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Demographic and migratory flows  
affecting European regions and cities

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DEMIFER Case Studies

### **Molise (Italy)**

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## Table of contents

<b>Key findings.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1. Specification of the research questions and the aims.....	7
1.2. Historical and economic background.....	8
1.3. Regional morphology, connections and human settlement.....	9
1.4. Outline of the case study report.....	10
<b>2. Demographic and migratory flows in Molise: a short overview.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3. The main demographics of the Molise region.....</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1. Population change and age structure.....	12
3.2. Natural change: fertility and mortality.....	21
3.3. Net migration and migration flows.....	23
3.4. The presence of foreign migrants: provenance and characteristics	25
<b>4. Economic change and population.....</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1. Economic characteristics and recent occupational trends.....	29
4.2. Characteristics of the working age population and role of migration.....	32
<b>5. The future evolution of the population: DEMIFER policy scenarios.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>6. Conclusions and the demographic challenges in the region...</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>37</b>

## List of tables

Table 1 The Italian and foreign population residing at the beginning of 2002 and 2009. Molise, The South, Italia. Absolute values.....	15
Table 2 Changes in the Italian and foreign residents between 2002 and 2009. Molise, The South, Italy. Absolute values and percentages..	15
Table 3 Age structure: 1.1.2009. Molise, The South and Italy.....	16
Table 4 Average number of children per woman or total rate of fertility (TFR) per citizenship. Molise, the South and Italy. 2004-08.....	22
Table 5 Average age at childbirth per citizenship. Molise, the South and Italy. 2004-08.....	22
Table 6 Life expectancy at birth and at 65 years of age per sex. Molise, the South and Italy.....	23
Table 7 Foreign residents in Molise. Main communities. Absolute values and percentages.....	26

## List of figures

Figure 1 Total demographic growth. Molise, The South and Italy. Years 2005 to 2008. Values per 1,000.....	16
Figure 2 Pyramid of age of population. 1.1.2009.....	20
Figure 3 Natural change. Molise, the South and Italy. 2005-08. Values per thousand residents.....	21
Figure 4 Net migration rate. Molise, the South and Italy. 2005-08. Values per thousand residents.....	24
Figure 5 National and international net migration. Molise, 1999-2008. Absolute values.....	25
Figure 6 Pyramid of age of foreign population. 1.1.2009.....	27
Figure 7 Distribution of the employees by economic sector. Molise, Southern Italy and Italy, 2007.....	29
Figure 8 Labour force participation rate by sex. Molise, Southern Italy and Italy, 1995-2008.....	30
Figure 9 Employment rate by sex. Molise, Southern Italy and Italy, 1995-2008.....	31
Figure 10 Unemployment rate by sex. Molise, Southern Italy and Italy, 1995-2008.....	31
Figure 11 Changes in the population of working age by age and nationality. Molise, 2003-09. Absolute values.....	32
Figure 12 DEMIFER policy scenarios. Total population of Molise, 2005-50.....	35

Figure 13 DEMIFER policy scenarios. Age structure of population by sex and age groups. Molise, 2005-50.....	35
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## List of maps

Map 1 The provinces of Molise region.....	10
Map 2 Municipalities by population change in the Molise region (2000-09).....	13
Map 3 Urban structure of Molise region (1.1.2009).....	14
Map 4 Municipalities by the share of elderly population (65+ years).....	18
Map 5 Municipalities by the share of workig-age population (20-64 years).....	19
Map 6 Share of foreign population in the municipalities of Molise region.....	28

## **Key findings**

- *The population of Molise spreads between mountain and hill areas characterized by low density, weakness of the urban structure and infra-structural backwardness compared to the rest of Italy. The geomorphologic characteristic of the region strongly influenced the economic development and growth of the local markets. The historical socio economic marginality has become chronic over the years.*
- *Molise is an area traditionally rural. From the end of 1800s to the 1970s the poor quality of local resources led to very strong migratory flows mainly towards the Americas and later the Centre-North of Europe and the industrialised regions in the North of Italy. Today the administration of Molise aims to keep a contact with the third and fourth generations of the emigrants.*
- *From the mid 1970s began a phase of demographic stagnation, during which no relevant changes in the population dynamic occurred. The structure of population has deeply affected by ageing due to very low fertility levels and very high life expectancy. The higher shares of elderly people are concentrated in very small mountainous and hill municipalities, where the 65 and older people represents over one third of the residents.*
- *Positive net international migration: a totally new experience in the history of the region. The share of foreign residents is still low, but they are beginning to contribute to the slight recovery of regional fertility.*
- *Foreign immigrants are inserted in the low skilled and low paid segments of labour market. Sex distribution of foreigners unbalanced in favour of women. The « female way » of foreign immigration is tied to the strong demand for care and help of ageing families.*
- *Strong temporary emigration of young Italian, often high skilled, due to mismatch between demand and supply of jobs. These flows are difficult to evaluate with official sources.*
- *Socio economic features of Molise produce a “dual” character of the regional model for use of space for work reasons: very short daily commuting for people who works in Molise due to micro local labour markets; medium-long range national temporary migrations in order to have a job position or a university degree.*
- *Demifer policy scenarios foresee strong population decrease (low scenarios) or stagnation (high scenarios), heavy population ageing and severe decline in the working-age population until 45 yrs.*

## 1. Introduction

The DEMIFER 'Case studies' have a twofold aim: they contribute to the improvement of knowledge on demographic and migratory flows, focusing on the aspects of internal and international migration, and translate the output of the policy oriented activities into specific regional settings. The case studies bring together the various activities, connecting the implementation of the analyses, the development of the typology, the scenario building and the formulation of the policy implications and illustrate the results and impacts at a regional and sub-regional level. The selection of the NUTS 2 regions that serve as case studies are based on the results of the DEMIFER activities 2 'Typology of regions and cities'. From each type defined in the typology at least one region or town/city, preferably the closest to the cluster centre, is selected to serve as case study. A total of 12 NUTS 2 regions are selected, but obviously the case studies cannot cover the entire socio-economic diversity of the European regions.

The Italian region of Molise belongs to the cluster "Challenge of decline", including 38 NUTS 2 areas, with a total population of 50 million inhabitants. Half the regions that make up the group are German (all the regions of the former East Germany and some regions of the central Northern Germany), six are Greek, four are Bulgarian, two Italian, two Hungarian, two Swedish and one Finish. Estonia and Latvia complete the group.

The group "challenge of decline" is marked by a percentage of young adults between 20 and 29 inferior to the ESPON average by one and a half percentage points (26.3 versus 27.8%), by a high number of elderly people, close to 20% over the ESPON average and by a natural population increase, clearly negative (-3.4 per thousand), that is the lowest amongst the seven demographic typologies identified in the project. It is also marked by a net migration that is also negative (-1.2 per thousand). Overall the demographic dynamic of the regions that make up the group is negative as an average in both its components; natural and migratory. Such a fact represents an element of differentiation compared to the whole of the ESPON regions, showing a migratory and natural dynamic that is positive.

