fenomeno del caporalato, 31 Luglio 2017, https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/ps_caporalato.pdf

immediate consequence of an increase in the number of illegal immigrants exploited and involved in illegal businesses. This is testified by the operators of regional integration projects that almost never succeed in achieving the objective of full integration of immigrants into the Italian market, both socially and in the workplace. This is due to an inflexible market or prolonged waits to receive a residence permit from the responsible authorities. These, as already discussed, are the victims who, even if not initially destined for trafficking, end up being recruited by local criminals. Here, as seen in previous chapters, the activities of indigenous mafias intersect with Nigerian ones.

Also linked to this are the policies for the protection of Nigerian trafficking victims. The protection of trafficking victims in Italy is still regulated by Article 18 of the Legislative Decree 286/1998²¹⁶, which was designed in the context of policies to combat irregular immigration and which creates confusion as it automatically designates trafficking victims as irregular immigrants. This aspect has already been discussed in the second chapter in relation to the "invisibles" of Castel Volturno which well-represent how the lack of recognition of the status of these migrants causes a legal prejudice that tends to consider the same victims of trafficking as instigators of criminal circles. This, too, does not give the victims the fair treatment and protection that should be guaranteed to them. In addition, if women who are victims of sex trafficking are easier to protect because they are easier to track down given the visibility resulting from their work, the same thing does not happen for men exploited by indigenous mafias in the vast fields of Southern Italy who, as discussed, live in a condition of total abandonment, neglect and far from the eyes of all and do not report cases as much as Nigerian women (European Commission, 2014)²¹⁷.

In this perspective the proposed law of popular initiative deposited March 23, 2018 aims to reform some aspects of the "Bossi-Fini law"²¹⁸ and address the causes of the irregularity of tens of thousands of foreign citizens in our country, primarily with the introduction of forms of regularization on an individual basis of irregular foreigners, even in the case of denied asylum seekers²¹⁹. Then, with the possibility of transforming the residence permit for asylum application into a residence permit for work even in the case of asylum seekers who have carried out a fruitful process of integration and

²¹⁶ Legislative Decree No.286 of 25.7.1998 on Immigration and Aliens, as amended by Law No.189 of 30.7.2002

²¹⁷ https://www.transcrime.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/THB_CoopToFight.pdf

²¹⁸ The law stipulated that the residence permit would be granted only to the foreigner who already had a work contract. The residence permit would have lasted two years and if in the meantime the foreigner had lost his job, he would have had to return to his country, otherwise he would have acquired the status of illegal immigrant.

²¹⁹ Camera dei Deputati - testi allegati all'ordine del giorno della seduta n. 134 di Mercoledì 27 febbraio 2019: Mozioni Concernenti Iniziative Per Il Contrasto All'immigrazione Clandestina E Alle Organizzazioni Criminali Straniere, Con Particolare Riferimento Alla Cosiddetta Mafia Nigeriana, available at: https://www.camera.it/leg18/995?sezione=documenti&tipoDoc=assemblea_allegato_odg&idlegislatura=18&anno=2019&mese=02&giorno=27

have the availability of an employer willing to hire them. The activity of Italian police, Carabinieri and anti-mafia authorities together is indispensable to deprive Nigerian and indigenous mafias of the revenues deriving from the exploitation of Italian illegal markets, which constitute an important item in the budget of these organizations. In addition, the involvement of anti-mafia authorities in the integration mechanisms appears effective in order to remove hundreds of potential victims from the yoke of organized crime.

This is undoubtedly an analysis that would require a separate study, but it points out how the phenomenon, already complex to counteract, is even more difficult to prevent and how much it depends on the policies of individual states. For this reason, a multi-level and shared approach on a European basis is even more urgent.

3.4 Policy recommendations

Along with Sergio Nazzaro, numerous experts argue that the problems associated with the spread of the Nigerian mafia and its trafficking of migrants can be traced to the country of origin. This theory is based on the interpretation of Nigerian culture, society, economy and politics as the ultimate factors in the entrenchment and global spread of Nigerian organized crime. It is a fact that the country suffers from various structural flaws such as a lack of political will, deep and intense corruptions in institutions and law enforcement, and a scarcity of both human and necessary resources that preclude support for police activities.

A discourse more purely related to social, cultural, and economic factors is the level of training and specialization of the NAPTIP forces and their ability to move within the territory, but also and especially along the nation's borders considering that, as already reiterated, the flow of trafficking of narcotics and Nigerian migrants occurs predominantly across Nigerian borders and first involves various states in the Sahel region. The first aspect is mainly related to the deep level of corruption in the police force and the lack of funding for law enforcement operations and the right intelligence instrumentation. The second aspect is related to the overlapping of competencies between NAPTIP and Immigration Service, which holds the exclusive competence of border control. Despite a progressive awareness of the phenomenon that led to the specialization of police forces against migrant trafficking in NAPTIP, it was seen in the previous section that the lack of resources does not allow the full efficiency and effectiveness of its operations. From the Nigerian police force, therefore,

one cannot expect that degree of cooperation sufficient for a factual and satisfactory fight against the common threat.

This should not only prompt Italian and European forces to provide Nigeria with the support it has hitherto offered in advancing the knowledge and training of its police personnel and the formation of task forces specialized in combating trafficking, but should also look at the phenomenon from the perspective of a system that lacks any element of stability. Reiterating that the problem as vast and widespread as it is requires a multifaceted response that cannot ignore partnerships with the countries from which it originates, Italy as well as the European countries involved in combating and countering the Nigerian mafia should not lose the goal of dealing with a problem with deep geopolitical connotations. The way forward is through continued cooperation with Nigerian institutions, but at the same time considering that the priority remains the declination of the problem within the national territory and the unprecedented aspects it takes on within its borders which precisely includes the stipulation of partnerships with pre-existing local crime and which requires a specific and targeted response. Specifically, the recommended policies to be implemented should be developed along three lines:

- **Security by sea (policies of repression):**

Although more and more reference is made to the concept of the “Mediterraneo Allargato” to indicate Italy's area of national interest²²⁰ that extends precisely to the Sahel region, as its crises directly affect the *Mare Nostrum*, it is advisable for Italian security forces to focus along the country's borders and act in the neuralgic area of human trafficking and along the direct route of migrants' access to Italian territory, namely the Mediterranean Sea in its geographical and not symbolic-strategic meaning. In fact, the Mediterranean stretching from our shores to the Libyan coast remains the main scene of the movement of narcotics and migrant trafficking by organized crime. See again the map attached to the first chapter provided by Frontex: most of the trafficking that reaches our coasts passing mainly through Sicily arrives from Libya via sea vessels, unlike other major European cities such as Paris or Frankfurt where the goods arrive mainly by air. Considering then that a large portion of the goods first arrive in Italy and then are disposed of in major European hubs, control of the narrow Mediterranean area between the Libyan and Sicilian coasts is of paramount importance. To this end, the law enforcement and monitoring procedures must be structured along two lines: security by sea

²²⁰ The notion of "Mediterraneo Allargato" is provided by ISPI in the following report: <https://www.parlamento.it/application/xmanager/projects/parlamento/file/repository/affariinternazionali/osservatorio/fo cus/PI0017ISPIMed.pdf>

and security by land, that is, inside Italian territory where the presence in the Nigerian mafia has already established itself. The first is preventive in nature in that it is aimed at preventing products and people from reaching Italian shores, the second more purely repressive in that it is aimed at countering the Nigerian presence in the territory.

Safety by sea is of vital importance and its protection is primary and preparatory to the protection of the national territory. The Mediterranean Sea has been defined by UNHCR as "the world's deadliest road,"²²¹ and nearly 80 percent of departures take place from Libya where the first disposal of Nigerian victims, especially those destined for the prostitution market, takes place, and they are then embarked to Italian shores. To ensure that this trafficking is stopped before the victims are disposed of first on Italian soil and then throughout Europe, strengthening and deploying military forces directed at countering the threat at sea is the first development to be made. Coast Guard and Navy should coordinate in the protection of territorial waters through operations such as diversion of suspicious vessels, ships boarding and seizure, and of course to the blocking of hulls. The already existing cooperation between the DIA and the Navy in this regard should be enhanced through the exchange of information and joint planning of operations. Recently, the Italian Navy has taken the lead in operations aimed at the military management of established migrant trafficking routes in the Mediterranean resulting from the 2015 migration crisis. The main one was "Operation Sophia" aimed at countering migrant smuggling in the central Mediterranean area mainly from Libya. The Operation had been included as part of a joint effort with the major fleets of European Union countries to form a Union Mediterranean naval task force known by the acronym EUNAVFOR MED²²² including a mechanism to monitor personnel in training to ensure the long-term efficiency of the training of the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy, surveillance and intelligence gathering activities collect information on smuggling and exchange information on human trafficking with member state police agencies, FRONTEX and EUROPOL.

A similar project should be envisaged for countering the Nigerian mafia's migrant smuggling: Italy should take the lead in the European military fleet aimed first at surveillance and assessment of smuggling and human trafficking networks in the Mediterranean, the search and inspection of suspicious ships and the subsequent disposal of ships carrying illegal goods or human beings. In this case, it should be remembered that the issue here is a structured and organized organization that as

²²¹ ANSA - Immigrazione, Unhcr: Mediterraneo 'strada più mortale del mondo', 3.419 morti nel 2014, 10 Dec 2014, available at: https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/mondo/2014/12/10/immigrazione-3.419-morti-nel-mediterraneo-nel-2014-029ab542-81ca-4a8f-a663-73bb74e0bbfd.html?fb_comment_id=619729894803799_619772514799537

²²² EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia, available at: https://www.marina.difesa.it/cosa-facciamo/per-la-difesa-sicurezza/operazioni-concluse/Pagine/eunavformed_sophia.aspx

already widely discussed often does not take part in the transport phase, but only in the recruitment and subsequent exploitation of migrants on Italian territory. Therefore, if the diversion of ships, as well as boarding and seizure²²³ are the exclusive responsibility of the Navy Corps, the tracing of the origin of the trafficking and the perpetrators is to be entrusted as much to intelligence agencies as to specialized forces against migrant trafficking and the fight against the mafia. The presence in Navy ships during the operation of personnel from Europol or Italian intelligence services, as much as DIA components, would thus be the turning point for the effective and synergistic conduct of operations and investigations.

- **Security by land (policies of prevention and repression):**

On the investigative level, concerning land security, it should be considered how the correct approach to the phenomenon of human trafficking has recently developed in our country as well. As already discussed, in fact, with the ratification of the Palermo Convention, the various anti-mafia district directorates started to be assigned also of jurisdiction for human trafficking. However, this phenomenon is quite recent and requires further strengthening of the D.I.A.'s info-operational capacity to counter mafia style criminal organizations. In this light, it is necessary for Italy to continue to move as a promoter of European cooperation projects such as the operations connected to the European anti-mafia network "@ON-Operational Network."²²⁴ The project's ultimate goal is to train member states' special anti-mafia units with the aim of providing operational support to investigations and take advantage of Europol's information-sharing channels. Currently, in fact, the priorities are the strengthening of analysis and investigation activities, including financial investigations consequent also to the analysis on suspicious transaction reports, money laundering and capital reuse investigations, corruption, narcotics, monitoring companies in the field of public procurement, with the use of specialized software. As part of this work, it is also planned to improve information exchange with Europol.

This would already allow for a degree of operativeness and repression throughout the country that, however, could be further corroborated if the action of the anti-mafia districts were complemented by that of task forces specialized in combating the Nigerian mafia. Such is the Turin SAT, the first

²²³ Vessel diversion, boarding, and seizure activities in the Mediterranean Sea are some of the operations in the National Rules of Engagement (ROE) catalog that the Navy uses both to carry out peacekeeping missions under NATO or UN auspices and to conduct operations related to drug trafficking, terrorism, or human trafficking.

