

FINANCING OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS IN ITALY

Fiamma Terenghi and Andrea Di Nicola

Italy represents a southern criminal hub in Europe as a destination and transit country for migrants arriving from north and west Africa, eastern Europe, the Balkans and China (Shelley, 2014), with most of individuals arriving from Libya. After the bilateral agreement between Libya and Italy in 2009 as to jointly prevent irregular migration, the collapse of the Qaddafi regime in 2011 and the related security vacuum, migration flows through the central Mediterranean route have increased (IT-E5; IT-E7; IT-E15). Recent data from the International Organisation for Migration (2018), report a total of 119,310 arrivals by sea to Italy in 2017 and a total of 181,436 in 2016. Among these arrivals, some estimations on the number of migrants that are further trafficked in Italy are available, although the covert nature of this criminal market and the lack of a centralised database do not allow for updated and comprehensive estimations as well as its constant monitoring (Eurostat, 2015). Trafficking in human beings for sexual and labour exploitation in Italy is mainly managed by foreign organised crime groups (OCGs). On one side, their *modi operandi* has been largely documented (Cabras, 2015; Ministero dell'Interno, 2015; Save the Children, 2017; Mancuso, 2013; Campana & Varese, 2015; Baldoni, 2011; Carchedi, 2010; Curtol et al., 2004; Sagnet & Palmisano, 2015; Leogrande, 2016; Palmisano, 2017; Scotto 2016; Iovino, 2016); on the other, little is still known on how these groups raise and manage capitals to finance and sustain their trafficking operations. Based on data gathered through in-depth interviews carried out with experts among police forces, prosecutors, non-profit organisations, and investigative journalists in various regions of Italy¹ and data collected from relevant judicial cases and media news, the present study focuses on trafficking in human beings for sexual and labour exploitation at the national level and in particular on:

1. Structure and actors of this criminal market.
2. Financing and financial management – source of capital to initiate and sustain trafficking operations and settlement of payments.
3. Costs of doing business – costs required to run this criminal business.
4. Profits, profit sharing schemes, and reinvestment.

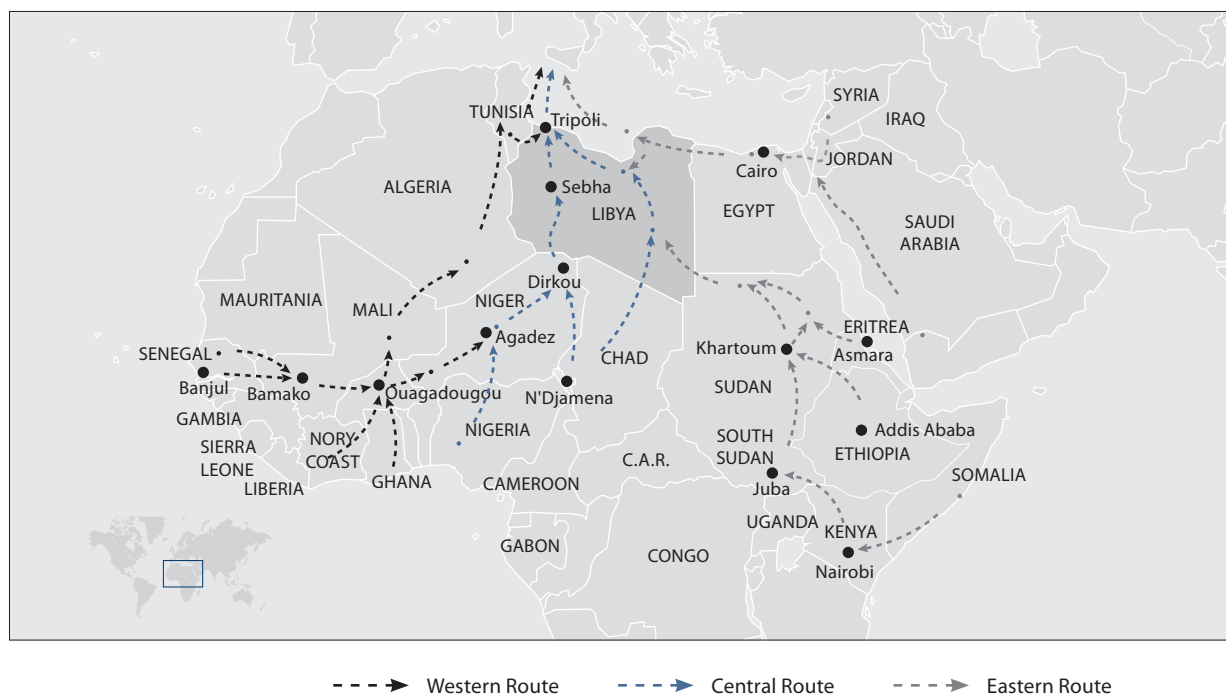
¹ The sources have been coded in order to preserve their anonymity. The first two letters of the code indicate the country, “E” indicates an expert. The description of the background of the individual sources referenced can be found in the list of interviewees in the references section.

1. MARKET OVERVIEW

The prevalence of migrants arriving to Italy from Africa is due to the key role of the central Mediterranean route. Data from Frontex (2017) underline that since 2014, the number of detections of illegal migrants crossing the central Mediterranean Sea has exceeded 100,000 instances. There has been an increase related to the persistent pressure of arrivals of migrants to Libya, which is the main departure country to Europe, and whose actual social and political instability has favoured both trafficking and smuggling of human beings (Wittenberg, 2017). Although migration routes change over time as traffickers adapt to law enforcement counteraction and borders patrol, at present three main routes can be identified from Africa to Italy (major transit point) and then other European countries: the western route for which the main source countries are Mali, Gambia and Senegal. This route in most cases connects in the Sahel with the central route for which source countries are Nigeria, Ghana and Niger. The eastern route for which source countries are mainly Somalia, Eritrea, Darfur in Sudan, and which usually cuts north through Sudan and Egypt and then along the coast of Africa (MEDU, 2018; Reitano et al., 2014; see also Figure 1). All these routes converge on the Maghreb, and in most recent years on Libya. "In all the judicial cases, women and girls follow the sea route and cross almost the same stops. Here they are located in facilities, named differently 'connection houses' or 'ghetto houses', that are hell on earth. Warehouses for migrants where they suffer violence and deprivation" (IT-E24). For example, Amnesty International (2015), has reported that since 2013 abductions for ransom of sub-Saharan migrants and refugees along the different trafficking routes in Libya have increased. Migrants are handed over or sold by traffickers to criminal groups upon crossing the border or arrival at major transit points, and then held like prisoners in private houses as well as subjected to torture and other ill-treatment for the purpose of extortion. These criminal groups are transnational and formed of nationals from Sub-Saharan African countries and Libyans. Abuses such as being beaten, subjected to electric shocks, or not given sufficient food and water have been documented in Sabha and surroundings, and in transit points (e.g., Ajdabya, the main hub for migrants arriving from Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia).

The majority of Chinese migrants in Italy originate from Zhejiang and Fujian provinces in the south of China, followed by Liaoning and Shandong provinces (northern China). Migrations from the north of China that has started in more recent years have been boosted by the expansion of the southern area as a result of money remittances of migrants abroad (Beretta et al., 2016). Trafficked migrants arrive to Italy through different sea, air and land routes: the east European route, crossing Romania, Hungary, Albania, the Czech Republic and the countries of the former Yugoslavia; the west European route, passing through Austria, France, Germany and Malta before reaching Italy. Other used routes are from Albania, via the Strait of Otranto, to the port of Brindisi, or from northern China, via the Maritime (Primor'ye) Territory of Russia, as to reach the city of Moscow where they get/buy visas to enter Italy (eastwest.eu, 2013; Berry et al., 2003; Curtol et al., 2004). "I have seen different routes

FIGURE 1. MIGRATORY ROUTES FROM SUB-SAHARAN COUNTRIES TO EUROPE



Source: Authors' elaboration on MSNBC (2018).

China-Italy, passing through Turkey and Afghanistan, or other long land routes where illegal migrants were sold to different groups of traffickers" (IT-E2). In more recent times, "Asian and Indian migrants have started to migrate to north Africa overland by passing through the Sahara. They mostly fly from their home countries to African capitals sometimes [crossing] the Gulf Arab states. From there, they travel along common Saharan routes via Niger and Algeria to Tunisia and Libya, where they set sail to Italy" (Reitano et al., 2014: 13). As for east European nationals (i.e., Albanians, Romanians, Ukrainians, Moldavians, Bulgarians, Poles) and given the role of Albanian and Romanian criminal entrepreneurs in trafficking in human beings, victims were used to be transferred from Kosovo and Montenegro to Albania, and from there by sea route to Italy (arriving mainly to the region of Apulia). More recently, the sea route has been replaced by land travels along the Balkan route, entering Italy mainly through the passages that connect Slovenia with the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia (Russo, 2010; Regione del Veneto, 2004; Ciconte, 2016; Sagnet & Palmisano, 2015).