The "Challenge of decline" regions can be differentiated into four subtypes:

The first subtype is one with which the population is more elevated (nearly 30 million people) and covers the entire East of Germany (except the regions of Berlin and Leipzig), as well as parts in West Germany and the peripheral regions of Sweden and Finland. It is affected by population decline, due to negative average values for both population development components (a natural population decrease by -5,4 per 1.000 and a negative migratory balance of -1,2 per 1.000). Furthermore the share of the age group 20-39 (24,7%) is relatively low, compared to the (already low) average of the cluster "Challenge of decline" (26,3%).

The age structure of the second subtype (17,4 million inhabitants) – to be found in Estonia, Latvia, parts of West and East Germany (Leipzig), Hungary, Southern Italy (Molise and Basilicata) and large parts of Greece – is very close to the overall average of the cluster "Challenge of decline". Although the

natural population balance is negative in all 17 regions, this subtype's total population development is only slightly negative, due to a positive average net migration rate of 0,8 per 1.000.

The last two subtypes include only the Bulgarian regions.

The third subtype includes solely the Severozapaden region in the North-West of Bulgaria, featuring a pronounced negative total population decline, due to strongly negative values for both components: a natural population decrease of -10,4 per 1.000 and a negative net migration of -11,3 per 1.000. Furthermore the proportion of elderly people (21,4%) is clearly above the ESPON space average (16,6%) and the share of the age group 20-39 (24%) is one of the lowest in the EU 27+4.

The other three Bulgarian regions belong to the fourth subtype and also show only negative values in respect to the natural population and the migratory balance, but to a lesser extent (-5,4 respectively -9,4 per 1.000).

### **1.1. Specification of the research questions and the aims**

The regions belonging to the "challenge of decline" are going through a demographic stagnation phase, characterised by a natural and migratory change that is often negative, leading to a loss in population and demographic ageing. The group is in fact defined by one of the highest share of elderly, only second to the "challenge of ageing group".

Molise's population has been stagnating at just above 300 thousand units for about 30 years. During the recent years the structure per age of the region shows an increasing demographic ageing, also due to a natural dynamic characterised by low fertility, far below the substitution level.

Molise's population mainly spreads between mountain and hill areas, placed between the Apennines and the Adriatic coast, defined by low density settlements. The historical socio economic marginality and the demographic difficulty of the region have become chronic over the years, confirming the weakness of an urban structure where its main town Campobasso has just 50 thousand inhabitants, surrounded by a territory sparsely settled. The areas where the productive activity is mainly concentrated, as well as the services, are those areas least hit by the great migrations of the 50s and 60s: both the main towns of Molise's provinces (Campobasso and Isernia) and the towns closest to the coastline, firstly Termoli. The geomorphologic characteristic of the region strongly influenced the economic development and growth of the local markets, limiting the possibility of leaving such an isolated condition much tied to the insufficient infrastructures and the distance from the main national connecting arteries. After a revival in the 90s, favoured by EU funding, Molise is risking a negative impact due to the exit from the group of regions included in the target "convergence" receiving EU structural and cohesion funds. The possibility of a revival in inner migrations towards the Centre North regions by young people of working age is a possibility in such a context.

The Molise of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, after having been a starting point for migratory exodus in the past, is now for the first time an area of settlement for a growing number of foreign immigrants and should take advantage of their presence.



Foreign immigration may add a strong contribution, easing the region's demographic difficulties and favouring an economic revival through respecting local production.

The purpose of this Report is to highlight the dynamics coming from the demographic stagnation of the region and the ageing of the population, with a particular interest in the analysis of the recent international migratory flows that have begun, only recently over the past few years, to interest the area and the impact of the demographic evolution on the economic development prospective for the region.

## **1.2. Historical and economic background**

The region of Molise was created in Dec 1963 through the separation of the Campobasso province from the Abruzzo region. In 1970 the separation of 52 municipalities gave life to the Isernia province, which includes the portion of the inner regional territory, which is mainly mountainous and without access to the Adriatic coastline.

Molise is an area traditionally rural and characterised by its infrastructural backwardness compared to the rest of Italy. During the last century the poor quality of local resources led to very strong migratory flows mainly towards the Americas and later the Centre-North of Europe and the industrialised regions in the North of Italy.

During the 1970s the region finally had a phase of economic growth through the start up of an industrial development. The Fiat car industry, a sugar refinery in Termoli are testament to it as well as a more general opening of about 20 new industries, mainly in the province of Campobasso, in different sectors: from building materials to textiles, from metal works to food products (Cercola, 1977). Such industries made it possible for Molise to reverse part of the productive backwardness that historically characterised the region and that, in the first half of the 1900s, had Molise described as "very rural". During the years of the international oil price crisis, Molise found itself being the Italian region with the highest growth in its GDP and diminished its unemployment rate to its historical minimum. (Massullo, 2006).

Though the economic growth of those years was not able to encourage a well defined local productive system, the Molise industrial development took place with the financial aid of the Italian state that stimulated the industries of the North to invest in the region. It was a passive form of industrialisation, generated by a productive delocalisation of some large Northern industries struck by recession and in search of a cheaper and less unified labour force (Massullo, 2006).

During the second half of the 1970s, thanks to the industrial development and the return migrations due to the economic crisis, the regional net migration became balanced after decades of being negative (Lombardi, 2006). During the 1980s the weight of agriculture in terms of workforce, for the first time in the region's history, decreased below the one of industry and in the following ten years, within a Southern Italy economic context distinguished by an increase in unemployment and a weak improvement in emigrations, Molise

showed a fair resistance even if it showed increasing demographic problems, above all ageing and population decline in the mountainous municipalities. Some of the endemic limits to the economic development of Molise are identifiable in the weakness of its infrastructures, the hydro-geologic formation of the territory and the fragmentation of the productive sectors in general, being mainly made up of very small businesses for the number of employees and with little connection between them (Massullo, 2006).