²²⁴ Fondo Sicurezza Interna 2014-2020, Call for Proposal – Project 15.5.1, Objective OS.5 / ON.1
<https://fondosicurezzainterna.interno.gov.it/progetti/call-proposal/progetto-1551>

anti-trafficking task force established in 2011 to conduct the first large-scale investigation concerning the Nigerian mafia and related crimes, namely the aforementioned Operation Athenaum, which revealed for the first time the secrets of Nigerian cults, their structure and modus operandi. The SAT is a permanent team with specific resources and apt to counter the phenomenon, an Italian unicum that nevertheless remains a type of local police force purely circumscribed to Turin and at most in the Piedmont region. If every major city were to equip itself with its own SAT, especially given that the Nigerian mafia has spread since the early 2000s throughout Italy by invading the South, there would be a capillary and extensive network throughout the country. This would ensure a very precise division of responsibilities and both horizontal and vertical operation with the DIA directing investigations nationwide and the SAT playing the role of local enforcement region by region.

- **Victims' protection (implementation of mechanisms of safeguards):**

From the perspective of victim protection, it would also be desirable for direct relationships and links to be established between DDAs and NGOs. Indeed, it is rare for trafficking victims, who already rarely decide to report their exploitative condition, to go directly to the police. As often emphasized in this research work, the aspect of victim protection is hindered by the nature of victims who very often do not report for fear of revealing their illegal status. Therefore, cases of victims turning to law enforcement are very rare. Instead, victims of trafficking and exploitation, also stimulated by civil society, are more likely to turn to NGOs or social workers. Civil society and police should therefore cooperate and exchange information more often, which, provided directly by victims, would be timely and greatly facilitate the work of police personnel during investigations.

The transversality of the public competencies involved concerns the various levels of government, of territorial and local authorities, with a view to complementarity and synergy of forces and the assurance of cooperation between the institutional level and the private social reference. Only by acting and organizing the forces involved in the fight against the Nigerian mafia would there be full and factual implementation of the aforementioned PNA²²⁵ and its four reference objectives, namely prevention, prosecution, protection and partnership while ensuring complete safety at sea and within the national territory.

In the South, the fight must inevitably be directed specifically at dismantling exploitation and in forms of *caporalato*. As mentioned above, the state has already arranged law enforcement tools in this

²²⁵ Piano nazionale d'azione contro la tratta e il grave sfruttamento 2016-2018, adopted by the Consiglio dei Ministri on 26th Feb 2016, available at: https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/7377/file/Italy_national_action_plan_trafficking_2016-2018_en.pdf

regard. The additions made to the Criminal Code in 2016 by Law 199, with the expansion of investigative tools, the aggravation of penalties for corporals, the sanctions against employers involved and confiscations in case of conviction (art.603 bis), the appointment of extraordinary commissioners to deal with the degradation in specific municipalities including Castel Volturno due to the presence of 'ghettos' and criminality. These developments have made it possible to multiply the number of inspections, which rose to 5,806 in 2019, and to suspend illicit business activities.

In terms of victim protection, however, there are inadequacies and unequal treatment. For example, protections are stronger if the exploitation concerns those who are also victims of trafficking, more attenuated in the case of irregular immigrants to whom support should be increased when they denounce their exploiters. Prevention policies are also currently unsatisfactory since in recent years, especially following the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, the phenomenon seems to have become more pronounced with increasing employment of underpaid migrants.

In this context, the Tavolo Caporalato remains as of now the most strategic solution and the only one to treat victims of caporalato equally without particularistic differences regarding social status. In order to combine repressive actions aimed at the emergence of present illegal situations with effective preventive interventions, the Tavolo of Caporalato is aimed at providing the producer with a legal alternative to the services offered by the corporals, sustainable from an economic and social point of view²²⁶. It is necessary, however, that the work of the Table also be supported by European and international institutions such as the European Community, which has approved the Three-Year Operational Plan, and the ILO, which provides the legal and institutional framework for action against caporalato. In this regard, it is emphasized that caporalato is categorized in the 2014 Protocol on the International Labor Organization Convention No. 29 as a form of "forced labor."²²⁷ This categorization is simplistic since it does not take into account the fact that in addition to being coercive and precluding the victim's freedom of decision and action, the case concerning migrants who mostly preserve their irregular and illegal status, is also a form of severe labor exploitation²²⁸. This presupposes that a substantial portion of the remuneration that is rightfully due to the worker for services rendered is taken away from him or her by someone who uses it for his or her own benefit.

²²⁶ Relazione al Parlamento sul primo anno di attuazione del Piano triennale di contrasto allo sfruttamento lavorativo in agricoltura e al caporalato (2020-2022), available at: <https://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/it-it/Altre-info/e/2/o/18//id/31/Tavolo-caporalato>

²²⁷ Doc. XVII n. 9 - Documento approvato dalle commissioni riunite XI (lavoro pubblico e privato) e XIII (agricoltura) Nella seduta del 12 maggio 2021. A conclusione dell'indagine conoscitiva deliberata nella seduta del 19 dicembre 2018 sul fenomeno del cosiddetto « caporalato » in agricoltura (articolo 144, comma 3, del regolamento della camera dei deputati), available at: <https://documenti.camera.it/dati/leg18/lavori/documentiparlamentari/IndiceETesti/017/009/INTERO.pdf>

²²⁸ *Il lavoro forzato e la tratta di esseri umani. Manuale per gli Ispettori del Lavoro*, Organizzazione Internazionale del Lavoro, Dipartimento per le Pari Opportunità, Roma 2010.

This is how the homegrown mafia operates, offering a tiny percentage of the proceeds even to the Nigerian mafia, money that is then laundered into other illicit activities or used to purchase material goods. Considering forced labor and labor exploitation as two facts that go hand in hand with each other when talking about migrant laborers and their exploitation by mafias would provide a more realistic picture of the situation and, above all, would ensure more effective safeguards for the victims of mafia caporalato.

Conclusion

Having reached the conclusion of this research work, it is now possible to trace the connotative elements of the Nigerian Mafia, structurally and organizationally characterized basically by five aspects:

- The presence of an internal structure
- The ability to perpetrate coordinated illegal activities in their own territory
- The ability to extend the network of illegal business beyond national borders through entrepreneurial tools and methodologies
- The ability to form partnerships with criminal organizations that stand out along the network of illegal trades
- A predisposition to the “ethnicization” of criminal actions through the exploitation of their own compatriots as the main source of profit

Further, the use of deception, extortion, coercion, intimidation, and the loyalty shown to cronies as additional features, make the Nigerian Mafia the prototype of a traditional mafia.

Yet, the goal of this research work was to show that the mafia as traditionally understood is a concept in need of revision, as much the world has become globalized in recent decades, so much the new mafias have taken advantage of market deregulation to diversify the portfolio of illicit activities. As the crises of the new millennium can be considered critical junctures to a process of infiltration into the global illegal market and “transnationalisation” that the mafia has been going through since the 1990s, it can be argued that almost all mafias in the world today are consolidated in the international market. During the economic crisis of 2008, the only liquid investment capital that some banks had available to avoid collapse were the earnings of criminal organizations (UN Office of Drugs and Crime); during the migration crisis restrictive policies had the counterproductive effect of increasing irregular immigration and exploitation of illegal immigrants at the same time when many of them were forced to enter criminal circles although some were still in a situation of regularity; during the economic crisis linked to the spread of Covid-19, the mafia progressively invaded the legal economy by selling low-cost contracts, providing illegal work and expanding illegal trafficking where it could escape state controls.

In a nutshell, the rational "capitalization" of the financial resources, the creation of criminal networks made up of a plurality of legal and illegal actors and the partnership links with other criminal groups is common to all mafia “welfare systems” (Musacchio, 2021), from the Yakuza to the Organizacija

or the Black Mafia. As Vincenzo Musacchio explains, these new forms of Mafia associationism are not such because of a change in essence, but rather because of a greater degree of pervasiveness as an ensemble of multiple and differentiated underlying activities and coordinated subsystems. They are strategic and chameleon-like and adapt instantaneously to new concussions that arise.

Therefore, the degree of dangerousness of the Nigerian mafia is concealed not only in its violent nature and the methods it uses, but also in the fact that it is decentralized, fluid, and is able to manage, through a combination of men and means, a reality as large as the trafficking of its compatriots from West Africa to Europe and without actually encountering any obstacles along the way. This is due to the fact that, first of all as explored in this research, much of the management of this traffic by the Nigerian mafia is strategically handled in the first and in the last phases of the trafficking process: the first phase concerns, as seen, the recruitment of the victims, whose transport is then delegated to the transporters and the *mamans*, while the last phase, that is the exploitation phase, is mainly conducted in the territory of destination in which the Nigerian bosses enjoy the protection and cover of the local Mafia. Further, it has been traced how the extreme “parcelization” of the trafficking routes, both of migrants and of narcotics, made up of passages from one actor to another and from one medium to another, providing for very contingent loads of both people and products, allows the Nigerian mafia to better dilute, dispose and disperse the traces of its activities.

This reveals all the pitfalls in a system of surveillance, monitoring, protection and repression of the phenomenon that has profound geopolitical connotations in that it should affect all law enforcement agencies in the Sahel area first and foremost, those in the Mediterranean and those in northern Europe where much of the traffic flows.

In this sense, in this research work, the author's personal voice was manifested in the “policy recommendations” at the end of the third chapter in which it is advanced that although the effort should be global and collective, synergistic and simultaneous, each country should act according to its geographical area of belonging by efficiently deploying its police and control forces. As far as our country is concerned, strategic would be to maintain our partnerships with Nigeria and the ECOWAS countries by thickening the presence of our law enforcement and especially military personnel in the Mediterranean Sea, from where the largest percentage of the Nigerian mafia's drug trade continues to pass and where Nigerian trafficking victims are transported to reach our shores.

As amply expressed and demonstrated, this criminal case encompasses a multitude of crimes, which is not limited only to those activities under the purview of the local police, the financial police or the

anti-mafia investigative directorate, but encroaches on a wide range of illicit activities that among other things are intertwined with each other, as is the case, for example, between migrant smuggling and drug trafficking, which often overlap. This makes it necessary not only to maintain and develop the international regulatory framework, the projects already underway and the personnel already designated to combat the phenomenon, but to devote even more in the near future to the work of specializing the forces, concentrating them in the nerve centers and in their simultaneous and synergistic work with European intelligence and Law Enforcement agencies to ensure the effective suppression and prevention on all fronts.

This research work also emphasized the relevance of cultural factors, not be underestimated when referring to prevention of the phenomenon. It has been described how the Edict of the Oba of Edo State achieved an outstanding milestone in convincing young women not to embark on the long journey to Europe and relieving them of debt to both traffickers and *mamans*, breaking the curse of *voodoo* and *juju* rituals. While this type of response to the problem might seem unfamiliar compared to the methods used by European or Italian institutions, it is not improper to consider that instead, in the face of the inefficiency of specialized agencies such as NAPTIP whose work has been seen to be still insufficient to provide an effective response to the threat, religious, social and cultural factors can instead be an effective countermeasure.

All this must be done with consideration of the worst-case scenario in which predictions are of greater diasporas from Africa to Europe due to the increase in population in Africa. Consequently, a parallel increase in illicit activities can be expected. As if this were not enough, in perspective, the increase in manpower for African criminal groups abroad could result in the modification of the current balances and relationships between them and domestic mafias. In fact, if until now the African criminal universe has accepted a subordinate role with respect to local organizations for reasons of economic and numerical inferiority, the future could see an attempt to claim greater operational autonomy. In parallel, the Nigerian mafia, if not stopped in time, could further refine its techniques more than they are already technologically advanced. Reference was made in the first chapter to money laundering activities or transfers through *hawala systems* and money movements through crypto-currency that may further exacerbate.

From what emerges in the DIA's latest Semi-Annual Report, especially in Palermo, and the reasons are now fully understandable, the sodalities between Cosa Nostra and the Black Mafia are progressively consolidating especially in the drug market where Nigerians are now able to

independently manage supply and demand. In the poorer areas of Sicily, especially as a result of the worsening economic situation brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Nigerian Mafia "welfare state" also seems to have accumulated a certain consensus.