Among migrants of different nationalities who reach Italy, some estimations are available about persons who are victims of trafficking and further exploitation within the national territory. Nevertheless, the lack of a centralised database at the institutional level on trafficking in human beings together with the absence of systematic data collections (on a yearly basis) still do not allow to gain a comprehensive picture in

terms of extent, potential and identified victims, areas of exploitation, exploited victims referred to social services and repatriated migrants. As a consequence, different sources of information are present, both at the national/regional or local level, such as governmental institutions and non-profit organisations, with the latter collecting data mainly through the first contact activity of street workers (Caritas, 2013; Save the Children, 2016; Amnesty International, 2015; GRETA, 2016). The Department of Equal Opportunities (Dipartimento per le Pari Opportunità, 2018) provides national estimations on the number of victims that benefit from assistance and social integration projects on a yearly basis.² In 2016, (latest data available) trafficked and exploited victims under this scheme totalled 1,172, among which 81.4% females, 17.6% males, 1.0% transsexuals. Adult victims are the majority (90.5%) while 9.5% are underage victims. As for the country of origin, Nigeria is the main country (59.4%), followed by Romania (7.0%), Morocco (5.3%), Albania (3.6%), Senegal (2.0%), Ghana (1.8%), Pakistan (1.7%), China (1.5%) and El Salvador (1.2%). Exploitation occurs mostly in forced prostitution (57.5%) and less in forced labour (7.8%) in economic sectors such as agriculture, manufacture, and construction industry. Forced begging concerns much lower percentage of victims (1.3%). Similarly, when taking into account underage exploited victims, 50.4% are forced into the sex market, 9.9% in illegal economies such as drug selling at the retail level, 5.4% are exploited in other labour sectors, 3.6% are forced into begging and 0.9% into forced marriage. Nigerian underage victims are the most represented (67.0%) followed by Romanians (7.0%). The Ministry of Justice (Ministero della Giustizia, 2015) has provided data on criminal proceedings brought against traffickers and resulting in a conviction, retrieved from a representative sample of 15 prosecutors' offices located throughout the Italian territory. From these data it is possible to trace a typical profile of exploited victims: young females (who are prevalent with a percentage of 75.2%) or male, of foreign origin (51.6% Romanian and 19.0% Nigerian), and in some cases married (13.6%) or with children (22.3%). Other nationalities of victims include Albanian (8.6%), Bulgarian (7.7%), Chinese (3.2%), Bosnian (1.8%), Moldavian (1.8%), and Polish (1.8%), while underage victims are 17.5%. Prostitution is the main area for exploitation of women (77.7%), while for men it is forced labour (48.3%), thefts (36.2%) and begging (29.3%). The International Organisation for Migration (2017), also provides data on potential victims of trafficking who are interviewed by operators in the places of first arrival (ports and other hotspots) on the basis of a set of relevant indicators (e.g. age and sex, nationality, psycho-physical condition, level of education, family background, travelling mode, etc.). In 2016, a total of 8,277 *potential* victims were identified; this compares with 6,599 *ascertained* trafficked victims. A small number among the latter have been signalled and referred to the competent police and judicial authorities as well as to protection programmes.

² Through annual calls addressed to non-profit organisations, the Department of Equal Opportunities grants funds for interventions of social protection under Art. 18 of Legislative Decree n. 286/1998 on "Consolidated text of provisions regulating migration and the rules relating the status of foreign nationals" and under Art. 13 of Law n. 228/09 on "Measures against trafficking in persons" (GRETA, 2014).

There are recurrent reasons among migrants for leaving, such as the need for international protection or the necessity to escape from instability and violence in the countries of origin, as well as social and economic factors mainly linked to poverty. All these may facilitate the work of recruiters, who in most cases and especially in the last years approach potential victims in poor and rural villages in Africa (e.g., Nigeria), China, and west European countries (e.g., Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Ukraine, Poland), and of very young age (IOM, 2017; Politi & Fick, 2015; IT-E7; IT-E22). For example, in Nigeria recruitment is carried out in the periphery of Benin City and, mostly in rural villages with the most unfavourable social and economic conditions with families playing a crucial role in pushing female children towards “masked” migration (UNICRI-PARSEC, 2010; Di Nicola et al., 2017; IT-E4; IT-E9; IT-E8; IT-E10). “A family mandate, with recruiters who may be friends or country fellows of both sexes, although women are more suitable for this role since dressed well, and looking wealthier” (IT-E8). The role of the family and/or well-known recruiters is valid also for Chinese and Western Europeans victims. In particular, the latter can be also recruited by partners or presumed partners (i.e. lover boy method). The major trend seems for recruiters to lure potential victims with the promise of legitimate well-paid jobs, such as hairdressers, caretakers, dancers, waitresses (IT-E10), which can also occur on the internet through social networks such as Facebook. The scheme is in general as follows: “the trafficker or the person linked to [OCGs] attract potential victims online. Among these [individuals] a virtual relationship is established based on dreams, false expectations and promises of a better future life; they plan weddings and travels and send presents or money to convince the [contacted person] to leave for Europe or Italy” (Di Nicola et al., 2017: 50). E-recruitment is usually linked to the organisation of travels and specific Facebook pages where complete packages of service are offered (i.e., job offers, travel options, and documents). Some of the interviewed experts have contended that on the internet and in particular on Facebook, it is possible to find pages where only travel services to Europe and Italy are offered: “An evidence that results from the investigation activity is the presence of Facebook profiles related to persons that offer travel arrangements and different options” (IT-E19). Consistently “our police officers that control at ports have reported that some potential victims once arrived in Italy show them the screenshot of a Facebook profile of the person that has organised their travel” (IT-E15). An interviewed expert also pointed out that besides direct recruiting, the pages of Facebook where women and girls post pictures portraying them in nice situations (i.e. well-dressed, holding mobiles, and having fun) serve as an attractive factor for others to leave their country (IT-E24). While communications between recruiters and traffickers is mainly through WhatsApp, as to avoid interceptions, the latter may be used to receive pictures of potential victims that were previously contacted on Facebook, similarly to the use of mobiles or emails by recruiters to send pictures of potential victims to exploiters (IT-E20; IT-E24). As for recruitment aimed at labour exploitation, both online and offline channels are employed, that are pages with online job advertisements and employment agencies (Leogrande, 2016).

Migrants may travel with or without documents. In general, Nigerian victims that arrive by sea do not have passports, and once in Italy exploiters suggest to lodge asylum claims. “The more recent trend, compared to recover victims as soon as possible, is to leave them in shelter centres and wait for the resident permit to be issued. Thus, it is safer when they are on the streets” (IT-E24).³ Travel by plane is also reported (even if at present less frequent) to European airports using fake documents, and reaching Italy by train (IT-E18; IT-E20).

Similarly, east Europeans (i.e., Albanians and Ukrainians) may be provided by traffickers with fake documents, while Chinese travel on tourist or study visas obtained thanks to intermediaries in China. “An additional service offered, facilitated by a corruptive mechanism: for a payment, it is possible to obtain the documents needed” (IT-E2). Another way, is via licensed tour operators which are granted of blanket visas, and which seem to charge a fee for those that do not return after the expiration date. The trend seems to travel with genuine passports to depart the country, and then switch to forged or fraudulently obtained documentation (UNODC, 2013). In Italy, documents are in most cases confiscated by exploiters, as to isolate the victims and make them more vulnerable (IT-E14; IT-E7; Leogrande, 2016). In other cases, new fake documents are provided, as to be safe from police controls or to request resident permits. “When migrants arrive to Lampedusa, they are subsequently directed to a specific neighbour of the city of Naples where, according to our intelligence, has emerged a high concentration of forgers. It does not seem a coincidence” (IT-E10). The debt bondage, linked to travel and/or documents expenses as well as access to work, represents the main factor allowing traffickers to exploit victims within sexual and labour markets in Italy, while using the threat of violent retaliation against family members if victims are reluctant to cooperate (Regione del Veneto, 2004; Beretta et al., 2016; eastwest.eu, 2013; IT-E2; IT-E10; IT-E14; IT-E21).

2 MARKET STRUCTURE AND ACTORS

Foreign OCGs such as Nigerians, Chinese and east Europeans (i.e. Albanians, Romanians, Ukrainians, and Poles) are involved in the sexual and labour exploitative markets in Italy (DIA, 2017; DNA, 2017). Although settled throughout the country, it is possible to identify specific hubs for these two forms of exploitation: the cities of Turin and Milan in the north, and Naples, Castel Volturno, and Palermo in the south for sexual exploitation managed by Nigerian, Albanian and Romanian criminal entrepreneurs, and the province of Foggia with the area of Capitanata as

³ Most migrants from Africa and travelling by sea are recovered in shelter centres (Centri di primo soccorso e accoglienza), where they receive first aid and are identified by law enforcement. These centres are located in the cities of Agrigento and Lampedusa (Sicily), Cagliari and Elmas (Sardinia), Lecce and Otranto (Apulia), and Ragusa and Pozzallo (Sicily). If the status of asylum seeker is granted, a migrant can obtain a residence permit to stay in Italy. In practice, requests are evaluated by a territorial commission that can either accept or refuse. In many cases, requests are refused and migrants have the right to appeal. In the meantime, and till the final decision of the commission, they can remain in the national territory (IT-15; IT-E24).

a main point for labour exploitation in agriculture (especially for tomato harvesting) (IT-E5; IT-E23; IT-E18; Scotto, 2016).

These criminal entrepreneurs share similar organisational characteristics. They are small in size (from 3-4 to 10-15 members) and based on family, ethnic and tribal bonds, while operating within large fluid networks of groups and individuals made of nodes present in both countries of origin and exploitation. These nodes are also connected to traffickers/smugglers (in the form of joint ventures) in transit countries as to facilitate the movement of victims. Although roles and duties tend to be distributed among members in relation to their skills, place, hierarchy and location, they are in most cases interchangeable within groups (DNA, 2017; Becucci, 2016; Carchedi, 2016; IT-E9; IT-E6; IT-E2; IT-E18). The “main feature of Chinese OCGs is that of *guanxi*, a term referred to a network of relationships among members on the basis of family bonds or commercial interests. These groups, that have mainly settled in northern and central Italy, may create alliances to share duties and criminal markets, or may fight to control their territories” (eastwest.eu, 2013: 102).⁴ Albanians, similarly to Romanians, active at the national level, are structured into family-based organised crime groups, with members belonging to the same cities or towns, and connected to the bosses residing in the country of origin, as well as to other small groups (cells). The latter are in charge of recruitment, travel organisation, procuring forged documents, and acts of intimidation against families of victims when reluctant. More often these criminal entrepreneurs collaborate in sexual exploitation, and at present Albanian OCGs manage the street prostitution of Romanian victims (Ciconte, 2016; Regione del Veneto, 2004; Carchedi & Tola, 2005). These criminal entrepreneurs as stated by Palmisano (2017) have overcome the other foreign OCGs rooted in the north of the country in regard to trafficking for sexual exploitation, and in the placement of labour force in public construction sites, as it occurs in the city of Turin. Ukrainians, active in particular in the region of Campania and the city of Naples, are structured into small to medium-sized criminal groups, with strong connections with native OCGs residing in Ukraine. Despite their dimension, these groups have been defined in different criminal proceedings as “[mafia-type] associations, due to the systematic intimidations and retaliations for control purposes, illegal immigration, and forced prostitution” (Ingrascì, 2016).

Nigerian cults (named for example Black Axe, Eiyè, Aye, Buccaneers, Vikings, Ku Klux Klan Fraternity), are small groups independent but integrated within Nigerian OCGs.⁵ The latter in Italy can be dated back

⁴ As underlined by Becucci (2016), in respect to trafficking of human beings, Chinese criminal groups have two main types of organisation reflecting the degree of internal trust: 1) family based groups involving traffickers with managerial roles, active in China and connected to members in Italy; 2) joint ventures among members. More often, Chinese criminal entrepreneurs combine both structures and bonds. Thus, a central node which is based on familial ties coexists with recruited individuals for specific tasks.