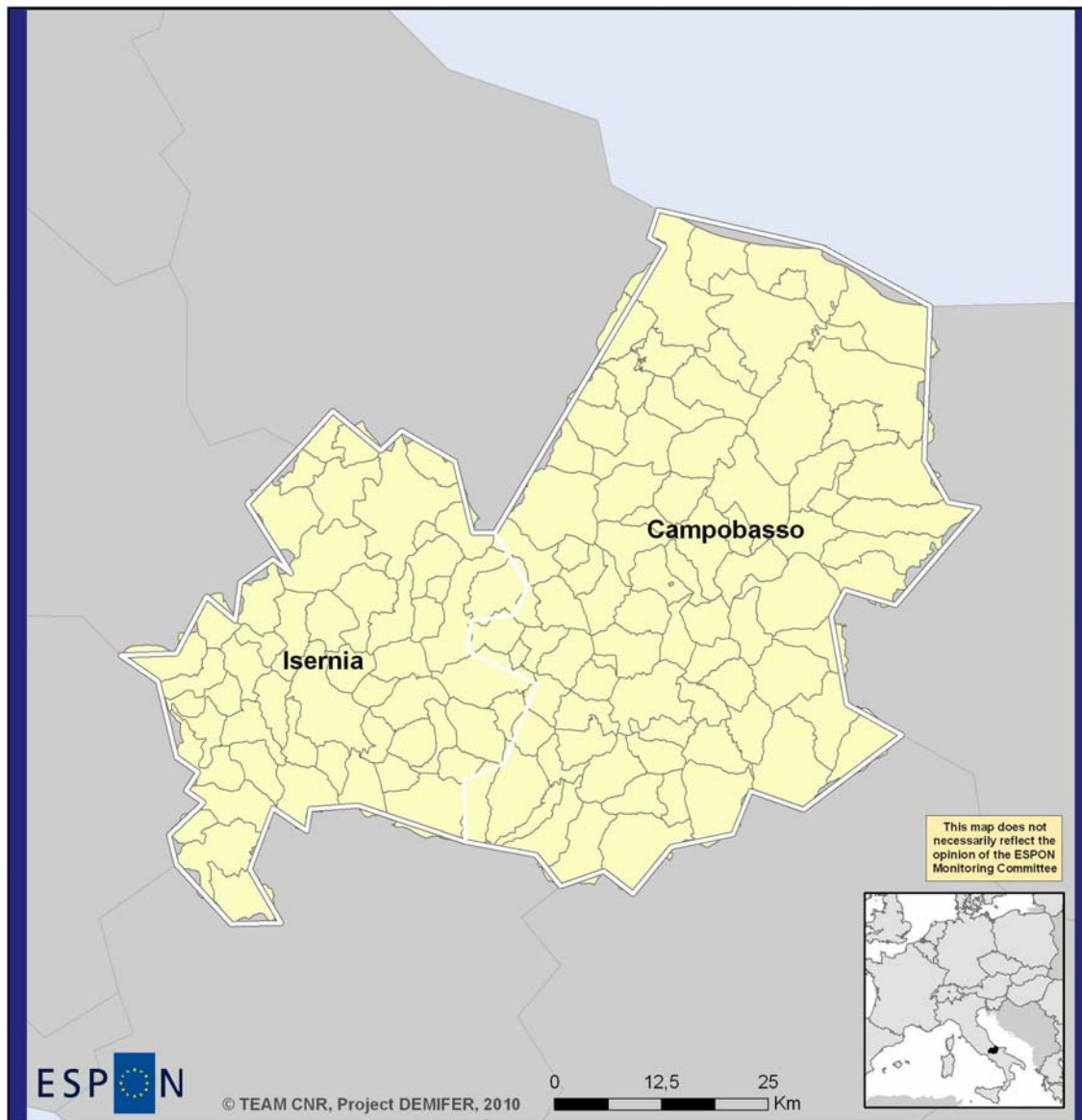
### **1.3. Regional morphology, connections and human settlement**

Molise is a Southern Italian region with 320 thousand residents and a land surface of 4.438 sq kilometres. Its density is low (72 inhabitants per sq kilometre), about a third of the national one. The region is divided into two provinces: Campobasso and Isernia (Map 1). The province of Campobasso includes the capital of the same name and hosts 72.3 % of the regional population.

The territory of Molise is almost equally divided between areas above the sea level: mountain areas (55.3%) and hills (44.7%). The mountainous part of the region includes the Apennine Sannita and the Apennine Abruzzese to the West, close to the border with Abruzzo, Lazio and Campania regions. Moving to the South-East, towards the border with Puglia, we meet hill areas slowly decreasing in height towards the Adriatic sea. The coastline is about 40 kilometres long. Completely flatland areas are rare, like the plain of Venafro, the plain of Bojano and the small coastal belt.

A hundred and eleven out of the hundred and thirty six Molise municipalities are mountainous, twelve are partially and the remaining 13, the closest to the sea, are hilly. As well as the territory, also the population is distributed the same way between mountains and hills. 70% of the Molise live in a municipality totally or at least partially mountainous. The better linked area is the Termoli one. Apart from having the only port in the region it is connected through a railway line and the Adriatic motorway. The inner mountain areas are linked with greater difficulty to the rest of the region and the rest of Italy.

## Map 1 The provinces of Molise region



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Local level: LAU2  
Source: [www.istat.it](http://www.istat.it), 2010  
Origin of data: National Italian Statistical Office, 2010  
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### 1.4. Outline of the case study report

The report provides a short overview of demographic and migratory flows (section 2), before illustrating in section 3 the main demographic structure and trends of the region. In particular, age structure, natural change, internal and international migratory flows, and characteristics of foreigners are analysed. In section 4, recent economic change and population trends are put in relation, with a special attention to the working age population and to the role of migration. Section 5 shows the future evolution of population according to the Demifer policy scenarios and section 6 includes some observation about demographic challenges faced by Molise.

## **2. Demographic and migratory flows in Molise: a short overview**

The roots of the demographic issue in Molise grew in a century of successive migratory flows, from the end of the 1800s to the 1970s. Such flows, in some phases, reached the dimensions of an exodus and deeply scarred the region's population structure. Between the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s the flows were essentially towards the Americas, in particular Argentina and the United States (Lombardi 2006), whereas after the war migrations became mainly European. Their main target areas were Belgium, France and Great Britain during the 1950s, Germany and Switzerland in the 1960s (Lombardi 2006).

As a whole, in the last 50 years, the region lost about one fifth of its residents. A contraction that did not interest all the municipalities uniformly, sparing the areas that are today more urbanised and with a stronger tertiary sector: both of the province's main towns, some Adriatic coastal towns and a few small municipalities along the Isernia-Venafro line. As a whole, between 1951 and 2005, only fifteen municipalities had a population increase, whereas, amongst the 121 towns affected by a demographic decline, at least 70 suffered a strong population loss, losing more than half of their inhabitants and now they barely reach a thousand residents (Casacchia, Crisci, 2006). As a whole, a phase of strong demographic contraction, during the 1950s and 1960s, due to a widely negative migratory phase, followed 30 years of substantial stagnation from the mid 1970s, during which no relevant changes in the population's dynamic occurred.

The inner migrations along the South-North line, easing during the second half of the 1970s, seemed to have had a revival during the last decade although some demographers pointed out the persistent dependence of the South of Italy during the exchange with Centre-North areas. This was also during the 1980s and early 1990s (Bonifazi 1999, Bonifazi, Heins, 2005). For some sources (Svimez, 2007), when adding the change of residency South – North to the flows of the weekly commuters who work in the North without having changed their residency, the total amount of the modern migrations is even comparable to the 1960s, when they approach the 300 thousand yearly movements. Some authors call for more attention to be paid to historical parallels and have strong doubts as to the existence of a new migratory boom that tends, instead, to decline, still being physiological due to the age old historical delay of the Southern regions (Livi Bacci, 2007).

In Molise the fragmentation of the local markets into several micro markets, and the need for many young people to find a professional occupation, seems to have produced a model for the use of space of a "dual" character. This consists of short daily movements from and to their home and work, to the intermittent long distance movements of those who must temporarily migrate in order to have a job position or a university degree suitable to the requirements of the market (Casacchia, Crisci, 2008).