Thus, two possible scenarios open up: one in which Nigerian criminality could become increasingly autonomous and carve out a space for itself at the level of the domestic mafias in the international illicit market and thicken its trafficking networks; the other, which is the more likely one, predicting a mafia that remains mostly subordinate to the domestic mafias, but through increasingly close associations can enjoy sufficient *placet* and protection to run its business, especially those related to prostitution and the exploitation of migrants. This second scenario is at present much more reliable in that we cannot expect, at least for the time being and at least on Italian soil, that a foreign mafia could take the place of local historical mafias. However, this research has shown that where there is a declining trend of a mafia (see Cosa Nostra), the Nigerian mafia is almost a support to hold on in order to increase interests, having a more international outlook.

Hence, if the Nigerian mafia has managed to settle and then take root so stably and deeply in Southern Italy, it is not only to manage the trafficking market more closely, since migrant landings take place mainly on the coasts of Southern Italy for clear logistical reasons, but also, and above all, because of the partnerships with the domestic mafias. These on the one hand, it is worth to reiterate, support the Nigerian business, and, on the other, take away from the Nigerian mafia some of the attention that the police forces would devote to them if the local mafia did not remain the priority to fight in the territory. Although in fact local mafias avoid jumping into overt business, such as the prostitution or street dealing business might be, 'Ndrangheta, Camorra, and Cosa Nostra are still deemed the main threat when it comes to organized crime or mafia-like associations stationed in Italian territory. Foreign mafias, instead, are the subject of specific, disjointed, sporadic Operations that are deferred in time and space, while the fight against the local mafia is conducted by the DIA and police forces on an ongoing basis.

In both cases, those left unprotected are the victims, who would be trapped in the vicious circle of their enslavement and saved neither in Nigeria nor in Europe. Still lacking the adequate apparatus and repressive forces to decisively counter such a sprawling phenomenon, Nigeria's action could instead focus at least on protecting its citizens, the repatriated victims and those most vulnerable to re-trafficking. First by beginning to register arrivals, providing at least in an initial stage from return home total protection in re-homing centers and then eliminating the social stigma of repatriated women often disowned by their families and communities.

In Italy, and in Europe in general, it has been seen how this phenomenon is accentuated by the fact that the *ethnoscapes* formed by mass migrations, the irregularity and clandestinity in which most migrants of Nigerian origin exist, and the degradation of living conditions that pushes many of them inevitably to slip into criminal circles, do not allow a distinction to be made at times between victim and exploiter.

In this thesis, it was not intended for a choice related to thematic rigor to delve into the discourse related to migration policies, since the focus of the research is organized crime's management of migrant trafficking routes, but it was mentioned in the third chapter how a large part of the problem is also to be attributed to migration policies that have so far encouraged the irregular stay of migrants in the territory. Again, the discourse regarding the development of reception policies and European migration policies that are based on solidarity between states is as valid as that of disposing of the work of reception centers and increasing the financial resources dedicated to reception and integration projects and their refinement. The method so far used by the operators acting in regional reception projects has been proved inadequate to ensure that migrant households achieve the sufficient degree of autonomy to self-determine themselves in the social and labor spheres. Most of the times, the prolonged waiting time for obtaining a residence permit, the difficulties in entering the regular labor market, and the lack of social integration are the push factor for migrants to give in to the offers of clans, whether they are locals or compatriots.

That said, the coming footprints are to be implemented on several fronts and once again the same as those laid out in the national plans against organized crime and trafficking: prevention, prosecution, protection, partnership. These are goals that must unite, Italy, Nigeria and the whole of Europe, and only through the full implementation of each will there be an immediate and decisive response to the threat. Although the importance of civil society as the primary supporters of the prosecution, prevention and protection processes has been emphasized in this research, it is the institutions that must take the lead in law enforcement policies.

The Mafia takes its place where the State does not exert its control, and it is therefore the institutions that make up the State that are the first to not have to yield to the overpowering grip of criminal associations to then protect those who sometimes have no choice, except to be sucked into it for lack of alternative.

Bibliography

Angeli, Franco, *La percezione della criminalità nigeriana in Italia: un confronto tra le fonti accademiche e le rappresentazioni giornalistiche*, in *Sicurezza e scienze sociali* I, 3, 2013, Milano : Franco Angeli, 2013

Antonopoulos, Georgios A. et al., *Human Trafficking Finances Evidence from Three European Countries*. 1st ed. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019

Beate Andrees, *Il lavoro forzato e la tratta di esseri umani. Manuale per gli Ispettori del Lavoro*, Organizzazione Internazionale del Lavoro, Dipartimento per le Pari Opportunità, Roma 2010

Becucci, Stefano, *Mafie straniere in Italia. Come operano, come si contrastano*, pp. 246, Politiche Migratorie, FrancoAngeli, Marzo 2016

Becucci, Stefano., and Monica. Massari, *Globalizzazione e criminalità*. Roma ;: GLF Editori Laterza, 2003

Catherine Francis Brooks, Brigitte Juanals, Jean-Luc Minel., *Trends in Media Coverage and Information Diffusion Over Time: The Case of the American Earth Systems Research Centre Biosphere 2*. *Journal of Creative Communications* 17:1, pages 88-107

Ciconte, Enzo, *Mafie straniere in Italia: storia ed evoluzione*. Roma: Edizioni Commercio, 2003

Colombo, Cristina F., *Economia criminale: geodiritto, globalizzazione e nuovi canali per i reati d'impresa*. Milano: Wolters Kluwer, 2021

Colombo, Cristina F., *Economia criminale: geodiritto, globalizzazione e nuovi canali per i reati d'impresa*. Milano: Wolters Kluwer, 2021

De Bonis, Antonio, *La cosa nera. Indagine a tutto campo sulla mafia nigeriana*. Paesi Edizioni: 2021

De Luca, Ruben et al., *Anatomia del crimine in Italia: manuale di criminologia*. Milano: Giuffrè, 2013

Godwin E. Morka, *National Rapporteurs on Trafficking in Persons and Equivalent Mechanisms in Addressing trafficking in Persons (NREMs): Institutional Framework*, , OHCHR 2014

Law no. 228 of August 11, 2003: "Measures against trafficking in persons", published in the Official Gazette no. 195 of August 23, 2003

Legislative Decree No.286 of 25.7.1998 on Immigration and Aliens, as amended by Law No.189 of 30.7.2002

Leogrande, A., *Il caporalato e le nuove schiavitù*, in "Parolechiave", Carocci, Gennaio-Giugno 1/2016, pp. 103-108

Luise Mario, *Un Lungo Viaggio Tra Gli Spaesati Di Castelvoturno*, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, gennaio 2001

Mediterraneo, in M. SAVINO, *La crisi migratoria tra Italia e Unione europea. Diagnosi e prospettive*, Napoli, 2017, pp. 303-348

Melillo, Giovanni, *I rapporti tra mafia e impresa: modelli di analisi economico-gestionale, qualificazione giuridica e strumenti di contrasto*, Roma: Laurus Robuffo, 2019

Mosca, L., *Migrazione, Stato, Camorra. Diritti Di Cittadinanza E Politiche Di Sicurezza Nella Provincia Di Caserta*. AM 2012, 14

Nazzaro, Sergio, *Mafia Nigeriana, la prima inchiesta della Squadra Anti Tratta*. Città Nuova: 2019

Nicaso, A., Gratteri, N., *Oro bianco*, Mondadori, Milano 2015

Palmisano, Giuseppe, *Il contrasto al traffico di migranti nel diritto internazionale, comunitario e interno*. Milano: Giuffrè, 2008

Petrarca V., *Sud e Nord nel Mondo. Migranti Africani di Castel Volturno*, in *Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane*, Anno XVI n.3, luglio-settembre 2013.

Roberti, F., *Tra animismo e neo-schiavismo: come i secret cult nigeriani operano in Italia*, Dario Flaccovio Editore, Palermo 2019

Sergi, Anna & Lavorgna, Anita, *'Ndrangheta. The Glocal Dimension of the Most Powerful Italian Mafia*, Palgrave Mcmillan, 2016

Taub, Ben., *The Desperate Journey of a Trafficked Girl*, The New Yorker: April10, 2017

Tinebra, G., Centonze, A., *Il traffico internazionale di persone*, Giuffrè Editore, 1 febbraio 2004

Trevisanut, S., *Immigrazione irregolare via mare, diritto internazionale e diritto dell'Unione europea*, Jovene Editore, Napoli 2012

Zelinsky, W., & Lee, B.A., *Heterolocalism: an alternative model of the sociospatial behaviour of immigrant ethnic communities*. *International journal of population geography* : IJPG, 4 4, 281-98

Sitography

"Kalifoo ground" Castel Volturno – Viaggio dentro Gomorra: il racconto della strage è su YouTube (video), Corriere delle Migrazioni, 30 Maggio 2011, <https://www.corrieredellemigrazioni.it/2011/05/30/kalifoo-ground-castel-volturno-viaggio-dentro-gomorra-il-racconto-della-strage-e-su-youtube-video/> (last access 06/06/2022)

Adeoye, O. (2009). *Godfatherism and the future of Nigerian democracy*. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3, 268-272, available at: <https://academicjournals.org/journal/AJPSIR/article-full-text-pdf/AED570C31547> (last access 06/06/2022)

Akpomera, E., & Tonwe, D. A. (2021), *Interrogating Nigeria's Evolving Legal Framework For Combating International Human Trafficking*, University of Nigeria Journal of Political Economy, 9(1). Retrieved from <https://unjpe.com/index.php/UNJPE/article/view/21> (last access 06/06/2022)

Alberto Mucci, *Smuggling tonnes of cocaine through an Italian port*, 10th June 2015, AlJazeera, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2015/6/10/smuggling-tonnes-of-cocaine-through-an-italian-port> (last access 06/06/2022)

Andrea Di Nicola (2014), *Criminalità violenta degli stranieri nelle province italiane: uno studio esplicativo*, N.3 (2010), available at: <https://ojs.pensamultimedia.it/index.php/ric/article/view/680/660> (last access 06/06/2022)

Angel Tinoco Pastrana, *L'ordine europeo di indagine penale*, Fascicolo 2, Giappichelli 2017, available at: <http://www.processopenaleegiustizia.it/ordine-europeo-di-indagine-penale> (last access 06/06/2022)

ANSA, *Immigrazione, Unhcr: Mediterraneo 'strada più mortale del mondo', 3.419 morti nel 2014*, 10 Dec 2014, available at: https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/mondo/2014/12/10/immigrazione-3.419-morti-nel-mediterraneo-nel-2014-_029ab542-81ca-4a8f-a663-73bb74e0bbfd.html?fb_comment_id=619729894803799_619772514799537(last access 06/06/2022)

Antimafia Duemila, *Blitz contro la mafia nigeriana: a Ballarò uno stato parallelo*, 19th November 2016, available at: <https://www.antimafiaduemila.com/home/mafie-news/254-focus/63077-blitz-contro-la-mafia-nigeriana-a-ballaro-uno-stato-parallelo.html> (last access 06/06/2022)

Antonio Balsamo (2020), *The international contrast to the economic dimension of organized crime: from Gaetano Costa's commitment to the United Nations "Falcone resolution"*, November 12, 2020, Sistema Penale, , available at: <https://www.sistemapenale.it/it/articolo/balsamo-contrasto-internazionale-criminalita-economica-gaetano-costa-risoluzione-falcone-onu>(last access 06/06/2022)