⁵ From Italian judicial cases on trafficking of Nigerian women and girls, cults inspired by Evangelical-Christian and animist beliefs are active both in Nigeria and within Nigerian communities in Italy. These cults act like criminal organisations and recruit members through a strict selective procedure. Their role is to support Nigerian OCGs in protecting businesses, recovering debts, and set disputes violently. In few cases, their involvement in physical mutilations against competitors and ritual homicides has been detected in Italy (Carchedi, 2016a; IT-E9; IT-E15).

to the 1980s. Settled at first in the northern and central regions, more recently they have expanded to southern regions such as Campania, Calabria, and Sicily. While cults have been detected in more recent years in the cities of Turin, Venice-Mestre, Milan (north), Rome (centre), Caserta, Castel Volturno and Palermo (south). “The power that these groups exercise in Italy is similar to that of Italian mafias. They manage drug trafficking, prostitution, and other criminal activities, and behave like our mafiosi in acquiring the control of local territories. In some criminal proceedings this characteristic has been recognised” (IT-E22; IT-E21). The role of the cults, in particular, is to assist the *maman* (madam) in her illegal activities such as sexual exploitation and drug selling, while protecting the businesses from other competitive groups of the same nationality (Ciconte, 2016; Carchedi, 2016a; IT-E5; IT-E6; IT-E21). This female member is the point of connection between the bottom and upper parts of Nigerian OCGs in regard to sexual exploitation (i.e. members/individuals that produce profits and invest revenues in the legal economy) (Carchedi, 2016a; IT-E6; IT-E7; IT-E24). For example, in one judicial case the structure and organisation of a Nigerian organised crime group active in sexual exploitation was described as follows in respect to the roles of the members: “Members active in Nigeria are involved in all the necessary stages to bring potential victims to Europe such as obtaining visas, hosting girls in accommodations while waiting for documents, performing a voodoo rite called *juju* on girls to formalise the obligation to settle their debts, arranging travels. While the members active in Italy cooperate to obtain and assure illegal entries of victims to Italy or Europe, to find *mamans* that manage women and girls and their prostitution activity, to arrange accommodations, to gather the proceeds and to intimidate victims” (IT-E20).

Native organised crime groups (Cosa Nostra, the ‘Ndrangheta, Camorra, and Sacra Corona Unita) are not directly involved in sexual and labour exploitation at the national level because these illegal markets produce low profits, compared to drug trafficking for example, and involve higher risk of detection – e. g. charges of exploited victims (IT-E14; IT-E15). This allows foreign organised crime groups to manage more or less these criminal activities independently (IT-E1; IT-E15; IT-E18; Leogrande, 2016). Nevertheless, where Italians OCGs are present agreements have to be reached, and these may also consist in illegal services or exchange of illegal goods (DIA, 2017). “If ten Polish men decide to be gangmasters in Cerignola [region of Apulia] they are not able to do anything without the support of the local bosses. And if they have set up a human trafficking activity, they cannot avoid to have some relations with local organised crime groups that control the territory” (Leogrande, 2016: 89). In the regions of Campania and Calabria, for example, Albanian OCGs sell drugs at a favourable price in exchange of using portion of local territories for sexual exploitation (IT-E8; Russo, 2010), or as it occurred on the Apulian, Calabrian, and Sicilian coasts where native OCGs have allowed clandestine migrants to disembark, offered support in logistics and control to prevent law enforcement counteraction, and in exchange are supplied by foreign OCGs with drugs, weapons, and contraband tobacco products (Spiezia, 2008). It is more likely that partnerships exist among foreign OCGs, and in particular east Europeans in terms of

trafficking and exploitation: Albanian and Romanian, but also Chinese and Bulgarian criminal entrepreneurs (IT-E10; IT-E14).

2.1 Sexual exploitation: the central role of female criminal entrepreneurs

“As for the nationalities in the Italian sex market, there are Romanians, Albanians, followed by Nigerians and Chinese” (IT-E10). Mobile phones may be used during the travel of Nigerian migrants as a means of remote control through GPS, which is why many victims arrive in Italy with a telephone number to call as to gain further information on how to reach their final destination. This method is also used to send bus or train tickets to the victims, or if recharged to sell credits to other migrants and then pay for the journey. In other cases, migrants are picked up at shelter centres by members of OCGs or individuals that are recruited for this purposes (called “ticket men”) (IT-E4; IT-E8; IT-E21). “Compared to the first migration flows where victims arrived with numbers written on papers and hidden in their hair, nowadays it is more likely that they call families in Nigeria that, in turn, inform exploiters of their arrival in Italy. It is a countermeasure of traffickers due to police controls when victims disembark” (IT-E24). When victims start to be exploited, Nigerians work on the street and can be forced into prostitution at the very beginning inside or in the surroundings of open reception centres or temporary reception centres.⁶ East European and Chinese victims work mainly in closed places – apartments, massage centres – and use the streets or the internet to approach clients (IT-E2; IT-E14; IT-E19). “Exploiters buy telephone numbers connected in series that women and girls use to be contacted by clients, and that are linked to the offers of prostitution services posted on internet websites or social networks” (IT-E10).

Common elements may be traced in the exploitation scheme applied by foreign OCGs. First, the high level of internal trafficking since victims are moved frequently from one city/town to another, and that victims usually work in another place distant from where they live (IT-E20). “At nights or early in the morning, regional trains from the city of Rimini to the city of Bologna are full of Nigerian women who commute” (IT-E10).

Second, the use of violence to force victims into prostitution, especially reluctant ones. Nigerians benefit from the intimidation of through voodoo rites⁷ and resort to violence in extreme situations (IT-E19; IT-E20). Use of violence is also typical for east European OCGs (especially Albanians), as a means of psychological submission and to enforce the loyalty of victims. Nevertheless, since the 2000s, these criminal entrepreneurs have lowered the use of violence as a strategy to curb their business risk (Baldoni, 2011). “They are more contractual in leaving few hundred euros

⁶ These places are Centri di accoglienza per richiedenti asilo (CARA) and Centri di accoglienza straordinaria (CAS).

⁷ The voodoo rite (also called *juju*) is celebrated by local holy men in the country of origin (e.g., Nigeria) before the departure of the victims as a guarantee of the contracted debt. The coercive power of this rite, resides also in the fact that if women or girls are reluctant or intend to denounce their exploiters, the family persuade them to continue working and repay the debt, fearing serious retaliations against themselves (IT-E18).

to the victims, and allowing more freedom in dressing and eating. During the 1990s earnings for women and girls amounted to zero. More recently, a similar trend seems to involve Nigerian OCGs as well” (IT-E8). Due to the intimidating force of voodoo rites, Nigerian victims are not directly controlled when working; on the contrary, east Europeans are subjected to strict supervision by members or employees of OCGs (IT-E18).

Third, the central role of females in managing exploited victims, in most cases supported by their partners or other male/female assistants. The Nigerian *maman*, usually a previously exploited woman able to marry an Italian man or to obtain a residence permit, is the point for sexual exploitation and may also work as a prostitute (IT-E18; IT-E20). She controls (i.e. demanding messages via mobile after each service) and organises trafficked victims, coordinates their activities and collects the income they make (IT-E19; IT-E24). Males (also partners) provide support through coercive and violent means when victims are reluctant or intend to emancipate (Baldoni, 2011). In some cases, exploited victims live with the *maman*, in others they are located in different apartments with other exploited women and girls, some of which may have legal residence permits as to be secured from police control (IT-E7; IT-E15; IT-E20). The *maman* may be supported by male or female assistants and other members or recruited individuals, depending on the number of victims (Table 1).

TABLE 1. NUMBERS OF VICTIMS AND CORRESPONDING UNITS OF CRIMINAL ENTREPRENEURS IN A LOCAL CONTEXT

Victims	Maman	Partner	Handyman	Bodyguard	Supervisor	Cashier	Courier – Transporter from/to Nigeria
1-3	X						
4-6	X	X	X				
7-10	X	X	X	X			
11-15	X	X	X	X	X		
15+	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Source: Authors' elaboration on Carchedi (2016a).

A study carried out in the city of Asti (region of Piedmont) has underlined that 3 or 4 *maman* are active, each exploiting from 4 to 6 victims, and receiving the support of female assistants (known as *petite maman*) with different roles. One *maman*, in a medium-high level position, is in relation with a partner belonging to a cult and in charge of intimidations and debt recovery (Carchedi, 2016a). Similarly, Chinese prostitution is managed by females – they make the appointments, collect the revenue, distribute money, provide food and clothes for the victims – and can be supported by males (Beretta et al., 2016; IT-E14). Albanian women, after years of prostitution and similarly to Nigerian ones can control

small groups of 3-4 victims, supported by their partner or another male member of the organised crime group (IT-E3; Russo, 2010).

2.2. Labour exploitation: the key role of the agricultural sector

The economic sectors of labour exploitation in Italy are textile, construction, the tourist and hotel industries, food services, and in particular agriculture (Shelley, 2014; Palmisano, 2017; IT-E10; IT-E11). Exploitation of Nigerians as drug sellers has been reported, together with other works such as parking attendants, window washers and beggars in the streets regarding other nationalities. As for female victims from eastern Europe (e.g. Bulgarians, Romanians) exploitation occurs for jobs such as caregivers (IT-E12; IT-E4; IT-E6; Bertolotti, 2017; Save the Children, 2017).

Chinese migrants are mainly exploited in textile and clothing factories, or in restaurants, where employers may be either Chinese or Italian nationals who have transient relationships of reciprocal interest with traffickers. It is more likely that the owners of factories and companies (especially Chinese) know the criminal entrepreneurs involved in illegal immigration (called *shetou*) and rely on them to acquire labour force at low cost (Becucci, 2016; IT-E2). The opposite may also occur. In one police investigation, the Chinese trafficker was in contact with two Italian representatives of a cooperative of job placement, compliant in delivering fictitious employment contracts and fake paycheques (IT-E14). In other cases, there is no link between the traffickers and the subsequent employers. Thus, within the Chinese community a recruitment service exists based on specialised bars and newspapers, as for example in the city of Milan (Beretta et al., 2016).