Alongside the persistent inner mobility, the international migrations of this century had a growing importance also in Molise where they are defined by a high fluidity, tied to the changing needs of the local economy in agriculture,

construction and tourism, and by a strong component of the black market (Intemigra, 2001). The seasonality of the foreign presence and the migrations in transit towards the North are often associated with an irregularity in their length of stay. This, hence, complicates a correct measurement of the phenomenon through official sources.

### **3. The main demographics of the Molise region**

The Molise of the first decade of the new century shows a region going through a prolonged demographic stagnation phase that has basically arrested the population from the early 1970's to a quota near 320,000 inhabitants. This stagnation is accompanied by a marked process of ageing in absolute and relative terms. The "exodus" of young adults looking for work in Rome or other regions in the Centre-North, and the difficulty for those who stayed behind to look for a stable and adequate working position adequate to their professional training, absolutely did not contribute to a re-growth in the regional fertility rate, that is one of the lowest in Italy. An element of discontinuity in an almost stagnant demographic framework is given by the foreign immigrants, that during recent years, have revitalised the regional net migration, after it was negative for many years, rejuvenated the age structure, and is contributing to the slight recovery of fertility in Molise.

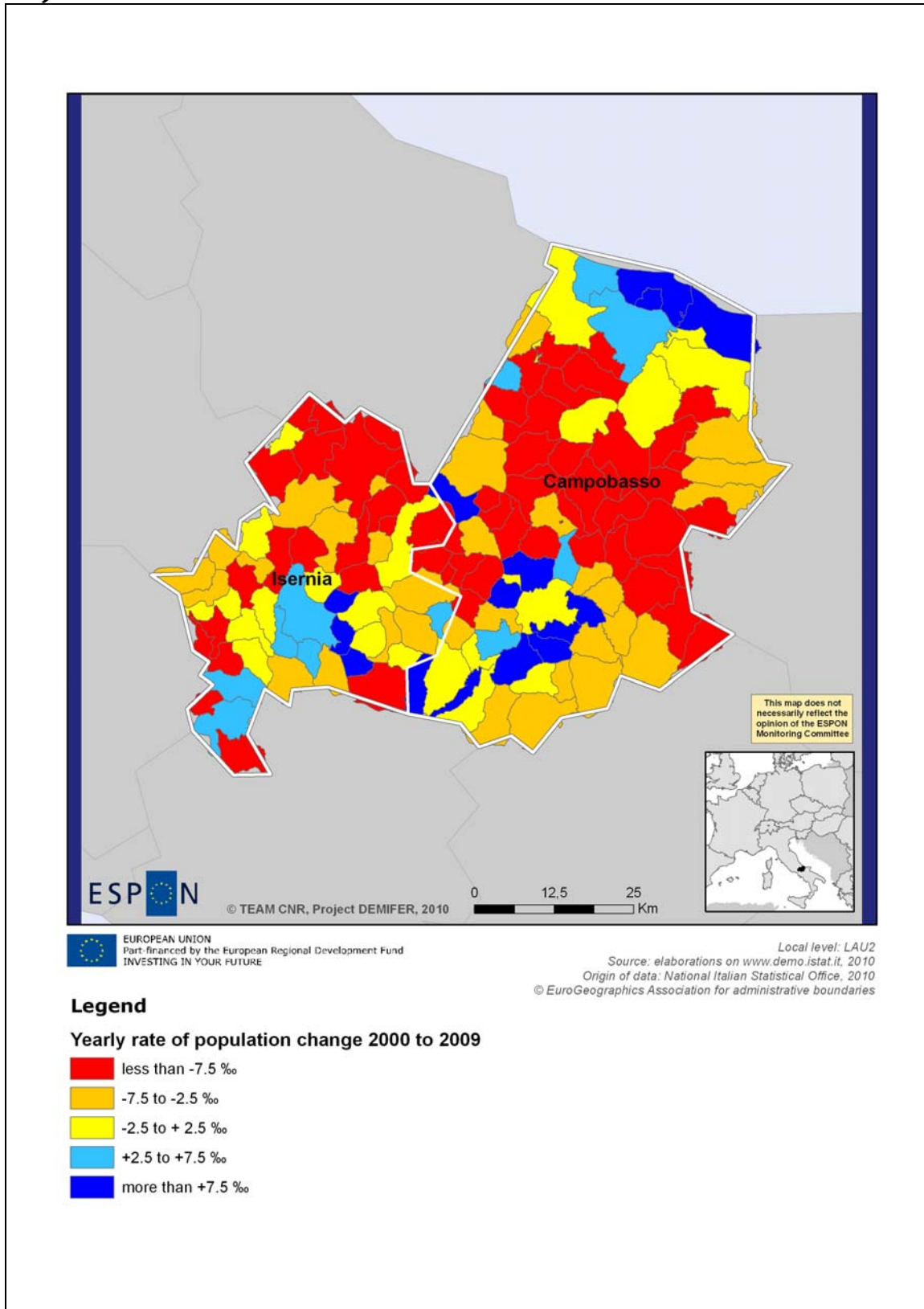
#### **3.1. Population change and age structure**

The population of Molise remained unvaried between 2002 and 2009, around 320,000 inhabitants. Whereas the Southern division (+236,000) and Italy as a whole (+3,05 million) have increased the number of residents (Table 1 and 2). In relative terms, the demographic growth of Italy has been 5.4% and has occurred mainly in the central-Northern regions. The increase was lower in the South (+1.7%) and, as previously stated, practically nil in Molise. Population growth occurred only in the urban areas of Campobasso and Isernia and in the coastal municipalities (Map 2). The stronger decline of population affected small mountainous and hill municipalities. The effect of the legalisation for immigrants between 2003 – 2004 that followed the Bossi – Fini Law, and the entrance into the EU of the new member states, led to an overall growth in the foreign presence that tripled in all three areas. At the beginning of 2009 the foreigners living in Molise were more than 7,300, 5,000 more when compared to seven years before (+200%). The foreign immigration compensated for the negative population change registered by the natives (-4500 units and -1.4%).

Almost three quarters of the population of Molise live in the province of Campobasso (229,000 residents) whose territory, apart from Campobasso town, includes the coastline facing the Adriatic sea and Termoli, the second most populated town of the region (Map 3). During the period 2002-2009, the province of Isernia had a slight decline in population (-1%), being small also due to the foreign immigrant population growth, which was more intense in the