Antonio Balsamo (2020), *Twenty years later: the new perspectives of the Palermo Convention*, Cross Vol.6 N°3 (2020), available at: <file:///Users/maiasacchetto/Downloads/14727-Articolo-44069-1-10-20201223.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Antonio Commisotto, *Aspetti socio-criminologici dell'immigrazione: il caso di Rosarno*, 5th May 2018, MeltingPort, available at: https://www.meltingpot.org/app/uploads/2018/05/tesi_definitiva.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Antonio De Bonis, *La mafia nigeriana in Italia: elementi per una corretta valutazione*, 25 September 2019, Centro Studi Politici e Strategici Machiavelli, Dossier del Machiavelli n.20, , available at: <https://www.centromachiavelli.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Dossier-20-La-mafia-nigeriana-in-Italia.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Archivio dell' Agenzia Informazioni e Sicurezza Interna, *La mafia nigeriana fra voodoo e computer*, GNOSIS Rivista di Intelligence, GNOSIS 2/2005, available at: <http://gnosis.aisi.gov.it/Gnosis/Rivista3.nsf/ServNavig/15> (last access: 06/06/2022)

ASGI, *Evocare immediatamente il Memorandum Italia – Libia: Appello al Governo e a UNHCR e OIM*, 2 Feb 2022, available at: https://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Appello_Memorandum_ITA.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Autorità di Sistema Portuale dei Mari Tirreno Meridionale e Ionio, Official website: <https://www.portodigioiatauro.it> (last access 06/06/2022)

Banche e Sicurezza, Stefano Delfini, Dipartimento di Pubblica Sicurezza, Direttore Servizio Analisi Criminale, 19-20 Maggio 2019, Official Website, available at: <https://banchesicurezza.abieventi.it/relators/stefano-delfini> (last access 06/06/2022)

Baratto, L. (2008), *Invisibili alla luce del sole*, in Confronti: mensile di fede, politica, vita quotidiana. Anno XXXV, numero 11/novembre 2008, Roma : Com Nuovi Tempi, 2008, available at: <http://digital.casalini.it/10.1400/100151>(last access 06/06/2022)

BBC News: *The world of Nigeria's sex-trafficking 'Air Lords'*, 27 January 2016 <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35244148> (last access: 06/06/2022)

Bilongo, Carchedi (2020), *Agromafie e caporalato*, Osservatorio Placido Rizzotto FLAI-CGIL, V Rapporto, available at: <https://cgiltoscana.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Agromafie-e-caporalato-quinto-rapporto.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Camera dei Deputati - testi allegati all'ordine del giorno della seduta n. 134 di Mercoledì 27 febbraio 2019: Mozioni Concernenti Iniziative Per Il Contrasto All'immigrazione Clandestina E Alle Organizzazioni Criminali Straniere, Con Particolare Riferimento Alla Cosiddetta Mafia Nigeriana, available at: https://www.camera.it/leg18/995?sezione=documenti&tipoDoc=assemblea_allegato_odg&idlegislatura=18&anno=2019&mese=02&giorno=27(last access 06/06/2022)

Camera dei Deputati XVII Legislatura, On. Rosy Bindi, *Commissione Parlamentare di inchiesta sul fenomeno delle mafie straniere e sulle altre associazioni criminali, anche straniere*, Doc.XXIII n.38, 7 febbraio 2018, available at: https://i2.res.24o.it/pdf2010/Editrice/ILSOLE24ORE/QUOTIDIANO_ENTI_LOCALI_PA/Online/_Oggetti_Correlati/Documenti/2018/03/27/La_relazione.pdf?uuid=fe6c3fea-3109-11e8-8398-6275159a4914 (last access 06/06/2022)

Camera dei Deputati XVIII Legislatura, *Focus: Criminalità nigeriana in Italia*, Doc. LXXIV n.3, 2nd semester 2018, available at: https://www.camera.it/_dati/leg18/lavori/documentiparlamentari/indiceetesti/074/003_RS/00000034.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Camera Dei Deputati, Documento approvato dalle Commissioni riunite XI (Lavoro Pubblico e privato) e XIII (agricoltura) , Doc. XVII n.9, seduta del 12 maggio 2021, available at: https://documenti.camera.it/_dati/leg18/lavori/documentiparlamentari/IndiceETesti/017/009/INTERO.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Camera dei Deputati, Il contrasto al caporalato nella legge n. 199 del 2016, Temi dell'attività parlamentare XVII legislatura, available at: https://temi.camera.it/leg17/post/OCD25-272.html?tema=temi/nuovi_reati_d (last access 06/06/2022)

Camera dei Deputati, *Trafficking in human beings regulatory framework*, Topics of parliamentary activity, XVII Legislature, available at: https://temi.camera.it/leg17/post/la_tratta_di_esseri_umani_quadro_normativo_e_statistiche.html?tema=temi/tutela_delle_vittime_dei_reati (last access 06/06/2022)

Camera dei Deputati, XVIII Legislature, Attachment B, Sitting of Wednesday, July 8, 2020, available at: https://www.camera.it/leg18/410?idSeduta=0368&tipo=atti_indirizzo_controllo (last access 06/06/2022)

Camorra e 'Ndrangheta soci in affari. L'intervista ad Antonio Nicaso: in AntimafiaDuemila.com, 5 January 2019, available at: <https://www.antimafiaduemila.com/home/opinioni/234-attualita/72904-camorra-e-ndrangheta-soci-in-affari-l-intervista-ad-antonio-nicaso-dal-suo-libro-e-nata-bad-blood.html> (last access 06/06/2022)

Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Nigeria : information sur la confrérie Eiyé (Eiyé confraternité), y compris sur son origine, ses objectifs, sa structure, ses membres, ses méthodes de recrutement, ses activités et les régions où elle exerce ses activités; les mesures prises par l'État (2014-mars 2016)*, 8 April 2016, NGA105490.EF, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=5843fa1f4> (last access 06/06/2022)

Caretta MA. (2015), *A Multilevel Analysis of a "Good Practice" in the Social Assistance of Sexually Trafficked Nigerian Women*, February 2015, Casa Rut. Affilia. 2015;30(4):546-559. available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272794882_Casa_Rut_A_Multilevel_Analysis_of_a_Good_Practice_in_the_Social_Assistance_of_Sexually_Trafficked_Nigerian_Women (last access 06/06/2022)

Centro Studi Internazionali, *Le capacità italiane di contrasto alla criminalità organizzata come strumento di stabilizzazione in Africa Occidentale*, April 2019, available at: <https://www.cesi-italia.org/contents/Analisi/le%20capacit%C3%A0%20italiane%20di%20contrasto%20alla%20criminalit%C3%A0%20organizzata.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Charlie Northcott, Sam Judah and Peter Macjob, *The ultra-violent cult that became a global mafia*, 13th December 2021, BBC World Service, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59614595> (last access 06/06/2022)

Claudio Orlando (2021), *Crimine organizzato e pandemia: l'intervento programmatico della "Risoluzione Falcone"*, La legislazione penale, ISSN: 2421-552X, available at: <https://www.la legislazione penale.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Orlando-Approfondimenti-1-1.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Comando Generale dell'Arma dei Carabinieri – Legione Carabinieri Sicilia Comando Provinciale Messina, *Carabinieri Messina: Operazione "Balance"*, Redazione, 25 January 2019, https://www.stelladitalianews.com/ultima-ora/2019/01/25/75970_carabinieri-messina-operazione-balance/ (last access: 06/06/2022)

Comando Provinciale Cagliari, *Riciclaggio di capitali illeciti e favoreggiamento dell'immigrazione clandestina*, Guardia di Finanza Ufficio Stampa, Cagliari, 22 novembre 2021 <https://www.gdf.gov.it/stampa/ultime-notizie/anno-2021/novembre/riciclaggio-di-capitali-illeciti-e-favoreggiamento-dellimmigrazione-clandestina> (last access 06/06/2022)

Commissione Parlamentare Antimafia, *Il ruolo delle mafie italiane nel narcotraffico*, giugno 2007, Sportello Scuola e Università, available at: https://web.camera.it/_bicamerale/leg15/commbicantimafia/documentazionetematica/31/116/schedabase.asp (last access 06/06/2022)

Commissione parlamentare d'Inchiesta sul fenomeno della criminalità organizzata mafiosa o similare, Resoconto stenografico della 53esima seduta, martedì 20 Aprile 2004, available at: https://www.parlamento.it/application/xmanager/projects/parlamento/file/commissione_antimafia_14leg/stenografici/seduta53.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Commissione Parlamentare di Inchiesta sul fenomeno delle mafie e sulle altre associazioni criminali, anche straniere, *Relazione su mafie, migranti e tratta di esseri umani, nuove forme di schiavitù*, p.31, DOC. XXIII, N.30, December 4, 2017, available at: <https://www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/BGT/1066856.pdf> (last access: 06/06/2022)

Comparison of Asylum Requests submitted Year 2018 / Year 2019 detected by Country of Origin, Ministry of Interior, available at: http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/confronto_dati_2018_-_2019_0.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Consiglio dell'Unione Europea, *Il ciclo programmatico dell'UE per contrastare la criminalità organizzata e le forme gravi di criminalità internazionale*, EMPACT Project, 2018, available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37348/20185274_qc0418775itn_pdf.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Convenzione delle Nazioni Unite contro la criminalità organizzata transnazionale, Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite, Conferenza di Palermo, 12-15 September 2000, available on: <https://uif.bancaditalia.it/normativa/norm-antiricic/convenzioni/conv-palermo.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Coppola, V., Lo Iacono, E. (2020), *I minori vittime di tratta e sfruttamento: chi sono, da dove vengono e chi lucra su di loro*, Piccoli Schiavi Invisibili, Save the Children, 16 July 2020, available at:

<https://www.savethechildren.it/sites/default/files/files/uploads/pubblicazioni/piccoli-schiavi-invisibili.pdf>
(last access: 06/06/2022)

Costa, Victor Braga (2017), *Dalla Nigeria in Italia: rapporti criminologi fra il fenomeno migratorio e la Mafia Nigeriana a Palermo*, Università di Bologna, available at: https://www.academia.edu/39751242/Dalla_Nigeria_in_Italia_rapporti_criminologi_fra_il_fenomeno_migratorio_e_la_Mafia_Nigeriana_a_Palermo (last access 06/06/2022)

Council Framework Decision of 13 June 2002 on joint investigation teams. Gazzetta Ufficiale No L 162 of 20/06/2002 p. 0001 – 0003, available at: http://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/8f163aaf-2c9a-45d3-bdb7-489369c80be9.0008.01/DOC_1 (last access 06/06/2022)

Daniel Flynn, *Corruption stymies Niger's attempts to stem flow of migrants to Europe*, Mon 22, 2015, The Guardian, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jun/22/corruption-niger-attempt-stem-flow-migrants-europe-smugglers-sahara> (last access 06/06/2022)

Demoskopika, *'Ndrangheta spa, stesso giro aggari di Deutsche Bank e McDonald's*, 26th March 2014, available at: <https://demoskopika.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CS-Ndrangheta-Spa.pdf>

Derek Lutterbeck (2008), *Coping with Europe's Boat People. Trends and Policy Dilemmas in Controlling the EU's Mediterranean Borders*, ISPI, No.76, available at: https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/pb_76_2008.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Di Gennaro, G., La Spina, A. (2016), *The costs of illegality: a research programme*, (Special Issue of Global Crime: the Costs of Illegality: Mafia-type Organizations and Extortion: the Case of Campania) In: GLOBAL CRIME. - ISSN 1744-0580. - 17:1(2016), pp. 1-20, available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17440572.2015.1128621> (last access 06/06/2022)

Dipartimento della Pubblica Sicurezza - Direzione Centrale della Polizia Criminale, Servizio Analisi Criminale, *Focus sulla mafia nigeriana in Italia*, Roma, Dicembre 2020, available at: https://www.poliziadistato.it/statics/41/focus_la_mafia_nigeriana_in_italia_dicembre_2020.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Dipartimento della Pubblica Sicurezza – Direzione Centrale della Polizia Criminale, Servizio Analisi Criminale, *La tratta degli esseri umani in Italia: Focus*, Roma, Marzo 2021, available on: https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2021-04/focus_la_tratta_10mar2021_10.30.doc1_.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Directorate-general for Migration and Home affairs, Brussels home.e.1/af, home-Funds/2021/30 Committee for the home affairs funds, Launch of the call for expression of interest for the 'Specific Action EMPACT' under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) – Reference ISF/2022/SA/2.2.1, available at: <https://fondoseuropeosparaseguridad.interior.gob.es/opencms/export/sites/default/pdf/Convocatorias/FSI/Call-for-interest-SA-EMPACT.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Direzione Centrale per i Servizi Antidroga, *Unprecedented cocaine seizures carried out by the law enforcement agencies*, in International Training, 8th October 2021, available at: https://antidroga.interno.gov.it/en/author/wp_7532387/ (last access 06/06/2022)