East Europeans (Romanians, Bulgarians, Poles, Slovaks, Lithuanians) and sub-Saharan Africans are the main nationalities exploited in the agricultural sector, with the highest concentration in the province of Foggia (i.e., the area of Capitanata) in the region of Apulia (Sagnet and Palmisano, 2015; Ciconte and Liberti, 2016). Migrants are subjected to constant internal exploitation from north to south due to the specificity of harvesting seasons (Leogrande, 2016; IT-E11; IT-E16). "By the end of winter they brought us to pick potatoes at Cassibile [in Sicily], then they told us we had to go to Apulia. It is four years that we make this travel. [...] When we arrived to the city of Lecce, they brought us with a light van to an Algerian man, in the farmlands of the town of Nardò" (Sagnet and Palmisano, 2015: 19-20). This form of exploitation involves also Italians, especially as a result of the economic crisis, while in regard to migrants the distinction between trafficked and smuggled individuals is not always definite. "It is hard to prove that the person employed in the tomato cultivation in Apulia is exploited as a consequence of trafficking. It is a multi-faceted situation. Migrants arrive through different illegal ways, and even if they have resident permits, they remain in a vulnerable situation. More likely, the discriminatory variable is the debt bondage. Slavery is the tip of the iceberg, under which there is just the exploitation of migrants" (IT-E11). In this regard, native and foreign OCGs benefit from

what can be defined as a “criminal system” in which legal and illegal entrepreneurs operate (i.e. grey area) based on the ancient Italian labour method of gangmasters and suitable to respond to the actual dynamics of the food industry (IT-E11; IT-E17; L’Espresso, 2016; Scotto, 2016).⁸

On one side, some foreign OCGs may recruit individuals with the promise of a legal job, arrange their travel and their further employment in agriculture in slavery conditions, as in the case of Polish or Romanian OCGs (Iovino, 2016; Leogrande, 2016). In a police operation named Piana (from the location of farmlands, Piana del Sele), carried out in the province of Salerno, a transnational criminal organisation comprising of Romanians and Italians was dismantled after lawsuits of some of the Romanian victims. The offenders were accused of having trafficked mainly women for labour exploitation between Romania and Italy. The latter were cheated with false promises of good profitable legitimate employments, but then exploited in agriculture. Female migrants were forced to work in local farms, underpaid and threatened. These criminal entrepreneurs were in charge of illegally intermediating with employers, subtracting documents, collecting payments (at higher prices) for accommodation and transportation, extorting money for residence permits and keeping a part of the salaries (Iovino, 2016).

On the other, Italian OCGs, especially where deeply rooted, such as in the south of Italy, and the regions of Sicily, Calabria, Apulia, and Campania, make profits thanks to the control of some areas where labour exploitation takes place (IT-E16). “In certain places, villages, gangmasters and farmers have to keep good neighbourly relations with local OCGs. This may consist in protection money and extortions” (IT-E11) or exchanges in other criminal activities, such as drug selling. For example, in one investigative operation named Svevia in 2000, local OCGs active in the province of Foggia, were interested in the tomato supply, and in perpetrating extortions money to farmers of around €1,000 for each shipment leaving the farm (Leogrande, 2016).

Gangmasters connect demand and supply, and offer their service to farmers, thus overcoming legal ways of recruitment. “In most cases, these persons are the only point of reference for the job searching of migrants devoid of the possibility to contact employers, and their role is crucial in less populated areas. [...]. More often, they have worked for a long time in the territory and know employment mechanisms. Their activity is usually subjected to an Italian gangmaster who, in turn, is recruited by unscrupulous farmers. Unlike in the past, these actors now manage not only the recruitment of workers but also all aspects of their lives (i.e. hours of working, salaries)” (Pisacane, 2016: 44-45). Gangmasters form criminal networks. On one side, they are linked to intermediaries, such

⁸ Farmers need to keep very low production costs because of the dynamics of the globalised food market where their power to negotiate prices with industries that process their rough products is almost inexistent (IT-E11; IT-E16; IT-E23). As stated by one previous victim of labour exploitation (IT-E23) “In my opinion, the real gangmasters are food corporations that through a mechanism of lowering costs force farmers to resort to gangmasters to have labour force at a very low price to compete on the market.” Another reason for the use of gangmasters to hire day labourers is related to the cycles and timing of harvesting. In many cases, farmers need labour force in very short times (Ciconte and Liberti, 2016).

as recruiters and travel organisers in the countries of origin of migrants; on the other, they are in constant relation with other gangmasters and intermediaries operating in the same region or areas of Italy. In one judicial investigation, interceptions of two Polish gangmasters, revealed connections with others collaborating for the placement of workers, and deciding the farmlands where employers could work. Some of the gangmasters charged in the trial were also involved in smuggling of solar panels, and were trying to organise operations of trafficking in weapons. Another gangmaster, for example, was connected to a friend receiving girls who wanted to work as prostitutes and paying €2,500 for each (Leogrande, 2016). Thus, as stated by an interviewed expert and as it results from investigative evidence (IT-E10; DIA, 2017), the presence of native OCGs in the agricultural sector, referred to as “agromafia” (agricultural mafia), may favour this form of illegal employment and exploitation, and the profiting from this criminal system, but there is no direct involvement. The lucrative business of Italian organised crime groups is to infiltrate and/or acquire legal farms, especially those facing economic difficulties, in order to infiltrate or control the supply chain, such as for example imposing the purchase of specific commodities, and easily launder revenues of other criminal activities (i.e. agromafia) (Europol, 2015; IT-E10; IT-E11).

Exploited migrants face hardship which includes very unhealthy and unsafe living and working conditions, high number of working hours per day (from 12 to 14), threats from gangmasters if they are reluctant to work, having residence in overcrowded and crumbling facilities, neglected right to receive medical aid if needed, and having their documents seized by gangmasters. “Passports, residence permits, and IDs are seized under the pretext of making employment contracts, while the real one is to keep us under their control. Sometimes, our documents are sold to irregular migrants” (Sagnet and Palmisano, 2015: 29). In other cases, employment contracts are absent or fictitious, or migrants are employed on piecework (IT-E15; IT-E23; Pisacane, 2016; Iovino, 2016; Leogrande, 2016; MSF, 2008; Galeazzi, 2016). As contended by one interviewed expert, this option is paradoxically preferred by the former since it allows to earn more money being paid for each filled up container (of tomatoes, for example) (IT-E16). In general, women compared to men are preferred by exploiters since they have fewer complaints and accept lower salaries: €37 is the daily pay for men, while women earn €22 if Italian and €20 if foreign. A hierarchy also exists for retributions in which Caucasian workers receive higher payments compared to African workers (Sagnet and Palmisano, 2015). As stated by an interviewed victim of previous labour exploitation: “It is hard to fight back this system. The daily threats we suffered, perpetrated by gangmasters and farmers. When the court trial ended, the sentences documented the state complicity with, for example, labour inspectors informing farmers about the day of inspection” (IT-E23).

3. FINANCING AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

As for the financial management of trafficking in human beings, the main data gathered was for Nigerian OCGs for two main reasons: nowadays in Italy they represent the most emerging criminal entrepreneurs involved in this criminal activity; the high numbers of Nigerian victims reaching the country and further exploited into prostitution, some of whom decide to collaborate with police forces and judicial institutions to escape their situation. East European OCGs have a long history in terms of sexual exploitation and are not the main and recent focus of criminal investigations. Chinese OCGs, even if investigated, are an insular ethnic group, thus allowing for more limited information to be gathered, mainly by undercover police activity.

3.1. Sources of capital for initiating/sustaining operations of trafficking in human beings and profiles of financiers

Although Nigerian OCGs are active in the drug and sex markets, it appears that the source of financing for the trafficking operations may come from the same criminal activity or other illegal activities. As a matter of fact, the distinction is blurred when transnational OCGs are involved, and this can be true also for Eastern European criminal entrepreneurs, such as for example Albanians that operate in drug trafficking and sexual exploitation (IT-E4; IT-E10; IT-E18). Nevertheless, as underlined by one expert, Albanian OCGs when settled in Italy have started to gain profits through prostitution, and then reinvested them into drugs to be sold to Italian OCGs at a very favourable price, which allowed them to gradually ascend the hierarchical structure of this criminal market (IT-E8).

Social capital more than financial capital is crucial as to recruit potential victims in the countries of origin (IT-E4). For example, Chinese clans (i.e. extended families) are actively involved in identifying nationals that can be moved and further exploited abroad (IT-E2), and in most cases some of their members are the financiers of the trafficking operations: "None of these Chinese migrants could leave without paying any money. It was a real extortion of OCGs against family clans, which were obliged to turn to loan sharks to pay for travel. A real form of getting into debts, but not with traffickers" (IT-E14). Similarly, family members and relatives play a key role in recruiting potential Nigerian victims. More generally, community relations in rural villages facilitate the process, where different individuals besides family members are in contact with the *maman* or other members of OCGs and act as intermediaries – e.g. friends, acquaintances, priests, etc. (IT-E25). As for the financiers, there are different situations: in some cases, it is the *maman* who pays for travel and documents (if needed) in advance. "[This Nigerian OCGs] with operative cells in the city of Catania, Genoa and Rome, was managed and promoted by *maman* Jennifer who handled all the relationships with members/associates in Nigeria

and Libya, followed the travels of victims through Africa till the Libyan coasts, and provided the necessary sums of money as for the victims to arrive to Italy” (Save the Children, 2017: 68). In other cases, experts point out the role of sponsors, that is persons close to the families of the victims that offer to cover the required expenses. There are cases in which the money is advanced by family members or relatives, usually getting into debts or selling their properties, and that wait to be repaid with the earnings of the victims once they have started to work in Italy (IT-E15; IT-E18; IT-E19; IT-E20; IT-E22; Di Nicola & Musumeci, 2014). The amount of debt may be known by the family, which allows to negotiate with recruiters: “in one judicial case, all the trafficked girls had to repay an amount of €30,000, except for one girl for whom the family was able to agree an amount of €25,000” (IT-E4).