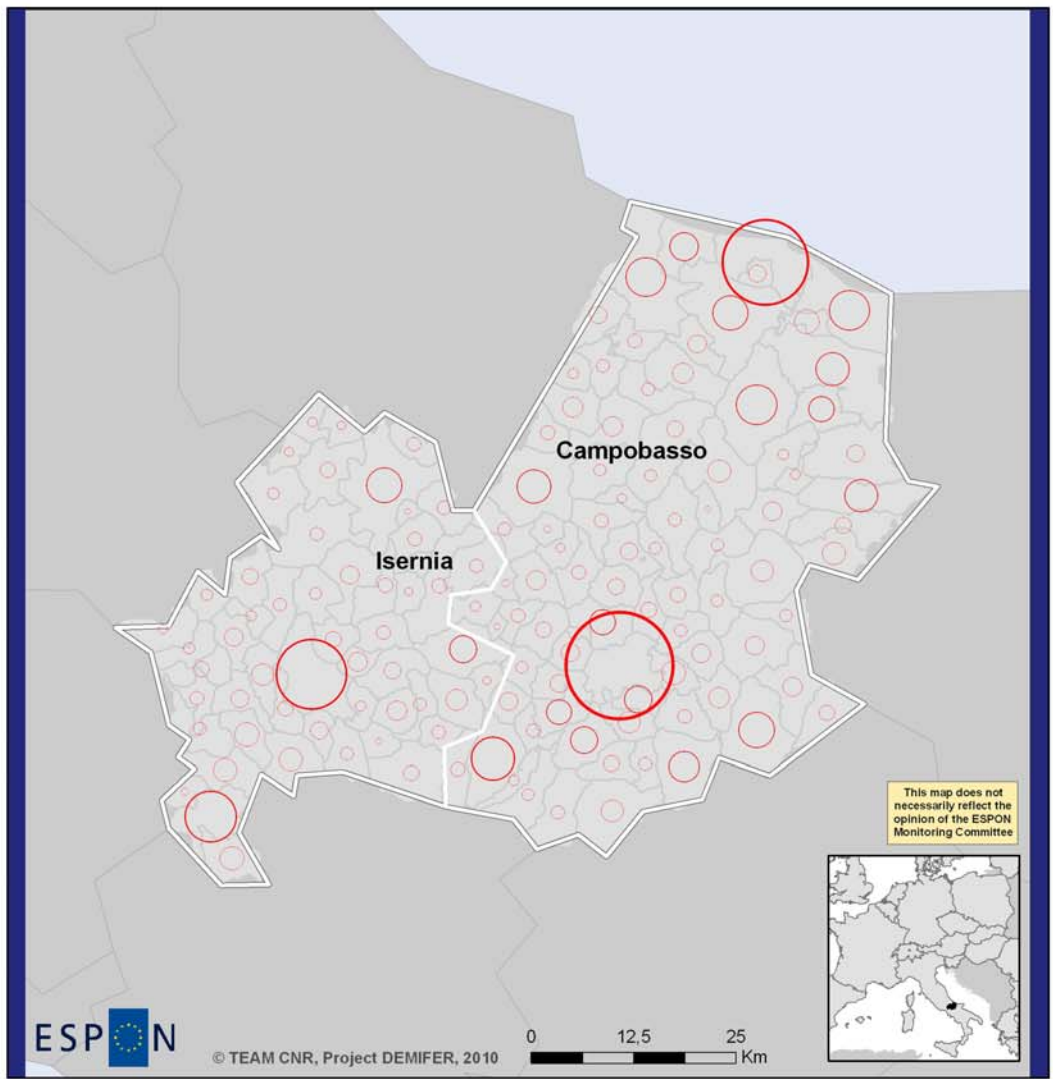
province of Campobasso. Both the provinces have a negative growth for the Italian population.

**Map 2 Municipalities by population change in the Molise region (2000-09)**



Source: Elaborations based on ISTAT data

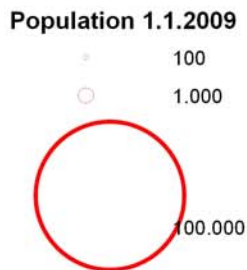
**Map 3 Urban structure of Molise region (1.1.2009)**




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Local level: LAU2  
 Source: [www.demo.istat.it](http://www.demo.istat.it) resident population, 2010  
 Origin of data: National Italian Statistical Office, 2010  
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**Legend**



Source: Elaborations based on ISTAT data

**Table 1 – The Italian and foreign population residing at the beginning of 2002 and 2009. Molise, The South, Italia. Absolute values.**

Reference areas, Region, Provinces	2002			2009		
	Italians	Foreigners	Total	Italians	Foreigners	Total
Campobasso	228.981	1711	230.692	226.542	5.358	231.900
Isernia	89.050	725	89.775	86.944	1.951	88.895
Molise	318.031	2.436	320.467	313.486	7.309	320.795
Southern Italy	13.795.667	115.159	13.910.826	13.795.010	352.434	14.147.444
ITALY	55.637.152	1.356.590	56.993.742	56.153.773	3.891.295	60.045.068

*Note: "Southern Italy" refers to the Southern part of continental Italy (excluding Sardinia and Sicily)*

*Source: ISTAT*

**Table 2 – Changes in the Italian and foreign residents between 2002 and 2009. Molise, The South, Italy. Absolute values and percentages.**

Reference areas, Region, Provinces	Absolute values			Percentage values		
	Italians	Foreigners	Total	Italians	Foreigners	Total
Campobasso	-2.439	3.647	1.208	-1,1	213,2	0,5
Isernia	-2.106	1.226	-880	-2,4	169,1	-1,0
Molise	-4.545	4.873	328	-1,4	200,0	0,1
Southern Italy	-657	237.275	236.618	0,0	206,0	1,7
ITALY	516.621	2.534.705	3.051.326	0,9	186,8	5,4

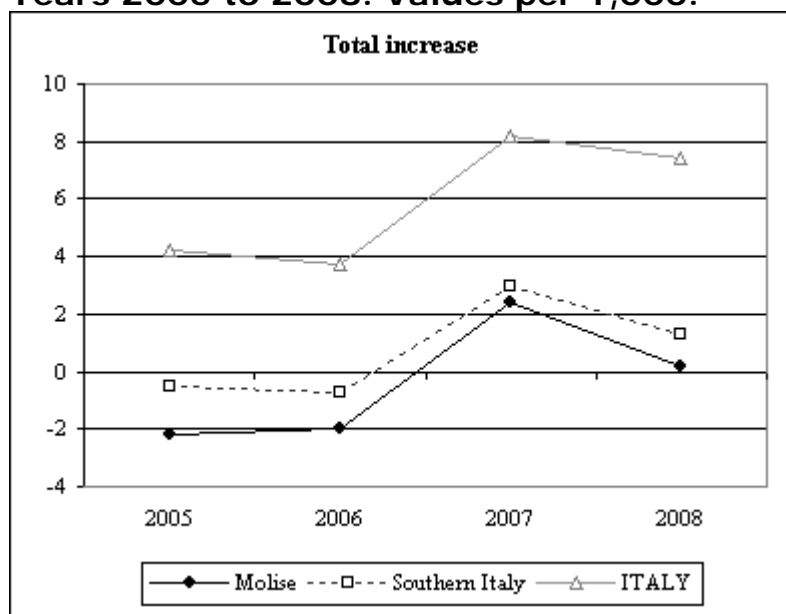
*Source: Elaborations based on ISTAT data*

Molise went through a phase of negative population change in the period of 2005 to 2006, followed by a slight growth in the following two years (Figure 1). Although on a different level, the areas show analogous paths, with a rather consistent growth in 2007, mainly tied to Eastern European migratory flows. In general, the Southern regions, less involved in foreign immigrations, show a much slower growth compared to the rest of Italy.