Direzione Distrettuale Antimafia in Trento, *Trento: Operazione "Sommo Poeta"*, 03 December 2019, available at: <https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/20155df0a55897110369889525> (last access 06/06/2022)

EMAPCT's actions, priorities and goals, Project website: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-statistics/empact> (last access 06/06/2022)

EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia, available at: https://www.marina.difesa.it/cosa-facciamo/per-la-difesa-sicurezza/operazioni-concluse/Pagine/eunavformed_sophia.aspx(last access 06/06/2022)

European Asylum Support Office (EASO), *Nigeria. La tratta di donne a fini sessuali*, Informazioni sul Paese di Origine, Lussemburgo, Ottobre 2015, available on: https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1305206/1226_1457689194_bz0415678itn.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

European Commission - Fight against organised crime: New 5-year strategy for boosting cooperation across the EU and for better use of digital tools for investigations, 14 April 2021, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_1662

European Commission – Migration and Home Affairs, The Case Koolvis, 2020, available on: https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/koolvis-case_it (last access 06/06/2022)

European Commission, *The Fight Against Trafficking in Human Beings in EU: Promoting Legal Cooperation and Victim's Protection*, 23 November 2011 – 22 April 2014, available at: https://www.transcrime.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/THB_CoopToFight.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

European Council and Council of the European Union, *La lotta dell'UE alla criminalità organizzata*, Anno 2020, available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/policies/eu-fight-against-crime/> (last access 06/06/2022)

European Council and Council of the European Union, *La lotta dell'UE alla criminalità organizzata*, 02/06/2022, available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/policies/eu-fight-against-crime/> (last access 06/06/2022)

European Court of Auditors Special Report, *Il potenziamento della capacità delle forze di sicurezza interna in Niger e in Mali: i progressi sono solo lenti e limitati*, n.15, 2018, available at: <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eca/special-reports/eucap-sahel-15-2018/it/#A11>(last access 06/06/2022)

European Parliament Resolution on the impact of organised crime on own resources of the EU and on the misuse of EU funds with a particular focus on shared management from an auditing and control perspective , Strasburg, 15 December 2021 ,(2020/2221(INI)), available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0501_EN.html (last access 06/06/2022)

Europol - Fighting transnational organised crime: Europol and the Italian Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate host first operational conference in The Hague, 16 April 2019, available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/fighting-transnational-organised-crime-europol-and-italian-anti-mafia-investigation-directorate-host-first-operational>

Europol Media & Press, *Europol supports the fight against Nigerian human trafficking networks*, 5th October 2015, available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/europol-supports-fight-against-nigerian-human-trafficking-networks> (last access 06/06/2022)

Europol, *Joint Action to Tackle West African Human Trafficking Networks*, 12 June 2014, available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/joint-action-to-tackle-west-african-human-trafficking-networks-1> (last access 06/06/2022)

Federico Cafiero de Raho (2020), *The Palermo Convention 20 years after: celebrating its anniversary and unleashing its full potential through the implementation of the review mechanism*, UNODC, 12 October 2020, available at: <https://www.dirittopenaleglobalizzazione.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Intervento-del-Procuratore-Nazionale-Antimafia-e-Antiterrorismo-per-il-ventennale-della-Convenzione-di-Palermo-UNTOC.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Finance Guard Annual Report for the Year 2015, Ente Editoriale per il Corpo della Guardia di Finanza Viale XXI Aprile, 51 - 00162 Roma

Fondo Sicurezza Interna 2014-2020, Call for Proposal – Project 15.5.1, Objective OS.5 / ON.1 <https://fondosicurezzainterna.interno.gov.it/progetti/call-proposal/progetto-1551> (last access 06/06/2022)

Frontex, *Africa-Frontex intelligence community joint report*, Publications Office, 2016, available at:

Garante Nazionale dei diritti delle persone private della libertà personale – Rapporto tematico sull'attività di monitoraggio delle operazioni di rimpatrio forzato di cittadini stranieri (Gennaio 2019 – Giugno 2021), available at: <https://www.garantenazionaleprivatiliberta.it/gnpl/resources/cms/documents/d5a4d5aa5e4e7fc7fccff55b1005765.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Gatti 22/07/2016 [Ddl caporalato], *Disposizioni in materia di contrasto ai fenomeni del lavoro nero, dello sfruttamento del lavoro in agricoltura e di riallineamento retributivo nel settore agricolo*, Relazione 2217 E 2119-A, available at: <https://parlamento17.openpolis.it/atto/documento/id/256034> (last access 06/06/2022)

Giorgio Bongiovanni, *Il sistema criminale integrato esiste*, 27 luglio 2017, available at: <https://www.antimafiaduemila.com/rubriche/giorgio-bongiovanni/66600-il-sistema-criminale-integrato-esiste.html> (last access 06/06/2022)

Girllone Carmela (2017), *The Slave Coasts. Transnational Sexual Exploitation from Nigeria to Italy. From human trafficking to human rights*, Academic year 2016/2017, Università degli Studi di Palermo – available at: https://iris.unipa.it/retrieve/handle/10447/270607/841295/TESI%20SU%20IRIS_final7.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Giuseppina Maria Patrizia Surace, *Immigrazione e Criminalità. Percorsi tra esperienze formative e dati ufficiali*, luglio 2008, Dipartimento di Scienze Psichiatriche e Medicina Psicologica, available at <http://fudepa.org/Biblioteca/recursos/ficheros/BMI20060000381/criminalitat.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Guardia di Finanza Press Office, Comando Provinciale di Reggio Calabria, *Sequestro record di cocaina al porto di Gioia Tauro*, November 14, 2019, report available on: <https://www.gdf.gov.it/stampa/ultime-notizie/anno-2019/novembre/sequestro-record-di-cocaina-al-porto-di-gioia-tauro> (last access 06/06/2022)

Guardia di Finanza Press Office, Reggio Calabria Provincial Command, *Progetto I-Can (Interpol Cooperation Against 'ndrangheta*, November 24, 2020, report available at:

<https://www.gdf.gov.it/stampa/ultime-notizie/anno-2020/novembre/progetto-i2013can-interpol-cooperation-against-2018ndrangheta> (last access 06/06/2022)

Hanafi, Z.O. (2014), *The Challenges faced by NAPTIP Officials in the Control of Child Labour and Human Trafficking in Lagos State, Nigeria*, October 2013, Available at: https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/74113/Zubair_Oba_Hanafi.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1 (last access 06/06/2022)
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3A114163>

International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), *Organised crime: West African Response to trafficking* (OCWAR-T), December 2019 to December 2023, available at:

International Organization for Migration (IOM), *La Tratta di esseri umani attraverso la rotta del Mediterraneo centrale: dati, storie e informazioni raccolte dall'Organizzazione Internazionale per le Migrazioni*, Osservatorio Interventi Tratta, Marzo 2016, available at: https://www.osservatoriointerventitratta.it/wpcontent/uploads/2017/07/RAPPORTO_OIM_Vittime_di_tratta_0.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Interrogazioni Parlamentari, 26 Aprile 2018, Risposta di Dimistris Avramopoulos a nome della Commissione, Riferimento dell'interrogazione: E-000937/2018, available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2018-000937-ASW_IT.html (last access 06/06/2022)

IOM, *EUCAP Sahel Niger and IOM Reinforce Security Along the Niger-Nigeria Border*, 12 October 2019, available at: <https://rodakar.iom.int/news/eucap-sahel-niger-and-iom-reinforce-security-along-niger-nigeria-border> (last access 06/06/2022)

ISPI - Caritas Italiana Report, *Cause di migrazione e contesti di origine*, Tau Editrice, Todi 2019, available at: https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/rapportoispicaritas_0.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

ISTAT Statistiche Report, *Cittadini non comunitari in Italia | Anni 2019-2020*, available at: https://www.istat.it/it/files//2020/10/REPORT_CITTADINI_NON_COMUNITARI_2019.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Italian Embassy Official Website, available at: <https://www.ice.it/it/mercati/nigeria/indirizzi-e-link-utili> (last access 06/06/2022)

Joint Report of the 5th meeting of the Nigeria-Eu Dialogue on Migration and Development, Abuja, January, 2012, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/nigeria/documents/eu_nigeria/conclusion_migration_and_development_final_en.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Kigbu & Y.B. Hassan, *An Assessment of the Institutional Framework for Combating Human Trafficking in Nigeria*, 39 J.L. POL'y & GLOBALIZATION 90 (2015). Available at:

Laura Zanfrini, *Un mare di Speranza. Migranti forzati alle porte dell'Europa*, International Journal of Migration Studies Atti della VII edizione della Summer School "Mobilità umana e giustizia globale", Lampedusa (AG), 18-21 luglio 2016, available at: <https://www.ismu.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Studi-Emigrazione-n.-205.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Mafia Capitale, Sentenza primo grado N. Reg. Sent:11730/2017, available at: https://www.archivioantimafia.org/mafiacapitale/mafia_capitale_primo_grado.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Marco di Liddo (2018), *La perdurante instabilità della regione saheliana*, Osservatorio di Politica internazionale, Centro Studi Internazionali, available at: <https://www.parlamento.it/application/xmanager/projects/parlamento/file/repository/affariinternazionali/ossevatorio/approfondimenti/PI0083Not.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Marco Massoni (2016), *La crisi e i conflitti dei Paesi dell'Africa Saheliana. La priorità per un'eventuale azione nazionale ed europea*, Centro Militare di Studi Strategici, Codice SMD AL-SA-10, available at: https://www.difesa.it/SMD/CASD/IM/CeMiSS/DocumentiVis/Rcerche_da_publicare/AL_SA_10_crisi_conflitti_paesi_africa_saheliana.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Martone, V. (2012), *La camorra nella governance del territorio*, in *Meridiana : rivista di storia e scienze sociali* : 73/74, 1/2, 2012, Roma:Viella, 2012, available at: <http://digital.casalini.it/10.1400/197889>(last access 06/06/2022)

Michelle Gavin, March 15, 2022, Nigeria Security Tracker, Council on Foreign Relations, available: <https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>(last access 06/06/2022)

Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, *La Comunità Nigeriana in Italia*, Anno 2020, Rapporto annuale sulla presenza dei migranti, available at: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/documenti-e-norme/studi-e-statistiche/Documents/Rapporti%20annuali%20sulle%20comunit%C3%A0%20migranti%20in%20Italia%20-%20anno%202020/Nigeria-rapporto-2020.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, *Lotta al caporalato in agricoltura: call per la segnalazione di potenziali buone pratiche*, 5 novembre 2020, available at: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/notizie/Pagine/Lotta-al-caporalato-in-agricoltura-Call-per-la-segnalazione-di-potenziali-buone-pratiche.aspx> (last access 06/06/2022)

Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, Protocollo Quadro OIM-INL, 12/03/2021, Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, available at: <https://www.ispettorato.gov.it/it-it/notizie/Pagine/-Protocollo-Quadro-OIM-INL.aspx> (last access 06/06/2022)

Ministero dell'Interno - Rapporto sulla criminalità in Italia. Analisi, Prevenzione, Contrasto. 2019, available on: https://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/14/0900_rapporto_criminalita.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Ministero dell'Interno, "ALTO IMPATTO – FREEDOM". *Attività di contrasto al fenomeno del caporalato*, 31 Luglio 2017, https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/ps_caporalato.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Ministero dell'Interno, *Europol Joint Action Days, 34 countries fighting organised crime*, October 1 2020, available at: <https://cscwb.info/2020/10/01/joint-action-days/> (last access 06/06/2022)