In Libya, other payments are required by Nigerian OCGs, which leave the victims to other local criminal/military groups, since at present they cannot count on previous corruptive networks. Stories of women refer to the trade between Nigerian criminal entrepreneurs and Arab gangs. Victims are kept into connection or ghetto houses until the *maman* in Italy pays this additional amount for their release (Zandonini, 2016; IT-E4; IT-E21). If she has no money when requested, victims can be bought by other *mamans* even in Libya. “There are ladies that go to these connection houses to buy women and girls, with the intention of profiting and making them move to another location or country” (IT-E4). The financiers may be family members or relatives as well, to whom more money is extorted (IT-E21). Similarly, Chinese victims are sold during their journey to Italy, sometimes more than once, either to other members of the same OCGs, or to other criminal groups (IT-E2; IT-E14). This way, it is possible to earn more money, or to share with other criminal entrepreneurs the profits of trafficking. “In this judicial cases, involving very long land routes, groups of around thirty Chinese migrants were sold several times to various criminal groups that managed different legs of the travel and that were in contact with each other” (IT-E2). Simulated kidnapping may occur as well, and perpetrated by members of the same OCGs. This way, the anticipated amount of money is not considered, and additional money is extorted from the families or relatives of the victims (IT-E14). On the contrary, when east European OCGs (e.g. Albanians) are involved, the recurrent scheme is the payment for travel, visas, and documents to be made in advance, since usually the agreement with the victims is that this amount will be repaid once starting to work in Italy (IT-E4).

3.2. Settlement and methods of payments

In general, migrants cannot leave if payments for travel and documents (when needed) had not been delivered to the respective persons (i.e. OCGs members, intermediaries, relatives, acquaintances) in charge of the recruitment and arrangement of the journey, residing in the countries of origin (IT-E15). The most used method to settle payments are pre-agreed instalments, that is an initial sum of money to cover initial travel and documents expenses, and another sum of money once the victims start

to work in Italy and to repay their debt. For example, in one judicial case on a Nigerian organised crime group, “the woman (maman) asked [her contact] how much money was needed for the girl to arrive to Italy. The contact explained the procedure and the payment: first he would have to deposit half of the amount to his trustee in Nigeria, and the other half when the girl would have reached Italy” (IT-E20). In another investigative operation regarding Chinese migrants, the payment was made in three instalments: “The agreed settlement of payment was 1/3 of the total amount before the departure, another 1/3 once arrived to Italy, and a final 1/3 through working (i.e. labour exploitation)” (IT-E14).

In some cases, it also happens that all the requested amount of money is advanced by sponsors, family members, or relatives before potential victims leave their country of origin (IT-E7). The agreement is then to repay once victims are employed in Italy. Sponsors, who can be also intermediaries of OCGs, will be repaid by them or in a later moment when victims start to work (IT-E7; IT-E8). On the contrary, family members or relatives run the risk not to be repaid. The reason is that victims are not able, in most situations, to send money to their home country because of the debt and the obligation to leave almost all the earnings to their exploiters (IT-E2; IT-E4; IT-E15; IT-E25). In the case of Nigerians, for example, the profits of victims and the possibility to send money to their families depend on their settlement in Europe and their subsequent career as *mamans* (IT-E20).

Besides the use of cash smuggling, which is always preferred since less risky, when OCGs anticipate the expenses of the travel and of eventual documents for migrants, there are four main methods used to send the money to the contact person in charge of organising the journey in the country of departure (IT-E10; IT-E12; IT-E15; IT-E18; IT-E19; IT-E24):

1. *Hawala*, an informal value transfer system, which is used in particular by north African and Muslim populations and represents “cash-in and cash-out businesses that primarily send personal remittances of low value and that do not preclude sending high value business transfer” (FATF, 2013; Europol, 2015).⁹ Besides the separated physical transportation of money, payments are made through the use of papers with codes among trusted brokers (*hawaladars*) (IT-E6; IT-E20).
2. Money transfer services (e.g. MoneyGram, Western Union, WorldRemit), especially with reference to Nigerian criminal entrepreneurs: “in some investigations, it was evident that [these groups] hold ethnic or money transfer shops used as a cover for illicit money flows” (IT-E12). The owners can be members of OCGs or accomplices, who borrow their ID documents or use other customers’ identity cards as to overcome the daily limit of money transfer.
3. Postepay service, which consists in a rechargeable credit card allowing to transfer money.

⁹ This type of service has been defined by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF, 2013: 15): “criminal *hawala*, [a system] driven by illegitimate money flows and often controlled by criminals or criminal groups [...]. These criminal networks are characterised by high value transactions between legal and natural persons that do not necessarily share the same cultural/geographic background.”

4. Bank accounts, where the transfer of money is usually delivered to bank accounts of straw men, who can be family members/relatives/acquaintances (of the contact person as well) or individuals connected to members of OCGs.

When trafficking involves migrants from Africa, and particularly from Nigeria, the same methods of settlement of payments are used in other two circumstances. First, if more money is needed in Libya for victims to cross the Mediterranean Sea. “The person in Nigeria appoints the smuggler for transportation and incurs a debt. It is not clear if the former sends the money from Nigeria, or if he pays through a contact in Libya. But the methods are *hawala* or money transfer services” (IT-E20). Second, when victims are kidnapped by or sold to other criminal/military groups in Libya. For example, in one judicial case, while migrants were kept prisoners in one camp in Sabha, there were persistent requests to their families to credit sums of money for their liberation through MoneyGram, Western Union or to bank accounts headed by family members (IT-E21). Unless the victims or recruiters hold a direct contact with traffickers and/or smugglers, and payments are mostly handled in cash, in all the other cases the aforementioned methods are applied. Consistently, the latter are used when paying individuals involved at the various stages and with different roles within the trafficking chain, as it occurs for example with “trolley men” or *boga* – the persons accompanying the victims from Nigeria to Libya – and the ticket man – the person in charge of recovering victims in Italy (IT-E21; IT-E24).

4. COSTS OF DOING BUSINESS

Costs of trafficking are mainly related to travel and/or documents expenses when OCGs are the financiers both from the country of origin and through Italy to reach the final destination. These costs are not particularly high if compared to other criminal activities, such as for example drug trafficking (IT-E8; IT-E15; IT-E20). In general, costs depend on the distance between the countries of origin and destination of victims, and the method of transportation (IT-E18). As reported in one judicial case on a Nigerian organised crime group, there are two ways of trafficking, which are in turn related to different prices (IT-E20). The first option, which regards travelling by airplane is the safest but also expensive, since it includes the costs of the ticket, documents and corruption in the countries of origin/transit. The second, concerning the arrival to Italy by sea (crossing the desert of Niger and leaving from Libya on boats) is cheapest, although riskier. Differences in costs of travelling encountered by traffickers reflect in diverse amounts of the debt of victims (e.g. around €80,000 if they arrive to Italy by plane and around €30,000 if they travel by land and then sea).

For victims arriving from Nigeria to Italy through the most frequently used land and sea routes by traffickers (i.e. from Benin City, crossing the desert of Niger to reach Libya and then Italy) that are subsequently

exploited in the sex market, the cost of travel ranges between €2,500-€3,000 and €5,000 (IT-E4; IT-E7; IT-E9; IT-E10). This amount pays for travel and for the persons in charge of transportation (*passseurs*) (IT-E12). It has been contended by one expert that when the amount is around €5,000, part of it is supposed to pay the ransom requested by other criminal groups operating in Libya that keep migrants hostages in connection or ghetto houses (IT-E4). In some cases, additional money is required by OCGs, a sum that can range from €200 to €500, as to allow victims to continue their travel to Italy (IT-E4; IT-E21). The total amount of costs for having the victims arrive in Italy can be also higher. In one judicial case, the initial price paid by the *maman* to her contact (partner) in Nigeria was €4,000, although the cost of the operation amounted to a total of €11,000: "He explains that the money is needed for the business, and that she does not have to complain since the total amount [€11,000] corresponds to a favourable price. He also says that he will add to the €4,000 another €2,000 for extra expenses" (IT-E20). A similar price for trafficking a girl from Nigeria to Italy and the city of Genoa was reported in another judicial case, where the total amount to be paid to all the persons involved in her illegal entry was €12,000 (IT-E20). Other judicial evidence refers to lower total costs for the journey (i.e. travel, transportation, intermediate stage) – between €500-€800 (IT-E24). As for Nigerian criminal entrepreneurs, other costs are related to the voodoo rites before victims leave their country of origin: in one judicial case the price paid by the contact of the *maman* in Nigeria was €500, while from another source of information the price was €150 with the obligation for the victims to pay another sum of money once employed in Italy and start to repay their debt (IT-E25).

Once Nigerian victims reach Italy, there are other costs to be sustained by OCGs. First, there is the cost of travel to the final destination. For example, in one case the price was around €300 (IT-E8), although the presence of different options and routes at the national level can make this estimation particularly challenging. When victims are recovered at the points of arrival (i.e. shelter centres) by a member or employee of Nigerian OCGs or the *maman*, this person is paid around €50 per journey. Second, there is the cost of management of the prostitution activity, such as paying the person in charge of accompanying and controlling victims on a daily basis while working (who can be Italian as well), who receive between €25-€50 per day; renting of street spots for prostitution (referred to as "joints") that cost around €50-€150 per day and are paid to the owners that are usually other criminal entrepreneurs, e.g. Albanians OCGs (IT-E4; IT-E24) (Table 2).

Other costs are related to the laundering of profits, and in particular to services that allow to transfer money to the countries of origin. For Nigerians, the commission charged by the owners of money transfer services is around 1%. There are some OCGs that while using cash transportation for their profits, offer the same service to other traffickers: "The organisation charges 6% of the transported amount that includes the delivery and concealment of money, transportation and air ticket, and final consignment. And this is also used for licit money, since it is

TABLE 2. INDICATIVE COSTS INCURRED BY NIGERIAN OCG FOR A TRAFFICKING OPERATION (SEXUAL EXPLOITATION)

Type of cost	Range (€)
Travel from Nigeria to Italy (by land and by sea from Libya)	2,500/3,000 – 5,000
Voodoo rite	150-500
Ransom to criminal groups in Libya	200-500
Passeur	220-330
Travel in Italy (point of arrival to destination)	300
Ticket man	50
Accompanying and controlling the girls to/at joints	25-50 (per day)
Renting of joints	100 (per month)
Money transfer service	1%-2% for each money transfer
Money courier	6% of the sum transported

Source: Authors' elaboration on gathered data, *Open Migration* (2017).

preferred to money transfer services where movements can be traced" (IT-E6). Usually, this service occurs within the *hawala* system.