Molises' population structure by age is older when compared to the national average, even more so when compared to the Southern partition. Over one fifth of the residents are over 65 (21.8%), a much higher quota than for the under 15 (12.9%), that produces an ageing index (AI) of 171. In substance, in the region the number of elderly is about to double that of the young, whereas in the rest of the South the distribution between the two main age groups is more balanced, although the elderly "overtaking" has occurred (AI:115).



**Figure 1 – Total demographic growth. Molise, The South and Italy. Years 2005 to 2008. Values per 1,000.**



Source: Elaborations based on ISTAT data

All the structure indexes (Table 3) confirm the high proportion of elderly residents in Molise in relation to the young population and the one of working age. Even the average age of the population in Molise suffers from this and it is three years older when compared to the Southern one (44.2 against 41.1 years of age).

**Table 3 –Age structure: 1.1.2009. Molise, The South and Italy.**

Index	Molise	Southern Italy	Italy
0-14 years (%)	12,8	15,4	14,1
15-64 years (%)	65,4	66,9	65,8
65 years and older (%)	21,8	17,7	20,1
Index of total dependency	53	49	52
Index of elderly dependency	33	26	31
Index of young dependency	20	23	21
Ageing index	171	115	143
Average age	44,2	41,1	43,1

Note: *The ageing index (AI)* is the ratio between the elderly population of 65 years and more, and the young population of less than 15 years. The *'index of total dependency'* is the ratio between the sum of the young and elderly population and the rest of the population between 15 and 64. The index of dependency can be divided into the index of the young population dependency and of the elderly dependency, having as numerator the young population (0-14 years) and the elderly one (65+ years), respectively.

Source: Elaborations based on ISTAT data

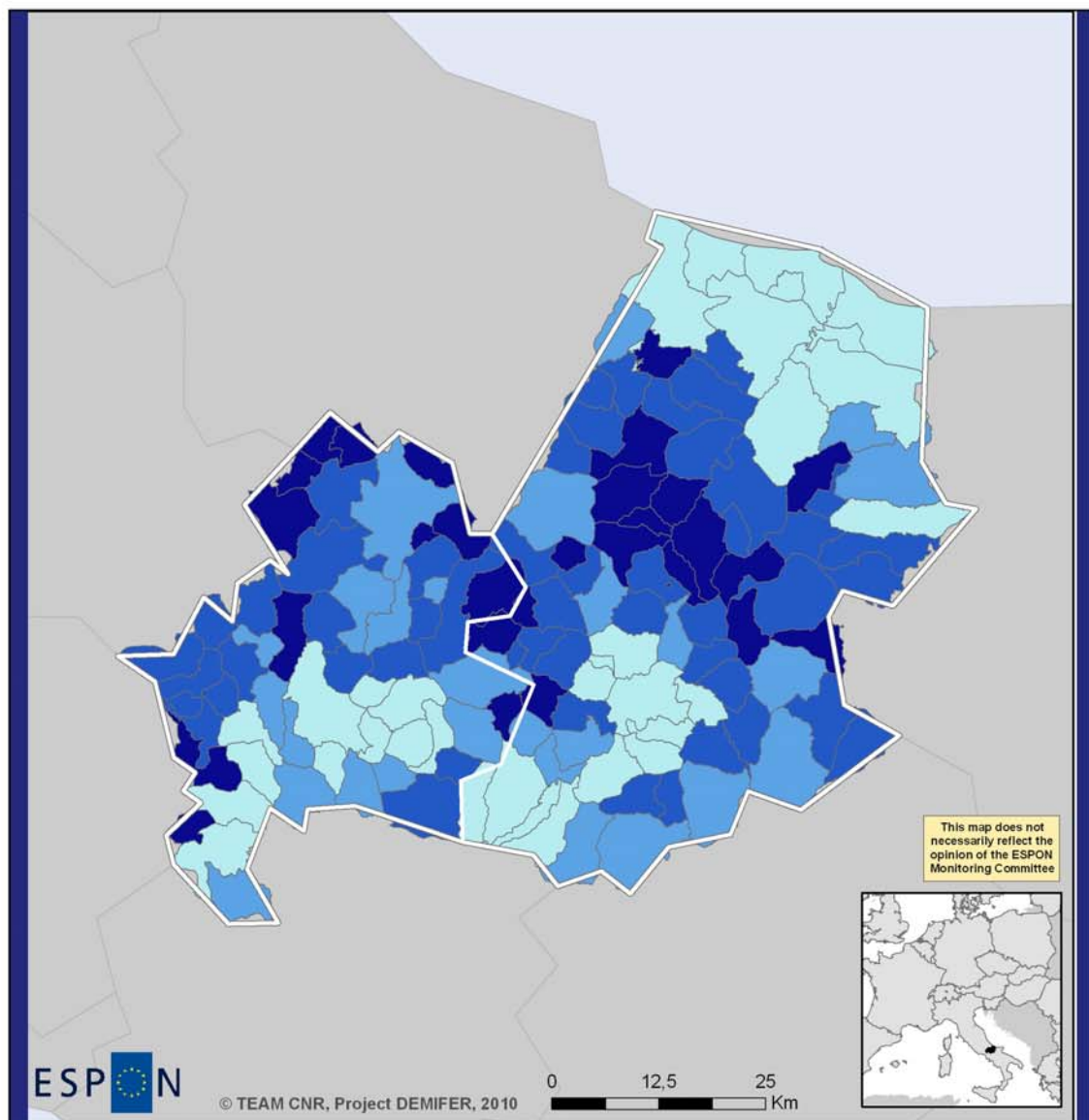
In Italy, for the past few decades the age pyramids show changed figures that illustrate the structure per age and sex for the population. They have lost their characteristic triangular shape mainly because of the transition towards reproductive behaviours characterised by low fertility.

The three age pyramids in Figure 2 present some common elements that compare Molise to Southern Italy and to Italy: the modal age is near to 45. That indicates that the majority of residents are born in a period of the baby boom around the mid 60's. The generations born during the two world wars are less numerous, hence the indent of the figures close to 65 and 90 years of age are explained. The prominence that correspond to 60 years of age are explained by the increases post war in childbirth that could not take place during the second world war. We noted a higher proportion of women than men in elderly ages due to a longer life expectancy in women's lives.

Molise's pyramid is characterised firstly by a higher irregularity due to the relatively small regional population that shows a more 'sharp angled' figure. The high proportion of elderly residents makes the top of the pyramid wider when compared to others. The opposite happens at the base of the pyramid where the percentage of the very young is much lower when compared to the Southern and national average (around 0.4% compared to 0.5% for the other two areas). The concentration of Molise residents under 40 is gradual and intense. On a national level, the diminution of the under 20 year age groups for both sexes is much more rapid, that being the children born during the 80's, but the base of the pyramid has stopped thinning also due to the foreign residents who act on the structure and the demographic dynamics in a much more decisive way in the Centre-North regions.