Ministero dell'Interno, *Lotta al caporalato: white list di lavoratori stranieri nella piana di Sele*, 24 Febbraio 2022, available at: <https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2022->

02/protocollo pref sa contrasto caporalato e sfruttamento lavorativo in agricoltura piana del sele.pdf(last access 06/06/2022)

Ministero dell'Interno, *Operazioni Antimafia a Bari e L'Aquila. Lamorgese: un intenso lavoro investigativo per contrastare vecchie e nuove mafie*, 26 Aprile 2021, available at: <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/operazioni-antimafia-bari-e-laquila-lamorgese-intenso-lavoro-investigativo-contrastare-vecchie-e-nuove-mafie> (last access 06/06/2022)

Ministero dell'Interno, Relazione della Direzione Centrale dell'Immigrazione e della Polizia delle Frontiere, ex art. 3, comma 1 - D.Lgs. 25 luglio 1998, n. 286, *Sull'attività delle forze di polizia, sullo stato dell'ordine e della sicurezza pubblica e sulla criminalità organizzata*, anno 2008 available at: https://www.poliziadistato.it/statics/23/relazione_al_parlamento_anno_2008.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Naptip Official Website: <https://naptip.gov.ng/intelligence-and-international-cooperation/> (last access 06/06/2022)

New York, 15 November 2000, available at: https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-a&chapter=18 (last access 06/06/2022)

Nwogu V. (2014), *Anti-Trafficking interventions in Nigeria and the Principal-Agent Aid Model*, 2014, pagg. 41-63. Available at: <https://www.antitraffickingreview.org/index.php/atjournal/article/view/64/74> (last access 06/06/2022)

Okoli AC, Nwangwu C. (2022), *Organized Crime–Terror Nexus: Interrogating the Linkage Between Banditry and Terrorism in Northern Nigeria*, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. January 2022. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/00219096211069650>(last access 06/06/2022)

Olukayode, Olabanji & Urhie, Ese. (2014), *Insecurity and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria*, *Journal of Sustainable Development Studies*. Volume 6. 40-63, available at: <https://unjpe.com/index.php/UNJPE/article/view/21/20> (last access 06/06/2022)

Onuitalia.com, *Palermo Convention: UN in Vienna adopts "Falcone resolution" on fight against mafias*, 17/10/2020, *Il Giornale italiano delle Nazioni Unite*, available at: <https://www.onuitalia.com/2020/10/17/convenzione-di-palermo-onu-a-vienna-adotta-risoluzione-falcone-su-lotta-alle-mafie/> (last access 06/06/2022)

Organismo Permanente di Monitoraggio ed Analisi sul Rischio di Infiltrazione nell'Economia da parte della criminalità organizzata di tipo mafioso, Report 4/2020, available at: https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/2021-03/report_4_2020.pdf(last access 06/06/2022)

Organizzazione Internazionale per le Migrazioni (OIM), *La tratta di esseri umani attraverso la rotta del Mediterraneo Centrale: dati, storie e informazioni raccolte dall'Organizzazione Internazionale per le Migrazioni*, October 2020, available on: https://www.osservatoriointerventitratta.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/RAPPORTO_OIM_Vittime_di_tratta_0.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

Oscar Wilde (2003) *Terrorism, Organized Crime, and Social Distress*, *Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness*, 12:1-2, 41-62, available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10530789.2003.11739480> (last access 06/06/2022)

Osservatorio dei Diritti, *Tratta delle donne: editto anti-vudù in difesa delle vittime nigeriane*, 30 April 2018, available at: <https://www.osservatoriodiritti.it/2018/04/13/tratta-delle-donne-editto-vudu-vittime-nigeriane/> (last access 06/06/2022)

Osservatorio sulla criminalità organizzata, Quarto rapporto sulle aree settentrionali per la Presidenza della Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sul fenomeno mafioso (2017), Università degli Studi di Milano, available at: <https://cross.unimi.it/wp-content/uploads/Quarto-Rapporto-sulle-aree-settentrionali.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Paolo Cassani (2014), *Sfruttamento lavorativo e stranieri: prove di dialogo interdisciplinare*, 19th December 2014, Università degli Studi di Firenze, available at: <https://www.dsg.univr.it/documenti/Iniziativa/dall/dall131337.pdf>(last access 06/06/2022)

Parliamentary Committee for monitoring the implementation of the Schengen Agreement, for surveillance of the activities of Europol, control and surveillance of immigration matters - Cognitive Investigation 10. Sittings of thursday, 30 january2020, available at: http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/resoconti/commissioni/stenografici/pdf/30/indag/c30_migranti/2020/01/30/leg.18.stencomm.data20200130.U1.com30.indag.c30_migranti.0010.pdf(last access 06/06/2022)

Parliamentary questions, 14 February 2018, Question for written answer E-000937-18 to the Commission. Subject: Nigerian mafia, available on: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2018-000937_EN.html?redirect (last access 06/06/2022)

Piano Nazionale d' Azione (PNA) contro la tratta e il grave sfruttamento 2016-2018, (adopted by the Council of Ministers at its meeting on February 26, 2016), available at: https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/7377/file/Italy_national_action_plan_trafficking_2016-2018_en.pdf(last access 06/06/2022)

Piano triennale di contrasto allo sfruttamento lavorativo in agricoltura e al caporalato 2020 – 2022, available at: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/Tavolo-caporalato/Documents/Piano-Triennale-post-CU.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

PNRR Inclusion e Coesione, available at: <https://www.governo.it/it/approfondimento/inclusion-e-sociale/16706> (last access 06/06/2022)

Polizia di Stato, *5th Europol convention on crime and terrorism*, 25/09/2015, available at: <https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/5th-europol-convention-on-crime-and-terrorism> (last access 06/06/2022)

Polizia di Stato, *Immigrazione clandestina: firmato l'accordo tra Italia, Nigeria e Interpol*, 18/02/2009, available at: <https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/immigrazione-clandestina--firmato-l'accordo-tra-italia--nigeria-e-interpol> (last access 06/06/2022)

Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime UNHRC, General Assembly Resolution 55/25 – Palermo, 15 November 2000, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons> (last access 06/06/2022)

Quaderni del Consiglio Superiore della Magistratura, Risoluzioni del C.S.M. in tema di criminalità organizzata, Anno 2004, Numero 138, a cura dell'Ufficio Studi di Documentazione, available on: <https://www.csm.it/documents/21768/81517/quaderno+138/3bcc54d7-b221-4cb0-989a-acc0825654fa> (last access: 06/06/2022)

Questura dell'Aquila, L'Aquila – Operazione, “*Hello Boss*” – *smantellata organizzazione mafiosa nigeriana*, 26 Aprile 2021, Questura dell'Aquila, available at: <https://questure.poliziadistato.it/it/LAquila/articolo/129260869fe52fa76551803869> (last access 06/06/2022)

Questura di Frosinone, “*OPERAZIONE SHOW DOWN*”, *Spari due mesi fa contro un'auto a Cassino: identificati gli autori del blitz criminale*, 14th July 2021, available at: <https://questure.poliziadistato.it/it/Frosinone/articolo/248160ee96a01af1b114051490> (last access 06/06/2022)

Raffaele Rio, *There is a pact between the ndrangheta and traffickers*, 11th May 2017, BGR Calabria, available at: <https://demoskopika.it/2017/05/11/rio-a-bgr-calabria-esiste-un-patto-tra-ndrangheta-e-trafficienti/> (last access 06/06/2022)

Rapporteur On. Dadone, Cfr. Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the phenomenon of mafias and other criminal associations, including foreign ones, *Relazione su mafie, migranti e tratta di esseri umani, nuove forme di schiavitù*; approved by the committee at its meeting of December 4, 2017; Communicated to the chairs on December 14, 2017, pursuant to of section 1(1)(o) of Act 87 of July 19, 2013, available on: <http://documenti.camera.it/leg17/resoconti/commissioni/bollettini/xhtml/2017/12/13/24/leg.17.bol0928.data20171213.com24.html> (last access 06/06/2022)

Redazione ANSA, *Mafia nigeriana a Palermo, undici ordinanze di custodia*, 4th February 2021, available at: https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cronaca/2021/02/04/mafia-nigeriana-a-palermo-undici-ordinanze-di-custodia_e507da6e-7888-49dd-ada2-d3ae28e388f4.html (last access 06/06/2022)

Redazione ANSA, *Voodoo per farla prostituire, arrestato boss mafia nigeriana*, 25th February 2022, available at: https://www.ansa.it/calabria/notizie/2022/02/25/voodoo-per-farla-prostituirearrestato-boss-mafia-nigeriana_54b97318-9655-4ceb-ad33-d43b9313f1e5.html (last access 06/06/2022)

Redazione Polizia di Stato, *Maxi Operazione “Pollino”*, 15/01/2019, Polizia di Stato Mensile Indipendente, available at: <http://www.mensilepoliziadistato.it/maxi-operazione-pollino/> (last access 06/06/2022)

Redazione Qds.it, *Migranti, a Lodi Onlus legate alla 'ndrangheta*, 3th July 2019, available at: <https://qds.it/migranti-a-lodi-onlus-legate-alla-ndrangheta/> (last access 06/06/2022)

Regulation (EU) N° 1052/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Border Surveillance System (Eurosur), available at: https://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/a80accf5-ff5b-417b-92d8-c5120fe4c5dd.0014.03/DOC_1 (last access 06/06/2022)

Relazione al Parlamento sul primo anno di attuazione del Piano triennale di contrasto allo sfruttamento lavorativo in agricoltura e al caporalato (2020-2022), available at: <https://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/it-Altre-info/e/2/o/18///id/31/Tavolo-caporalato> (last access 06/06/2022)

Relazione del Ministero dell'Interno al Parlamento, *Attività svolta e Risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia*, Gennaio-Giugno 2019, available at:

<https://direzioneeinvestigativaantimafia.interno.gov.it/semestrali/sem/2019/1sem2019.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Relazione del Ministero dell'Interno al Parlamento, Attività svolta e risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia, Gennaio-Giugno 2020, available at: <https://direzioneeinvestigativaantimafia.interno.gov.it/semestrali/sem/2020/1sem2020.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Relazione del Ministero dell'Interno al Parlamento, Attività svolte e risultati conseguiti dalla Direzione Investigativa Antimafia, Gennaio-Giugno 2018, available at: <https://direzioneeinvestigativaantimafia.interno.gov.it/semestrali/sem/2018/1sem2018.pdf> (last access 06/06/2022)

Rif. Camera Rif. normativi, XVIII Legislatura, Comitato parlamentare di controllo sull'attuazione dell'Accordo di Schengen, di vigilanza sull'attività di Europol, di controllo e vigilanza in materia di immigrazione. Resoconto stenografico. Seduta n. 32 di Mercoledì 19 maggio 2021, available at: http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/resoconti/commissioni/stenografici/html/30/indag/c30_migranti/2021/05/19/indice_stenografico.0032.html (last access 06/06/2022)

Sabbatini, M. Assunta Accili (2019), *La Convenzione di Palermo e i Negoziati per il Rafforzamento della Cooperazione Internazionale*, Cross Vol.5 N°4 (2019), available at: [file:///Users/maiasacchetto/Downloads/13095-Articolo-38700-2-10-20200224%20\(1\).pdf](file:///Users/maiasacchetto/Downloads/13095-Articolo-38700-2-10-20200224%20(1).pdf) (last access 06/06/2022)

Sara Barattini, Sentiti Libera podcast, *Mafie nigeriane, origini e sviluppi dei cult in Italia*, Racconti di mafie liquide, violente, nascoste, available at: <https://www.qcodemag.it/podcast/sentiti-libera-mafie-nigeriane-origini-e-sviluppi-dei-cult-in-italia/> (last access 06/06/2022)

Senato della Repubblica, *Focus: Criminalità organizzata nigeriana in Italia*, Disegni di Legge e Relazioni, Anno 2018, Doc.LXXIV N.3, available at: https://www.camera.it/_dati/leg18/lavori/documentiparlamentari/indiceetesti/074/003_RS/00000034.pdf (last access: 06/06/2022)