For labour exploitation involving African, Chinese and east European migrants, the costs related to travelling, the intermediation of recruitment agencies or persons in charge of providing documents, and visas (both for the journey if needed, and to remain in Italy) are in general covered by the victims (Leogrande, 2016; Palmisano, 2017; Sagnet and Palmisano, 2015; IT-E2; IT-E14) and no costs are incurred by the criminal entrepreneurs. In one case, for example, Polish migrants paid to the recruiter or the driver of the bus a total of €200, plus another sum of around €50-€100 to other intermediaries. One Polish exploited victim, in particular, refers to having paid €200 to the recruiter and another €120 to the driver, after which he was able to leave for Italy. In another case, a Polish man directed to the city of Foggia in the region of Apulia reports to have paid €150 to traffickers, €50 to an intermediary as to pass the last border and other €50 after the first week of work (Leogrande, 2016). Consistently, a young Tunisian boy had to pay €2,000 to an intermediary to obtain the residence permit to stay and work in Italy (Sagnet and Palmisano, 2015). The actual costs are borne by future exploited victims, while profits are gained by gangmasters by reducing the final amount of salaries. In the agricultural sector, for example, the amount of wages for workers is agreed between the gangmasters and the farmers. While the former makes profits from deducting part of the daily earnings of workers, and charging other costs to them (e.g. transportation, food, etc.), the latter is able to make profits due to the very low cost sustained for production (Palmisano, 2017; Sagnet & Palmisano, 2015). For example, drivers that bring migrants to the farmlands on a daily basis are paid €600 per month by gangmasters,

but this cost, as explained below, is actually paid by exploited victims (Palmisano, 2017).

5. PROFITS AND PROFIT SHARING

As pointed out by Europol (2015) exact and overall estimations of profits from trafficking in human beings is challenging, and when available are unreliable. This is valid also for estimating profits of trafficking and exploitation at the national level. It is, however, possible to give indicative amounts of profits mainly referred to specific cases. In general, the debt incurred by the victims represents the main source of profits for OCGs. For example, the total amount of the debt for Nigerian women and girls ranges between €30,000 and €60,000, while for Chinese victims exploited in the sexual and labour markets is €15,000-€20,000 (IT-E6; IT-E8; IT-E9; IT-E14; IT-E20; IT-E21; Di Nicola & Musumeci, 2014). The requested sum of money is set completely arbitrarily by exploiters, since it does not correspond to the costs sustained for travelling, eventual documents, and access to work, and can therefore be even higher. In one judicial case the total debt of the exploited girl was €90,000, forcing her to consign €500 per week to the exploiter. It can depend on the behaviour of the victim, that is “€50,000 if she behaves and €70,000 if she misbehaves” (IT-E20). Nigerian OCGs also make profits by selling trafficked victims among *mamans*, as documented by one judicial case in which one girl, once arrived in Italy, was sold to another exploiter for €8,000 (IT-E20). When the debt is repaid, and in most cases this happens over many years, the victims are free to leave their exploiters and to find another job. When Nigerian women and girls are involved, it is more likely that they become *mamans* and carry out the trafficking and exploitation activities using contacts developed during their experience. Thus, the constant arrival and employment of victims is essential for OCGs to continue making profits.

Sexual exploitation victims are forced to deliver daily earnings to their exploiters until the sum of the debt is repaid. Usually, they are supposed to earn a certain amount per day which can be around €100-€300 for Nigerians and east Europeans. The opportunity to earn a certain amount per day is related to the ethnicity, the physical appearance, and the location of working (i.e. joint) (IT-E6). The sex market is highly competitive and victims who are pushed to generate profits due to the debt and intimidations can even work for very low rates (IT-E8; IT-E9; IT-E20). Nigerian prostitutes, for example, can work for an average of €30 per service, and even for less (around €10-€15). On the contrary, east European victims (Albanian and Romanian) can charge higher rates (around €30-€50), since in general they are better looking, work in central areas, and may have apartments at their disposal where to bring clients (IT-E8; IT-E12). Reaching the daily requested amount, particularly for Nigerians, in practice means working 10-12 hours per day (IT-E2; IT-E6; IT-E8; IT-E20; IT-E21). The amount of the debt for OCGs is almost a net profit due to the fact that victims have to cover the rent of houses/

apartments, food and clothes expenses, thus earnings pay both the debt and living expenses (IT-E8). As reported in one judicial case (IT-E20), an exploited girl was supposed to pay €250 for the monthly rent plus €40 per week for the food. While Albanian criminal entrepreneurs have adopted a more contractual model and leave 30-50% of the earnings to the victims, Nigerians keep all the generated income (IT-E10). As a result, exploited women and girls are able to repay their families (if they are the financiers) or to support them, once free and usually when they become *mamans* and start to exploit other victims. For this reason, when possible victims try to conceal some of their earnings and send them to their families (IT-E8). Similarly, Chinese women and girls exploited in massage centres or apartments are forced to leave all the earnings to the owner/boss (usually a woman) until they have repaid their debt, and receive a small amount of money to cover their living expenses (IT-E14).

Within Nigerian OCGs, the money collector is the *maman*, who keeps tracks of revenues and expenditures on papers or notebooks. Within Chinese groups it is also a woman in charge of exploiting the girls and keeping their profits (IT-E14). In particular, the *maman* is responsible for delivering the proceeds to her partner or husband and to pay the other individuals who support her in managing the prostitution activity: “the girl was used to deliver the money to this lady who, in turn, every week sent the profits to Nigeria minus the costs to pay her husband and for living expenses” (IT-E4). It is believed that part of the profit is also divided among the higher level of OCGs, that is other male members residing in Italy and other European countries (IT-E9; IT-E15).

The scheme that generates profits in labour exploitation is somehow different. Besides traffickers there are other legal or illegal actors who make revenues within a grey economy. The first source of profiting for OCGs regards travel and document expenses that are covered by migrants. The latter usually pay the recruitment agencies in the country of origin and, in some cases, in Italy. Available examples are related to different economic sectors: €200 each month are remitted by a caregiver employed in Italy; €700 a year are paid by a waitress working in a hotel on the Italian coast; €200 to a Polish recruiter to work in agriculture (Palmisano, 2017).

In the agricultural sector, while farmers earn from employing labour force at a low cost (and this is valid also for processing companies and corporations within an “adulterated” production system), illegal profits from labour exploitation are mainly made by gangmasters, employers (when recruitment agencies are involved), and the owners of the lands where accommodations for workers are located (Sagnet & Palmisano, 2015; Palmisano, 2017; Ciconte & Liberti, 2016; IT-E10; IT-E15). As for farmers, earnings are still high and allow them to remain in the market, as explained above. The following example is indicative: “They told us that we would be paid €3 for each container of tomatoes.”¹⁰

¹⁰ These wages (i.e. €3 per crate or €3.50 per hour) are not aligned with the salary prescribed by law in national contract agreements for this type of work, which should be €4.40 euros as a minimum threshold for 6.5 working hours per day (Leogrande, 2016; Sagnet & Palmisano, 2015; IT-E23).

Five workers were able to gather 25 containers per day, each of them earning €15 and each container holding 2.8 tonnes of tomatoes. 25 containers a day are equal to a total of 70 tonnes of tomatoes. Since the farmer will sell each tonne for €60, profit margins are high" (Leogrande, 2016: 98).

Illegal profits of gangmasters are significant. In the area of Capitanata (located in the province of Foggia of the region of Apulia), Leogrande (2016: 204) reports the following example: "if the gangmaster subtracts 50 cents per hour from the salary of day labourers (paid in some cases €2.80 instead of €3) after 10 hours of work, he has gained €5. If there are 50 workers, the amount increases to €250. In a month he profits €7,500." A Chinese criminal entrepreneur was used to subtract sums of money from salaries of the exploited victims in order to provide them with employment contracts and residence permits, and to have their debt repaid. "This boss usually told the victims: you have to pay me a total of €15,000 for your travel and documents, and to remain in Italy. Thus, you owe me €1,000 for the residence; €1,000 for the person that works in the prefecture; €1,000 for the policeman that helps me; €100 are needed to pay the representatives of the cooperative that found you the employment" (IT-E14). The monthly amount of salaries was settled between this boss and the representatives of the employment cooperative: "if the boss needed, for example, to legalise three Chinese migrants he made fictitious contracts to an amount of €1,000 per month. Out of this sum, €500 were for the worker and the other €500 were kept to pay governmental contributions as well as the debt and other costs for documents to remain in Italy" (IT-E14).

As for the agricultural sector, daily salaries are agreed between farmers and gangmasters, the former paying around €4-€5 per container, the latter deducting €1.50. An interviewed victim (previously exploited), claimed that they should have been paid €5 for each container of tomatoes gathered but that the actual amount was €3, with €1.50 withheld by the gangmaster. A worker was able to fill 6-7 containers a day (IT-E23). Although gangmasters sustain costs related to minivans, drivers, rent of accommodations and salaries of their assistants, the main part of expenses are recovered from employees. As an example, Leogrande (2016) reports an indicative estimation of profits equal to €1.5 million in two years (2005 – 2006) considering a total of 5,000 Polish workers in the farmlands of the region of Apulia and an average of one month of employment for each worker from whom €5 a day are subtracted by gangmasters. Charges of gangmasters are related to clothes used for working, accommodation (€30-€50 per month to the owner of the land), food (€4 per day), mobile phone recharging (50 cents), shower (€1), medical aid (€5 to be accompanied to the hospital). Penalties maybe also applied, such as €20 a day if workers do not comply with the arbitrary time of picking tomatoes. "From my daily salary of €20-€25, he subtracted €5 for transportation to the farmland; €3.5 for a sandwich and €1.50 for water. We actually received a net salary of €10 per each working day of 12-14 hours" (IT-E23). An Algerian gangmaster was reportedly bringing employees to bars, restaurants, and

supermarkets he owned, or to others owned by Italian accomplices, where food and other products were charged at three times more than the market price (Palmisano, 2017).

It should also be noted that it is not uncommon for salaries not to be paid at all to victims, meaning that their daily/monthly earnings, paid by farmers, are entirely kept by gangmasters, who in turn increase their profits. The latter may be also involved in other criminal activities while exploiting foreign and Italian workers, such as drug supply within farmlands. For example, consumption of amphetamine by Polish migrants has been reported, especially to bear the very heavy working conditions. Gangmasters acquire the drug at a wholesale price of €7 per gram and resell it at €30 per gram, which is a price higher than the average daily salary of workers. The latter may work for free to repay the drug. "In one occasion, my gangmaster bought around 160 grams and due to the difference in prices, he profited €3,000 in a few days" (Leogrande, 2016: 189).