The higher shares of elderly residents are concentrated in very small mountainous and hill municipalities, where the 65 and older people represent over one third of the total population (Map 4). By the urban areas of Campobasso and Isernia and by the coastal municipalities the share of elderly persons is very lower, in most cases less than one fifth of the total population. The opposite happens considering the territorial distribution of working-age population (Map 5). The lowest shares of 20-64 years residents are present in the small mountainous municipalities (often less than 50%), whereas the most populated municipalities have the higher shares (more than 60%).

**Map 4 Municipalities by the share of elderly population (65+ years)**



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Local level: LAU2  
Source: elaborations on [www.demo.istat.it](http://www.demo.istat.it), 2010  
Origin of data: National Italian Statistical Office, 2010  
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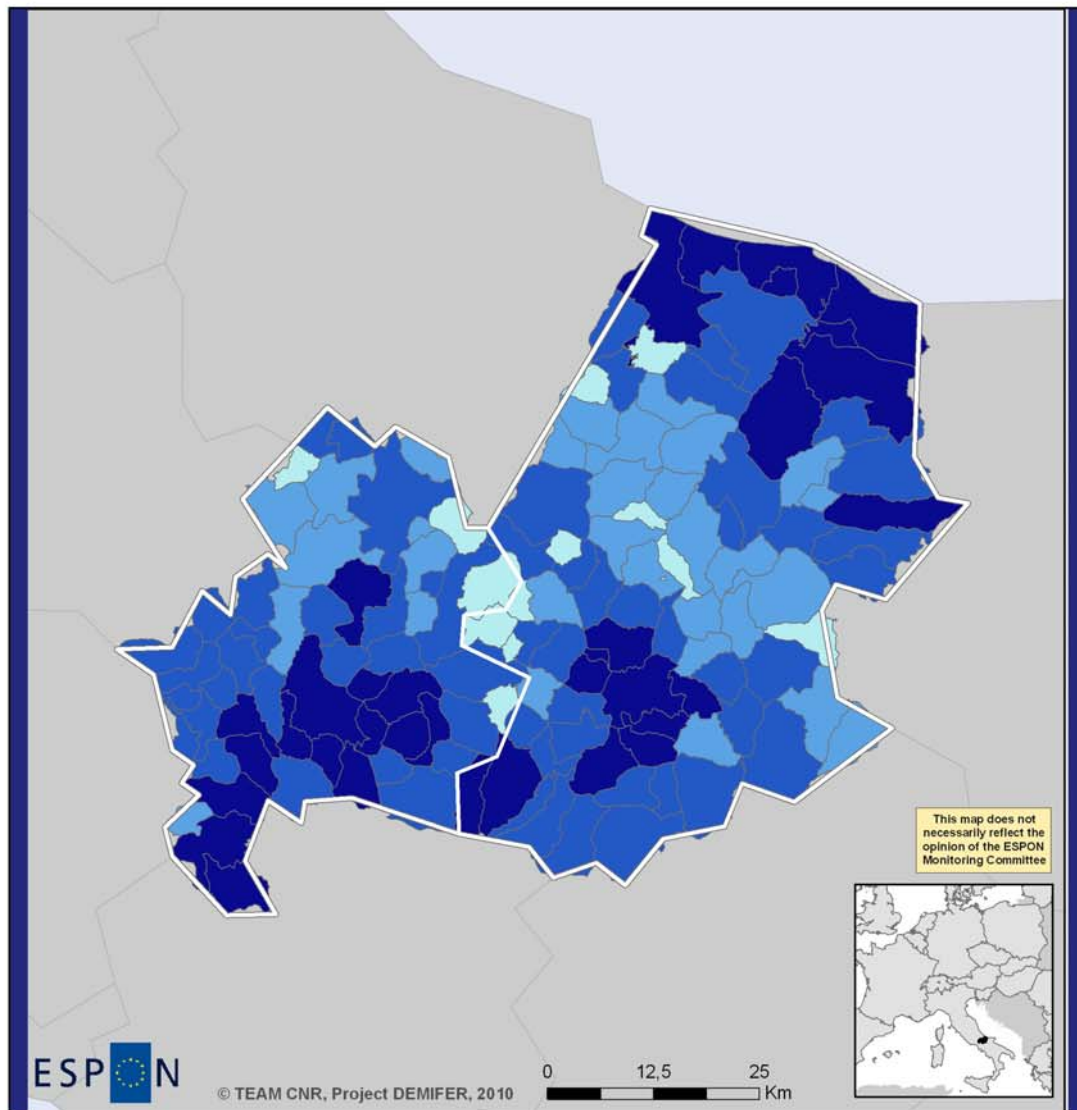
**Legend**

**Population 65 years and older 1.1.2009**

- less than 21.8 %
- 21.8 to 25.0 %
- 25.0 to 33.0 %
- more than 33.0 %

Source: Elaborations based on ISTAT data

**Map 5 Municipalities by the share of workig-age population (20-64 years)**



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**Legend**

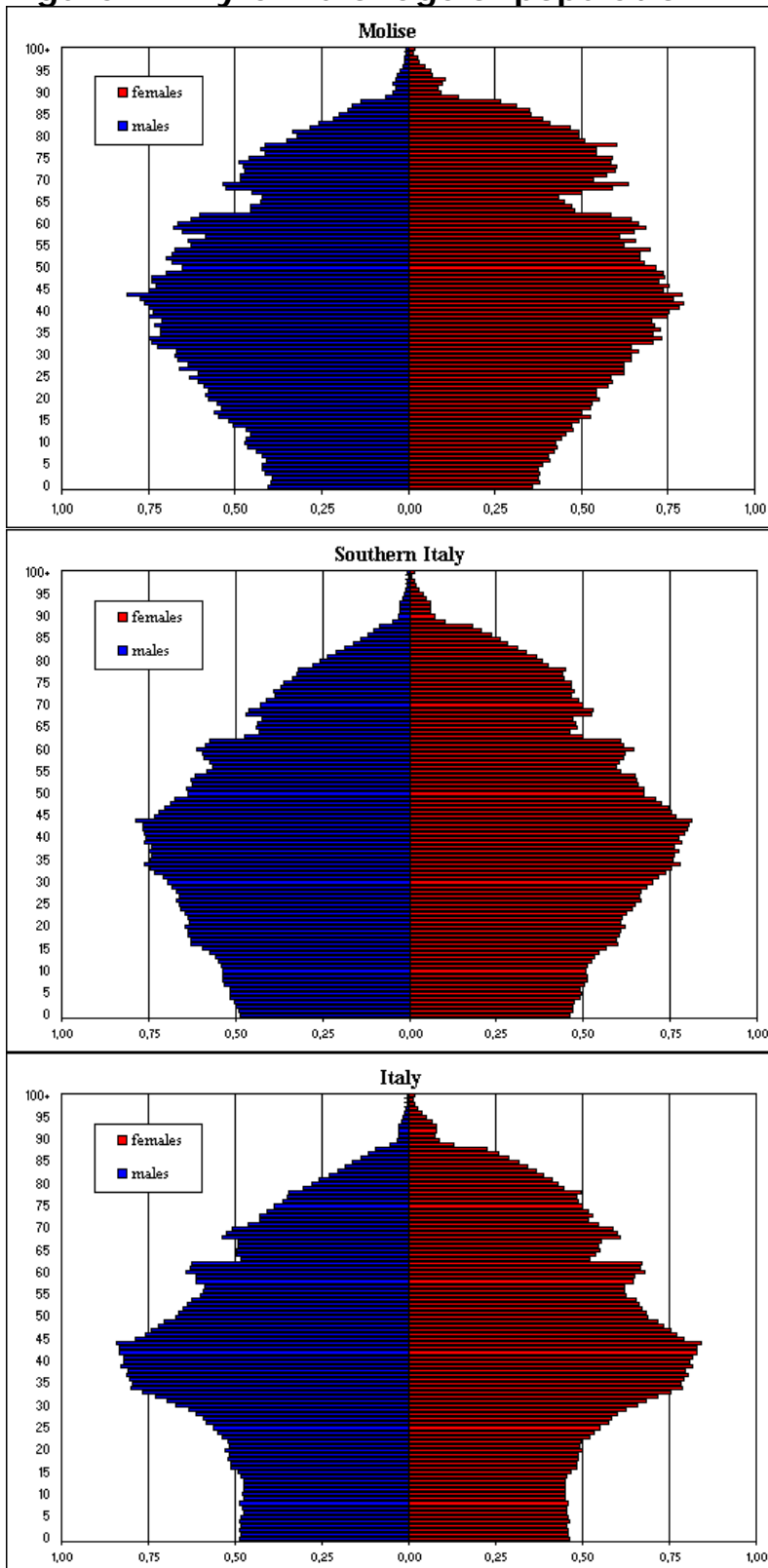
**Population 20 to 64 years old 1.1.2009**