Sindacato Polizia Penitenziaria (S.PP.), *Mafia nigeriana: Di Giacomo, servono sezioni speciali all'interno delle carceri*. 18 luglio 2019, available at: <https://www.sindacatospp.it/blog/index.php?id=8xkqzbyy> (last access 06/06/2022)

Tavolo Caporalato Official Website: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/Tavolo-caporalato/Pagine/default.aspx> (last access 06/06/2022)

Trattato di Prüm: Rafforzamento della Cooperazione Transfrontaliera, Risoluzione legislativa del Parlamento europeo del 7 giugno 2007, P6_TA(2007)0228, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52007AP0228&from=DE> (last access 06/06/2022)

Udo Bux / Mariusz Maciejewski, Note tematiche sull'Unione Europea: Cooperazione giudiziaria in materia civile, 06/2022, Parlamento Europeo, available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/it/sheet/154/cooperazione-giudiziaria-in-materia-civile> (last access 06/06/2022)

Ufficio Stampa della Polizia di Stato, *Catanzaro: con "Johnny arrestate 68 persone*, 15/05/2017, available at: <https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/1559196ad4cfa10088126985> (last access 06/06/2022)

Ufficio Stampa Ministero dell'Interno, *Droga: Palermo capolinea del "Golden Eggs*, 30/09/2011, available at: <https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/droga--palermo-capolinea-del--golden-eggs>(last access 06/06/2022)

Ufficio Stampa Ministero dell'Interno, *Mafia nigeriana: 66 arresti nell'Operazione Viola*, 15/01/2008, available at: <https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/mafia-nigeriana--66-arresti-nell--operazione-viola> (last access 06/06/2022)

Ufficio Stampa Ministero dell'Interno, *Palermo: colpita la mafia nigeriana, 8 arresti*, 04/02/2021, available at: <https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/38601bf09502e3a686537017> (last access 06/06/2022)

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Organized Crime and Irregular Migration from Africa to Europe*, Rabat Paper, July 2006, available at: https://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/Migration_Africa.pdf (last access 06/06/2022)

UNODC, *Nigeria Takes Steps to Stop Migrant Smuggling*, Abuja (Nigeria) 16 December 2021, available at: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/Webstories2021/nigeria-takes-steps-to-stop-migrant-smuggling.html>(last access 06/06/2022)

UNODC, *OCWAR-T supports Joint Operation by Côte D'Ivoire and Nigeria against trafficking network*, 31/03/2022, available at: <https://www.unodc.org/westandcentralafrica/en/2022-03-31-ocwar-t-supports-joint-operation-by-cte-divoire-and-nigeria-and-cte-divoire-against-trafficking-network.html> (last access 06/06/2022)

UNODC, *Promoting Better Management of Migration in Nigeria (2011 - 2018)*, available at: <https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/promoting-better-management-of-migration-in-nigeria-project.html> (last access 06/06/2022)

UNODC, *STARSOM Goals and Actions*, available at: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/migrant-smuggling/starsom-goals.html> (last access 06/06/2022)

UNODC, *Strengthen the capacities of state and non-state institutions to assist, support and protect victims of trafficking in Nigeria (2018 - 2020)*, available at: <https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/strengthen-the-capacities-of-state-and-non-state-institutions-to-assist--support-and-protect-victims-of-trafficking-in-nigeria-2018--2020.html> (last access 06/06/2022)

UNODC, *Support to the Fight against Trafficking in Persons in Nigeria (2015 - 2017)*, available at: <https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/support-to-the-fight-against-trafficking-in-persons-in-nigeria-2015--2017.html> (last access 06/06/2022)

US DoS, 2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria, 27 July 2015, pag. 266, available at: <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2015/index.htm> (last access 06/06/2022)

Veronica Boggini (2017), *Il compromesso impossibile. Gestione e utilizzo delle risorse del Fondo per l'Africa*, ActionAid, available at: https://www.actionaid.it/app/uploads/2017/12/Fondo_Africa_Il-compromesso_impossibile.pdf(last access 06/06/2022)

Vincenzo Castellano, *La mappa dei porti dove sbarcano i migranti*, 01/07/2017, AGI, available at: https://www.agi.it/cronaca/mappa_sbarchi_migranti_porti-1918365/news/2017-07-01/ (last access 06/06/2022)

Vincenzo Musacchio, Antimafia Duemila, *Le nuove mafie*, Intervista al criminologo, 13/12/2021, available at: <https://www.antimafiaduemila.com/home/di-la-tua/239-parla/87233-le-nuove-mafie-intervista-al-criminologo-vincenzo-musacchio.html> (last access 06/06/2022)

Summary

Among the various interpretations of the globalization process, a somewhat shared approach is that greater mobility of people, capital and resources along the increasingly blurred boundaries of what has always been customarily called “nation-states” has had the unintended effect of creating events that escape the closest control and legislation of states. According to the supporters of this approach, if not adequately accompanied by systems of regulation and surveillance, the liberalization of the market would in fact lead to the emergence of new sectors and illegal activities, sometimes totally unrelated to legal markets, others intrinsically intertwined with them. According to European ministries of interior and the European agencies dedicated to the fight against transnational organized crime, such as Europol, the rise of a true “global criminal village” has been favored by the growing flows of clandestine migration which, since the 1990s, have been accompanied by the emergence in the various European states of forms of "criminal ethnoscapes", a term used to define illegal activities undertaken by groups of ethnically diverse people.

It is an incontrovertible fact, therefore, that globalization, expanding the frontiers of the illegal market, has favored both the “transnationalization” of criminal activities through partnerships between various ethnic groups across national borders, and the inevitable contact between foreign crime and local crime. With regard to this last aspect of the global criminal village, Italy represents a *sui generis* phenomenon. Having always been characterized by a deep tentacular rooting of local criminal organizations in the territory, Italy represents for the settled crime at the same time a hostile ground and an opportunity as this would imply the attainment of a space in an illegal market already historically monopolized by powerful autochthonous mafias such as Camorra, Cosa Nostra or 'Ndrangheta. These groups most often seek to avoid conflict and instead pursue the support and backing of local criminal entities. In the Italian case, the existence of already solid local criminal networks implies that the extension of the latter to new partners almost always results in the integration of these into the traditional structure and organization of the mafia associations. This is the case of the "Black Mafia", term used to define the phenomenon of diffusion, rooting and integration of Nigerian criminality in the Italian territory.

Recent studies conducted on Nigerian criminal organizations, have in fact allowed to delineate the tendency of these to structure themselves according to a vertical scheme on the model of Cosa Nostra, recognizable by the presence of the figure of a boss with the role of manager of illegal activities. Other times, their internal organization is more flexible and horizontal, recognizable by blood pacts

or family ties, more typical of the 'ndrine in Calabria. Although in fact different cults, depending on the structure and territory of influence, have evolved, the Supreme Court of Cassation has qualified them all as mafia-like associations with strong direct links to the motherland. Thanks to this flexibility and its willingness to adapt to the unwritten rules of the illegal market, as well as to respect the already existing territorial subdivisions without ambitions or pretensions, the Nigerian mafia has settled with particular success in the whole Italian territory. On the other hand, local mafias have been particularly accepting of newcomers, recognizing their enormous exploitative potential in the form of "manpower" and recognizing their developed flair for international affairs. Apart from sparse and rare occurrences of conflict due to the "intrusion" of newcomers into the territory, evidenced by episodes such as the Pescopagano massacre occurred in the 1990s, relations between the local Mafia and the Nigerian Mafia have always been marked by connivance and respect for each other's areas.

The arrival of the new partners has, in effect, favored a reallocation of the illegal market, providing total coverage even for activities that generally do not fall within the sectors of greatest interest and profit for the local mafias. The trafficking of migrants for the exploitation of labor or prostitution represents in this respect the major source of enrichment for the Nigerian mafia which, instead, has never represented a particularly fruitful or profitable activity for local mafias, focused instead mainly on managing the global drug market. In this regime of *lassaiz faire* or tacit consent, there are, however, contractual forms, or rather more explicit associative ties, such as those that emerged from the investigations of the local police between the Nigerian cult of Black Axe and Cosa Nostra or the Camorra and that between the Maphite and the 'Ndrangheta in the management of entire networks of criminal activities along the routes of clandestine migration. This is the case with the 'Ndrangheta and the Maphites, who share the narcotics trade in Turin, or with the Camorra and the Black Axe, who have adopted a system of dividing business according to products: cocaine remains in the hands of the local mafia, heroin in the hands of its Nigerian counterpart. In other cases, the agreement simply foresees the deposition of a "tax" to the local mafias for the occupation of territories for the advancement of lucrative activities, as in the case of prostitution in the so-called "red lights" neighborhoods in Ballarò neighborhood in Palermo. Relations between the Black Mafia and Cosa Nostra are solid and are bound to intensify by virtue of the decline in the power of the island's main bosses in recent decades, not only in terms of their ability to influence local institutions, but also in international business having been almost totally supplanted by the 'Ndrangheta in the cocaine trade. Ties with Nigerian bosses in this regard are a springboard and a reliable sidekick for Cosa Nostra to keep the performance of their portion of the international supply competitive.

In Campania's criminal landscape, the Nigerian Mafia has joined the Camorra on an equal footing by almost securing the exclusive management of one of the most infamous areas of the Domitium: Castel Volturno. The latter represents a special case not only for being the Italian municipality with the largest Nigerian community living within it, but also and especially for the conditions under which this community leads its life almost undisturbed. The degree of abandonment and urban decay of the municipality, made up mostly of dilapidated and decaying houses in which more than thirty people live without electricity and water, have gone hand in hand with the process of development of a street crime dedicated to drug dealing and prostitution in so-called "connection houses" that has immediately appealed to the Nigerian Mafia and the local Mafia. The migrants living there are almost all undocumented and illegal and it is easy for the gangs to attract them into their criminal networks by promising them the welfare they seek and a better life prospect. These characteristics have earned the town of Castel Volturno the appellation of "stateless village," where rules and legality have never entered and where criminality now manifests itself even in the presence of the local population, which seems to be almost resigned in the face of the phenomenon.

The ambivalent attitude of local mafias toward this business is as much about values as it is about interests. Traditionally tending to value the role of women within the association, the Italian mafia abhors prostitution as a for-profit business. While with regard to men, the local mafia avoids interfering in the transportation phase. Apart from rare occurrences of material support through the procurement of hulls to transport migrants from the Libyan to the Sicilian or Apulian coasts, the local mafia acquires a preponderant managerial role in the exploitation phase of illegal laborers especially in the agricultural sector, consequently favoring the illegal stay of the migrants in the territory by providing them with false documents. What has historically been defined by the term "caporalato" to indicate an illegal form of labor recruitment and organization, in this sense takes on a greater level of seriousness since it is a true form of labor exploitation, also including the subtraction of part of the remuneration from those who offer the required service, which is most often recycled in further illegal activities or employed in the purchase of material goods. The most striking evidence of this phenomenon is certainly provided by Rosarno, in the province of Reggio Calabria, which has long become an open-air ghetto in which the Nigerian community, exploited in the fields by the 'Ndrangheta, lives around real slums in which degradation and phenomena of real guerrilla warfare between the Nigerian community and the local population have deeply shaken the peace and public order.

Men who are not employed as underpaid laborers in the fields of the South are used as couriers in drug transportation. In fact, the strategic transportation of small quantities of drugs employed by the Nigerian mafia requires the use of large numbers of men: for the transportation of goods through vehicles, Nigerians prefer to employ Western men who would be less conspicuous, while generally compatriots or migrants from North Africa are recruited in the same reception centers to be then employed as ovulators. The role then is to ingest the cocaine or heroin ovules and travel across Europe to their destination. Other times, Nigerian migrants destined for exploitation in Italy are forced to swallow the ovules at the beginning of the journey and then deport them once they reach their destination. In this case, women destined for the sex-for-hire market are also employed as ovulators.