5.1. Investment schemes

At present, the investigative and judicial evidence suggests that after living expenses and the costs for running the business revenues are reinvested to run the same criminal activity, and in drug trafficking especially with reference to Albanians and Nigerians OCGs. In general, net profits are sent to the countries of origin for two main reasons: either to finance new trafficking operations or to invest in real estates and commercial activities (hotels, restaurants, bars, etc.); this is valid, with very few exceptions, for all the foreign OCGs (IT-E1; IT-E2; IT-E4; IT-E6; IT-E12; IT-E14; IT-E20). For example, Polish gangmasters, involved in labour exploitation used profits to acquire real estates both in Poland and Italy: one of those "well settled in Italy and willing to stay, besides showing his wealth as every parvenu, has started to invest big shares in pubs, bars, apartments, cars, shops. In one year he bought a house for which he paid €160,000 in cash" (Leogrande, 2016: 206). Compared to other foreign criminal entrepreneurs, Chinese OCGs invest revenues in Italy, and this allows them to root in local territories, launder profits, and keep running their legal and illegal businesses. In one case, a Chinese boss opened bank accounts, and acquired houses and apartments thanks also to the complicity of bank directors and notaries. "Using copies of the documents of exploited migrants he opened bank accounts, made notary deeds, and to put the signature it was not the documented Chinese but another national paid €200 for this service." Some migrants, "after having repaid their debt and applying for a mortgage to a bank as to buy an apartment, discovered to be the holders of three houses and of negative bank accounts" (IT-E14). Notwithstanding this, part of the profits is sent back to their country of origin: "The system used was the concealment of cash transported by plane. There was a list of individuals with this role and working for Chinese criminal entrepreneurs. The typical route is leaving from Italy to Portugal or Spain and from there to China. Once, a man arrived to Lisbon to recover a suitcase with €600,000, then he left by plane to Beijing to deliver the money and returned to Rome. He was

used to travel 3-4 times a year. These are trusted men, well known to transfer money, which is the most important criminal activity, and also related to the hawala system” (IT-E14).

The same method and other money transfer systems, are employed by Nigerian organised crime groups that, unlike Chinese OCGs, invest all the revenues in their country of origin (IT-E1; IT-E2; IT-E6; IT-E19; Save the Children, 2017) for two main reasons. First, to acquire properties and commercial activities for themselves or family members: “my *maman* used the money I gave her – €11,000 – to finish her house in Nigeria” (IT-E21). Second, to sustain the economy of some African states. It is documented, for example, that almost the entire economy of Benin City is supported by the money made through trafficking and sexual exploitation; when the first migrants arrived in Europe, they understood the potential of this criminal activity in terms of profits (IT-E25; Musumeci & Rosini, 2017; Carchedi, 2016a). Nigerians prefer to “transport cash, through individuals called also ‘trolley men,’ who arrive at the last minute at the airport with 8-9 large suitcases wrapped in cellophane. Confident in the very limited time, they risk less control from customs officers and manage to transport this well concealed money” (IT-E6). A small part of profits invested in Italy is for buying or renting ethnic shops or bazaars that in many cases are covert places offering services such as money transfers used by *mamans* or her assistants (IT-E4). Another scheme used to send profits to the country of origin is called “euro-to-euro”, an informal value transfer system based on services and guarantees *ad personam* (i.e. linked to the credibility of the intermediary) within a widespread network of intermediaries located mainly in Nigeria, and with money collectors in Italy (IT-E4; IT-21). In one judicial case, its functioning is explained as follows: “A first man calls the [*maman*] who refers to him the account details [i.e. codes] of the euro-to-euro payment. Then, the same man calls another person to communicate the received account details. The latter will communicate this information in Nigeria as soon as he has finished to work. The first man calls back the [*maman*] and confirms to have reported the received information, and that the person receiving the money in Nigeria will go on Monday” (IT-E21). Similarly, east European OCGs, invest profits in their home countries to acquire real estates, commercial properties (e.g. bars, restaurants, pubs, hotels) and companies, using mainly cash transportation and money transfer services. A smaller part of the revenues or the total amount (in case of small criminal groups) is spent on a lavish lifestyle. “In one investigation of Albanian and Romanian criminal entrepreneurs, it was evident the fast change of luxury cars, and profits were mainly used to show off a high standard of life. They do not have a particularly dynamic entrepreneurial spirit if compared to drug traffickers” (IT-E1).

6. FINANCIAL INVESTIGATIONS OF THB CRIMES: CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICES

The majority of interviewed experts agreed that the national legal framework and the criminal provisions are comprehensive and allow the tackling of trafficking in human beings both for sexual and labour exploitation. After a huge protest in 2011 of day labourers in the farmlands of the town of Nardò (in the region of Apulia), a specific provision on countering undeclared work and labour exploitation in the agricultural sector (art. 603 bis, c.c. “Illicit intermediation and work exploitation” – dubbed the “gangmaster provision”) was introduced into the Criminal Code by Law No. 199/2016 (IT-E11; IT-E23; *L’Espresso*, 2016; *La Repubblica*, 2016).¹¹

Due to its key geographical location between Europe and the countries of origin of most exploited victims, Italy has enacted specific domestic legislation prohibiting the exploitation in human beings in different modalities, which includes prostitution and other forms of abuse of persons who are in situations of vulnerability. Italy is bounded by international treaties and European directives, among which the United Nations Convention against Organised Crime and its Protocols (ratified by Law No. 146/2006), thus the Criminal Code has provisions which incriminate conduct related to trafficking and smuggling. In particular, before the ratification of the United Nations Protocols, Law No. 228/2003 had already introduced/modified the provisions against trafficking in human beings envisaging crimes such as “Reducing or holding a person in a condition of slavery or servitude” (Art. 600 c.c.), “Trafficking in persons” (Art. 601 c.c.), “Trade in slaves” (Art. 602 c.c.). Paragraph 6 was also introduced to Art. 416 of the Criminal Code, which refers to the “Participation in a criminal organisation” that includes increased penalties if there is an association that commits crimes under the aforementioned articles on trafficking and smuggling in human beings (Spiezia, 2008; European Commission, 2018a).¹² Art. 416 bis c.c. “Mafia-type associations, including foreign ones” and Art. 601 c.c. and/or Art. 602 c.c. allow the prosecution of organised crime groups involved in trafficking in human beings. These have been applied, for example, in court trials in the cities of Turin and Palermo where Nigerian OCGs were sentenced under these articles. If Art. 416 bis c.c. is charged to foreign OCGs, it is possible to seize and confiscate (i.e. final stage of proceedings) cash and assets that represent the proceeds of crime. Preventive seizure and confiscation (ex Art. 240 c.c.) are envisaged under paragraph 6 of the same law and regard all predicate crimes; the same applies to money laundering

¹¹ Although this represents an important step forward to the fight of labour exploitation, it has been contended that the law lacks preventative provisions, such as the obligation of transparency of the supply chain (i.e. information to consumers on the farms and processing companies that sell food) (IT-E23).

¹² Legislative Decree No. 286/1998, Art. 18 envisages special residence permits for humanitarian reasons for third country nationals subjected to violence and serious exploitation. The residence permits can be granted in two ways: a judicial path that is dependent on the victim’s report of the crime and a social path that is contingent on the victim’s report but on the participation in a programme of social assistance and inclusion. For further details, also on criminal legislation, see Spiezia (2008); European Commission (2018a); European Commission (2018b); Goisis (2016).

punished under Art. 648 bis (IT-E4; IT-E5; IT-E6; IT-E21). These provisions, in particular, represent the strength of the Italian criminal system that has proved to be efficient in the fight of native OCGs due to the possibility to heavily undermine the material resources acquired through crime, and consequently the capability of OCGs to keep running their criminal activities (IT-E6; IT-E7; IT-E10). In general, Law No. 146/2006 is particularly important since: a) extends the comprehensive anti-mafia legislation to trafficking in human beings including the potential benefits to collaborating witnesses; b) identifies and punishes all the activities through which trafficking and smuggling can start and develop; c) balances the repressive and social approaches (i.e. protection of victims); d) attributes to the Anti-mafia District Directorates the competence of investigations and prosecutions of trafficking and smuggling which are considered to be organised criminal activities (Spiezia, 2008).

At the national level, investigations of trafficking in human beings for sexual and labour exploitation are, depending on cases (i.e. competent courts where the crime occurred), jointly carried out by the State Police, Carabinieri and the Guardia di Finanza (the Fiscal Police). Dedicated magistrates or pools for prosecution are settled in each Anti-Mafia District Directorate and coordinated by the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Directorate that coordinates also police forces (Spiezia, 2008; IT-E24). Despite the high level of expertise of law enforcement agencies and other field operators and the well-developed and comprehensive criminal legislation in Italy, there are some criticalities that impact on the possibility to carry out investigation and prosecution, also of financial type.

First, the collaboration of victims is necessary as to initiate the investigation and prosecution activities, but it is not always easy to obtain. Thus, in different cases it is not possible to proceed. "Although sexual exploitation and prostitution are indictable, the charges of victims are more effective in opening an investigative scenario and hypotheses, so as the activity can initiate" (IT-E10). But victims are in most cases, reluctant to report their traffickers or exploiters because this means that an investigation has to be started. They are afraid of retaliations against family members as well (IT-E1). On the contrary, it can occur that victims report to the competent authorities in times that are not compatible with police investigation and the prosecution activity (i.e. interceptions, judicial printouts), and after a path of social assistance and reintegration. In these cases, charges need to be filed in a short time. Second, prosecutions for trafficking in human beings are few in numbers. Such investigations involve long periods of observations and a challenging collection of evidence (i.e. probative elements), such as for example the state of vulnerability of victims which is not easy to prove. As a consequence, it is easier to notify the slavery condition than the crime of trafficking (IT-E4; IT-E6). Third, when investigations and interceptions can be initiated, there is the problem of language and translation related to the different dialects of foreign OCGs, and especially with Nigerians and Chinese. In particular, it is almost impossible to find interpreters capable to translate Chinese dialects. This ethnic group is very closed and suspicious, and their

members are not so willing to work for the judicial system (IT-E9). “In one case, while intercepting some gangmasters we were not able to understand their language. We tried different interpreters and then we realised that it was a particular Romanian dialect” (Leogrande, 2016:116). Similarly, translation gaps affect the questionings during trials; while the differences in the ethnic background makes the police proactive activity on the territory particularly difficult to be carried out if not impossible, and the same applies to undercover police activity (Perrucci, 2017).

Besides these criticalities, a particular challenging aspect is the possibility to carry out investigations in third countries such as Libya and Nigeria, that represent key countries for trafficking flows towards Italy. “While we have efficient instruments of judicial cooperation at the EU level and we collaborate, also on the basis of specific agreements, with other European countries such as for example France, Germany, the Netherlands, Albania, Romania, the situation in Libya makes bilateral police cooperation almost impossible” (IT-E5; IT-E24; IT-E22).¹³ Cooperation, including the issuing of letters rogatory, is particularly difficult with Nigerian authorities, and when the investigation and prosecution activity ascertains that the revenues of trafficking were reinvested in Nigeria. “In one prosecution, the presence of bank accounts to which profits were transferred was ascertained, but it was not possible to proceed with the investigation for the lack of judicial cooperation. Investigations in Nigeria are needed to verify where the money went” (IT-E18). Despite the signature of a memorandum of understanding in 2016 that bounds Nigeria and Italy to jointly fight trafficking in human beings, in practice is still difficult to collaborate, and in the opinion of the majority of the interviewed experts because of high levels of corruption and the absence of institutional procedures that facilitate investigative and judicial cooperation.¹⁴ As a result, in most cases the criminal assets are not traceable and seizures as well as confiscation cannot be applied, even in enforcing a sentence under 416 bis in Italy of a Nigerian OCG. Some of the interviewed experts consider this aspect to be one of the major vulnerability of financial investigations (IT-E6; IT-E7; IT-E9; IT-E10; IT-E20; IT-E24). It is therefore only possible to seize assets that are recovered in Italy once it is proved that they are linked to the commission of crime. “With regards to Chinese criminal entrepreneurs, it can happen to seize as much as €70,000-€90,000 in cash, within apartments or massage centres that were the profits of prostitution. But it is hard to start a broad investigation. While judicial collaborators and interceptions are key elements, finding these resources is difficult. The most important aspect in starting an investigation and detecting the upper levels of OCGs is international cooperation. For example, we are notified about Albanians, but no reporting on Nigeria and China is sent” (IT-E9).

¹³ For further details on investigative and judicial instruments of cooperation at the EU level see GRETA (2016).

¹⁴ The memorandum of understanding was signed in February 2016 between the Head of Italian Police and the Ministry of Interior Alessandro Pansa and the Nigerian Head of Police Solomon Arase. The focus of the agreement was the fight against trafficking in human beings and the collaboration to repatriate Nigerian nationals who for different reasons cannot stay in Italy. For further details, see Polizia di Stato (2016).

Due to the difficulties in tracing and confiscating the proceeds of trafficking in human beings when international cooperation is lacking, one possibility could be to detect and seize cash (which is the main method to reinvest and launder profits) when transported from Italy to other countries, especially third ones. But as pointed out by an interviewed expert this preventive approach would expose and undermine the ongoing police investigation (IT-E6). When cash is discovered by the Fiscal Police at borders, pursuant to Legislative Decree No. 195/2008 an administrative sanction (fine) is imposed that corresponds to 40% of the total amount transported if the maximum allowed amount of €10,000 per person is breached. Since it is preferable to preserve the investigation activity, the alternative option is the so called “confiscation for equivalent” (ex Art. 322 ter c.c.). “At the final stage of the proceedings, if profits gained when committing predicate crimes are no longer available for confiscation, it is then possible to confiscate other assets of equivalent value” (IT-E6).¹⁵ In the end, other criticalities are related to the level of development of both technological archives or registers (e.g. civil registry), that can facilitate the identification of individuals or telephone subscribers and to discrepancies among criminal legislations at the international level (IT-E22). “An agreement of cooperation might have been signed, but a specific criminal legislation exists in Italy on organised crime and related offences. In other states, it is likely that certain crimes are not included within the criminal codes” (IT-E15).

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to its geographical position Italy represents a key area for migration flows especially from north and west Africa through the central Mediterranean Sea, followed by eastern Europe and China as source countries. The available estimations about these arrivals, although not comprehensive, suggest that some migrants are trafficked from their countries of origin to be further exploited for sexual or labour purposes on the national territory of Italy, due also to the presence of more or less organised crime groups that are active in these criminal markets. In particular, trafficking for sexual exploitation is managed by Nigerian, Chinese, Albanian, and Romanian criminal entrepreneurs; while trafficking for labour exploitation is the domain of mainly east Europeans – Albanian, Romanian, Polish, Ukrainian, and Chinese criminal entrepreneurs. These actors share similar organisational characteristics: they are small in size (from 3-4 to 10-15 members) and based on family, ethnic and tribal bonds, while operating within large fluid networks of groups of individuals made of nodes present in the countries of origin and exploitation. Hubs for sexual exploitation are located in different Italian cities such as Turin, Milan (north), Naples, Castel Volturno and Palermo (south). Labour exploitation occurs mainly in the agricultural sector and in the province of Foggia – i.e. the

¹⁵ When crimes are committed against minors under articles 600, 601 and 602 c.c. the confiscation of assets is envisaged and directly applied. If assets are not at disposal, at the final stage of the proceeding it is possible to apply the confiscation for equivalent.

area of Capitanata located in the region of Apulia. Collaborations among foreign OCGs exist, such as for example between Albanians and Romanians in sexual exploitation, and exchange of favours or services are requested if these actors operate in areas or territories under the control of Italian OCGs. The latter, in an almost monopolistic position, are involved in other criminal activities (e.g. drug trafficking, tobacco smuggling) considered to be more profitable and less risky.

Thus, foreign OCGs have not encountered particular barriers to enter these criminal markets in Italy, as it occurs in managing trafficking operations. Recruitment is facilitated by social capital in terms of networks of family members, friends or acquaintances, or by fake advertisements of job opportunities on the web and social media. The expenses for travel and documents (when needed) in most cases are sustained by the victims or their families, especially if labour exploitation is concerned. Even if OCGs advance this sum of money, including through sponsors that are in contact with them, the costs are much less than the profits gained. In the case of sexual exploitation, the amount of the debts of the victims imposed for their liberation is set completely arbitrarily and largely encompasses the costs incurred. Similarly, with regard to labour exploitation, the earnings of the gangmasters that illegally keep part of workers' daily salaries are significant. Profits are mainly used to run other trafficking operations, although in some cases can finance other criminal activities, as it happens with drug trafficking by Nigerian and Albanian criminal entrepreneurs. The revenues of trafficking in human beings are mainly reinvested in the countries of origin to acquire real estates, bars, restaurants, companies, and a small part is spent in Italy for living expenses or to sustain a lavish lifestyle. The methods employed to transfer the profits are similar to those used for the settlement of payments – paying the individuals involved in the trafficking operations and in the exploitation activities. In particular, cash transportation represents the most frequent way of payment, together with the use of money transfer services and informal banking systems such as the *hawala*.

All these methods still pose great challenges in terms of the capacity to interrupt the financing mechanisms of trafficking in human beings, and the results of the study suggest important steps forward to enhance the preventative and counteraction activity of law enforcement and prosecutors. First, there is the need to foster police and judicial cooperation, mainly with third countries, given the difficulty of applying the Italian legislative framework, which is considered comprehensive and capable to curb the power of these criminal organisations with respect to assets confiscation. Second, a related aspect is the necessity to harmonise the legislation on organised crime at the international level. Although cooperation agreements are in action, in practice gaps in legislations weaken their effectiveness. Third, more stringent controls or tailored judicial instruments are needed over money transfer services and cash transportation, which still represent the main vulnerabilities. Finally, while police officers and prosecutors have high level of qualified expertise, developed mainly on the field, to handle the various aspects of trafficking in human beings (e.g. the identification of victims

and indicators of trafficking, the protection of victims through the connection and cooperation with non-profit organisations delivering special programs), the prosecution of offenders is still challenging due to their different ethnical backgrounds. In this regard, the fight against this criminal market could benefit from the establishment of dedicated multicultural police units or magistrate pools at least at the regional level, and from enhancing, through a similar approach, the cooperation at the EU level.

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Expert	Role and Institution	Area
IT-E1	Head of Flying Squad – State Police	Region of Trentino-Alto Adige
IT-E2	Prosecutor at Anti-Mafia District Directorate	Region of Trentino-Alto Adige
IT-E3	Head Foreign Organised Crime and Prostitution Unit – State Police	Region of Trentino-Alto Adige
IT-E4	Prosecutor at Anti-Mafia District Directorate	Region of Piedmont
IT-E5	Head of Flying Squad – State Police	Region of Piedmont
IT-E6	Head of Foreign Organised Crime and Prostitution Unit – State Police	Region of Piedmont
IT-E7	Head of Flying Squad – State Police	Region of Liguria
IT-E8	Professional, non-profit association Mimosa	Region of Veneto
IT-E9	Prosecutor at Anti-Mafia District Directorate	Region Emilia-Romagna
IT-E10	Head of Anti-Crime Unit – State Police	Region Emilia-Romagna
IT-E11	Professional No profit Association On The Road	Region Abruzzo
IT-E12	Head Flying Squad – State Police	Region Umbria
IT-E13	Agency of Monopolies	Region Latium
IT-E14	Officer at the Guardia di Finanza, Excise and Revenue Police – Group on Investigation of Organised Crime	Region Latium
IT-E15	Head of Central Operative Service (SCO) – State Police	Region Latium
IT-E16	Professional, non-profit association Terra!Onlus	Region Latium
IT-E17	Professional, Social Cooperative PARSEC	Region Latium
IT-E18	Prosecutor at Anti-Mafia District Directorate	Region Campania
IT-E19	Head Flying Squad – State Police	Region Calabria
IT-E20	Prosecutor (previously Anti-Mafia District Directorate)	Region Sicily
IT-E21	Prosecutor at Anti-Mafia District Directorate	Region Sicily
IT-E22	Officer Flying Squad – State Police	Region Sicily
IT-E23	Professional (ex-victim of labour exploitation), non-profit association NoCap	Region Sicily
IT-E24	Prosecutor (previously Anti-Mafia District Directorate)	Region Sicily
IT-E25	Freelance journalist	Region Lombardy

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