The latter remain beyond doubt the most vulnerable subjects of traffic. Their exploitation begins well before they reach their destination. Indeed, the victims are first made to prostitute themselves in connection houses in Agadez, the most important hub for the disposal of Nigerian products, but also the one where narcotics trafficking and migrant trafficking intersect (in fact, this is where migrants are forced to swallow their ovules or where drugs are loaded into the same vehicles in which migrants are transported). Once in Libya, the women are again trafficked and sold to Libyan bidders and then made to embark for the Italian coast. Here the young Nigerian women are destined for *mamans*. The latter play a key role because they are themselves former prostitutes who accompany the young women along the entire trafficking route: from the recruitment phase in which they exercise coercive power over the women through the magical-superstitious element, to the exploitation phase, in which they first teach the young women the tricks of the trade and then bind them to the debt regime. This refers as much to the portion that the women owe the *mamans* once the services are completed, as much as the costs of food and lodging, as much as a symbolic value that corresponds to the price to be paid to have the *mamans'* protection assured during their stay in the territory where the exploitation takes place. The *mamans* thus take the young women to houses of prostitution or neighborhoods destined for the market. Some of them are then subjected to a selection process: the older ones are often made to move to Northern Europe, to Holland specifically, where supply and demand in the prostitution market also allows for an allocation of women who no longer meet Italian demand.

Actions to counter the spread of the Nigerian mafia are scarce and often unsuccessful. There is still a tendency to underestimate the threatening potential of the phenomenon, considering Nigerian cults a small and marginal type of criminality and under evaluating its systematic and large-scale character. The complexity in countering this phenomenon stems from the acute abilities of Nigerian clans to act according to a very strategic *modus operandi* that allows them to use a very large network of people

and vehicles that interchange during trafficking routes, transporting small loads of products or people. In this way, traffic managers ensure that they better dilute and disperse their traffic patterns and remain covered from law enforcement interference. This process is corroborated by a network of proxies to third parties such as transporters who also drive the ground transportation vehicles and are responsible for producing the fake documents to be distributed to trafficking victims and *mamans*.

In short, both men and women, be in the hands of the Nigerian mafia and in the hands of local mafias, are sucked into a vicious cycle of favor and debt in which escaping is as dangerous as remaining there. In particular, victims of trafficking experience a double pitfall: on the one hand, they wish to break free from the grip of their exploiters and repatriate. The luckiest in this category, those who manage to return home voluntarily, with potential victims of so-called re-trafficking. It happens that victims manage to escape even before they have exhausted their debt to the exploiter. In such cases, it is not at all uncommon for *mamans* and traffickers to initiate regular telephone stalking reminding victims to honor the suspended debt. As one would expect, these victims are then tracked down and forcibly readmitted into the criminal circle, subjected this time to even more intransigent treatment to prevent them from escaping again. Victim protection always takes a back seat to countering the threat itself. In this sense, the participation of civil society in the form of nongovernmental organizations or associations such as Caritas and shelters can play a more relevant role than the State.

Indeed, Nigeria does not provide its citizens with the proper level of protection. A large proportion of repatriated victims are not registered once they gain access to the national territory, many find themselves stigmatized by their families and their home communities for leaving their homeland and devoting themselves in the Western world to sinful and obscene activities, and still others find themselves without money and without a home, without jobs and without guarantees.

In Italy their lot is no better. The prejudice that hangs over the African immigrant community also causes bias within legal institutions. Often the judiciary is the first to fail to ensure that victims receive the right treatment and protection and instead places them on a par with their own traffickers. This "legal bias" is a clear testimony to the reforms that the issue needs on a normative and theoretical level, where the serious crime of trafficking of migrants at the hands of organized crime, in this case mafia-style, is still a legally undeveloped case.

Still open is the debate about the law enforcement actions to be taken to effectively manage the phenomenon that undoubtedly cannot be considered a purely internal security problem. Indeed, the ties between the Nigerian mafia and the motherland remain strong although, unlike our mafias that

keep their decision-making processes still tied to the local reality, most of the clans' trafficking management takes place outside the national borders.

Solving the problem must therefore inevitably start first with the implementation of prevention policies that can only be developed in the area where the phenomenon originates. In this sense, Nigerian institutions first tried to discourage young people from approaching the world of cults through discrediting campaigns against them, but this approach proved to be not very decisive as it occurred at a time when the presence of cults was already quite entrenched in the national territory.

A very recent second attempt was the promulgation of Edo State's Oba Edict in March 2018. This was an event that gathered a large number of women victims of bondage to *mamans* seeking an antidote to free themselves from the curse resulting from *voodoo* and *ju-ju* ritual. In fact, the Oba gathered a troupe of so-called "native doctors" who, through a formula, broke the effect of the curse by freeing hundreds of women from their debt to their traffickers. This also had the indirect effect of discouraging other women from making the journey and denouncing the *mamans* and their exploiters. News of the promulgation of the Edict also reached Italy, and in Sicily, trafficked Nigerian women celebrated by taking to the streets. As a result, the number of denunciations by Nigerian women also increased significantly in Italy.

Concerning repressive actions, on the other hand, Italy plays a frontline role by placing itself at the head or as a major collaborator in European projects to combat both trafficking and organized crime. In addition to having signed all the existing conventions on the international level on the subject, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, not surprisingly signed in Palermo, and the Additional Protocols, Italy participates in EMPACT operations with the aim of maintaining constantly updated strategic data on migration flows and cross-border crime, of which it is co-driver with Austria. The project, expiring in 2025, has the main aim to dismantle major transnational criminal networks with a focus on combating migrant trafficking for exploitation. Equally, Italy is at the forefront of the coordinated fight against sexual exploitation at the hands of the Nigerian mafia as a priority of the ETUTU and OCWAR-T projects against smuggling and trafficking originating in Nigeria. Operationally, European action has achieved a certain level of synergy through the Joint Operation Investigation Teams. These are actual teams composed of police forces from all the European countries most affected by the Nigerian mafia threat that conduct investigations in parallel. The work of the teams under Joint Operations is based on mutual recognition of investigative methods that would make a second investigation unnecessary according to procedures that vary from nation to nation. Joint Operations is a tool made available by Europol, which, in the fight against such a vast and pervasive phenomenon, is developing together with

Eurojust its traditional functions so as to provide not only guidelines to states, but also support them operationally by facilitating an effective and rapid exchange of information between member states during the course of investigations. The goal is to create European intelligence in which communication and investigative procedures are recognized and shared by all member states.

Since 2016, Italy has drafted the National Anti-Trafficking Plan, establishing its agenda of priorities and dividing them into four main domains: prevention, prosecution, victim protection and partnerships with trafficking countries. The National Plan has placed the fight against trafficking in the specific case of combating the trafficking of migrants at the hands of organized crime as a priority of the joint effort of institutions and law enforcement agencies, and for this it provides for the definition and deployment of specialized teams to the fight against this criminal case. In fact, the attribution of the phenomenon of trafficking to mafia-like associations is a criminal case that has only recently found the appropriate countermeasures and penal sanctions in the Italian legal system. In fact, before the definition of the national plan, there was a tendency to consider the fight against trafficking and the fight against the mafia as two totally separate measures.

Still, the decision to reserve to the competence of the District Anti-Mafia Directorates the investigations related to trafficking in persons and not also to the aiding and abetting of illegal immigration, does not allow to have a comprehensive view of the phenomenon that instead requires a coordinated and all-embracing approach. The use of specialized teams dedicated to countering the Nigerian mafia both in its nature as a transnational mafia and in its exercise of the crime of trafficking and exploitation of migrants, is still confined to a few local realities where, among other things, trafficking activity is most evident as manifested in the phenomenon of street prostitution. Such is the case of Turin where in 2016 the Operation Athenaum was concluded in which the special team composed of the local police and the Carabinieri weapon, unveiled the dense criminal network of an association that had given itself rules and structure within a real Criminal Bible, the Green Bible. Although the operations that have taken place on Italian soil since 2016 have all added something extra to the investigations into the Nigerian mafia, even allowing some of its illicit activities to be foiled and assets derived from them to be seized, there have been no more instances in Italy of a task force like the one employed in Operation Athenaum to counter Nigerian bosses.

Nigeria achieved this well before Italy did, in 2013, when the country set up an anti-trafficking police department named the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP). NAPTIP actions are mainly focused on combating the trafficking of young Nigerian women destined

for exploitation in European prostitution markets and who are mostly recruited within Edo State and that is why its reach extends over the entire ECOWAS area with a larger presence of its officers in the Agadez hub. This is what is also envisaged in the National Anti-Trafficking Plan established by Nigerian institutions which, like the Italian one, has the four objectives of prevention, prosecution, victim protection and partnerships with European countries, but also and especially with neighboring countries. Indeed, on border protection arise the major inter-institutional dyscrasias and anomalies of NAPTIP. The deployment of agents along the borders for their control is not the responsibility of NAPTIP, but of the Nigerian Immigration Service. By acting the operational and intelligence plan disconnected from the monitoring plan, Nigeria also falls into the trap of overlapping responsibilities that cannot keep up with the traffickers' pace. The high degree of corruptibility of agents positioned at the borders, by the way, is a real issue in Nigeria as is the lack of adequate funds to support NAPTIP-led operations and the adoption of technologically advanced intelligence tools. It follows that despite the high level of awareness Nigeria has achieved about the issue, from a practical standpoint the country is still unable to handle a phenomenon as large and pervasive as that of a mobile, fluid association with resources larger than those of a state.

Overall, although considerable progress has been made both from the cognitive point of view of the structure and *modus operandi* of this mafia and the effective ways to counter it, there is little coordination on the operational level and a lack of operational continuity. The landscape still appears fragmented and disconnected and, from a theoretical point of view, the traditional conception of a mafia that acts purely in its home territory produces biases about the interpretation of a phenomenon that is instead increasingly a-territorial. Therefore, the law enforcement response must take place on multiple fronts and by a multitude of forces acting synergistically from local, national and European perspectives, both on land and sea. The Italian Navy with its control of the Mediterranean, which for Italy is still the preponderant geopolitical area of interest and also the sea through which Nigerian mafia trafficking passes most heavily, could play an even more drastic role in naval blockade operations, shipboard inspections and hijacking of suspicious vessels. At the European level, the coordinated and more incisive action of Europol and FRONTEX should together with Joint Operations provide the blueprint for action by European police forces in law enforcement operations both intraterritorially and on the borders, both at the level of information exchange between member states and at the level of authorizing action and apprehension of criminal actors.

It is then necessary for the states concerned, and Italy first among them, being the country where the Nigerian mafia is most entrenched in addition to being the home of the most powerful mafias in the world, to equip themselves with task forces specialized in combating the Nigerian mafia, the

phenomena of exploitation in the target territory and the protection of victims. In the latter, Italy has already achieved a major milestone with the establishment of the Tavolo Caporalato. The Table, supported by European and international institutions such as the European Community, which has approved the Three-Year Operational Plan to combat all forms of forced labor, is structured on four priority axes concerning: 1. prevention, 2. vigilance and contrast to the phenomenon, 3. protection and assistance for victims, 4. their social and work reintegration. This is a great step forward in protecting the rights of victims and bringing them into the legal labor market.

The goals to be achieved as soon as possible are specialization and coordination of Italian and European forces in the fight against the new mafias and the dismantling of the associations they establish with local mafias in the territories where they are based. The imminent and increasingly real danger is that these associations will solidify and expand to include more and more actors and to cover more and more areas of application. Through these mutually supportive and mutually protective relationships, these mafias, which have already sharpened in the wake of the deregulation brought by globalization and its myriad possibilities for portfolio diversification and enlargement of the illicit business, could strengthen further and refine their methods and tools. In the face of a growing acceptance by the most disenfranchised portions of society of the welfare system that the mobs are consolidating, especially as a result of the credibility of institutions following the crises of recent decades, the intensification of the threat of organized crime is becoming increasingly real and difficult to unseat. Action by institutions is now more urgent than ever.