- less than 50.0 %
- 50.0 to 55.0 %
- 55.0 to 60.0 %
- 60.0 %

Local level: LAU2  
Source: elaborations on [www.demo.istat.it](http://www.demo.istat.it), 2010  
Origin of data: National Italian Statistical Office, 2010  
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Source: Elaborations based on ISTAT data

Figure 2 – Pyramid of age of population. 1.1.2009.

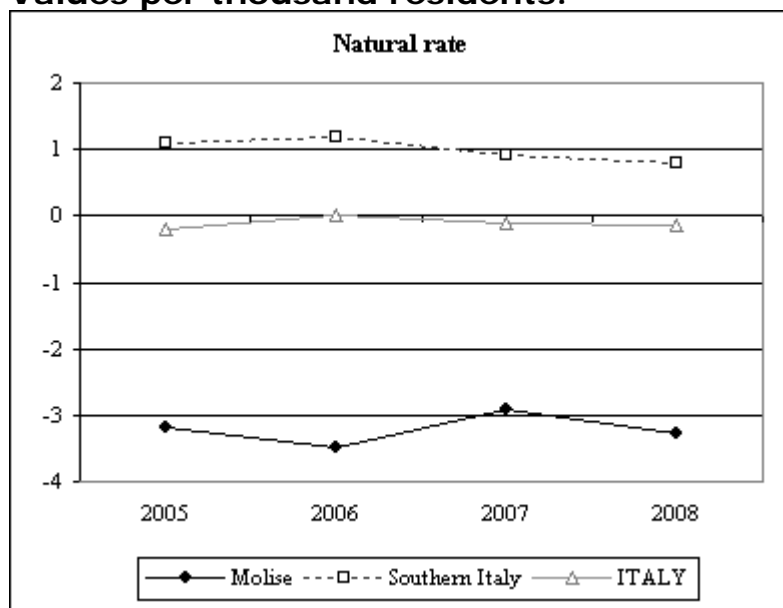


Source: Elaborations based on ISTAT data

### 3.2. Natural change: fertility and mortality

In 2008 the natural demographic balance of Molise is widely negative (-3.3 per thousand) when compared to the substantial balance of the national data and the slight growth occurring in the South (+0.8 per thousand). The balance of births–deaths is negative because of a much lower birth rate than in the rest of Italy (in 2008: 7,8 versus 9,6 per thousand) and a higher mortality rate (in 2008: 11.1 and 9.8 per thousand), due to a particularly old population structure (Fig. 3).

**Figure 3 – Natural change. Molise, the South and Italy. 2005-08.**  
Values per thousand residents.



Source: Elaborations based on ISTAT data

The total fertility rate (TFR), that being the average number of children born by woman, in Molise is the lowest in Italy (in 2007: 1.16) after the Sardinian one, clearly below the national and repartition average, both near the 1.35 value (Table 4). The tendency of the latter years is partially encouraging, with a slight growth, less rapid than the Italian average. The contribution by foreign women, whose TFR is 2 and hence much more fertile than the locals, still plays a secondary role in such a slight improvement in fertility, certainly inferior to what certain Northern regions are experiencing.

**Table 4 – Average number of children per woman or total rate of fertility (TFR) per citizenship. Molise, the South and Italy. 2004-08.**

Areas	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total residents					
Molise	1.13	1.14	1.13	1.16	1.17
Southern Italy	1.36	1.32	1.33	1.35	1.35
ITALY	1.33	1.32	1.35	1.37	1.42
Italian women					
Molise	1.11	1.12	1.09	1.14	1.13
Southern Italy	1.35	1.31	1.31	1.33	1.34
ITALY	1.26	1.24	1.26	1.28	1.32
Foreign women					
Molise	2.72	2.16	2.46	2.05	2.23
Southern Italy	2.16	2.03	2.20	2.17	1.92
ITALY	2.61	2.45	2.50	2.40	2.31

Source: ISTAT

The low TFR of Molise women is associated with a tendency to delay the childbirths, as shown by the relative high average age at childbirth. As a whole, higher by 3 to 4 years for Italian women compared to foreign women (Table 5). Such a tendency to delay links Molise to the rest of Italy and is linked to the extended time dedicated to training and education and the difficulties in finding a stable insertion into the workforce, amongst other reasons.

**Table 5 – Average age at childbirth per citizenship. Molise, the South and Italy. 2004-08.**

Areas	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total residents					
Molise	31.2	31.5	31.6	31.5	31.7
Southern Italy	30.4	30.5	30.6	30.7	30.8
ITALY	30.8	30.9	31.0	31.1	31.1
Italian women					
Molise	31.3	31.7	31.8	31.7	31.9
Southern Italy	30.4	30.5	30.7	30.8	30.9
ITALY	31.1	31.3	31.4	31.6	31.7
Foreign women					
Molise	27.0	26.8	27.1	28.0	28.0
Southern Italy	27.3	27.4	27.5	27.3	27.5
ITALY	27.4	27.5	27.7	27.8	27.9

Source: ISTAT

In 2008 the life expectancy at birth –constantly increasing over the last years – for men is 78,7 years, the same as the national level, and for women is 84,7 years, slightly higher as the national value. Molise is one of those regions with the longest lifespan in Italy. The life expectancy at birth in older years is 18,1 for men and 22 for women (Table 6).

**Table 6 – Life expectancy at birth and at 65 years of age per sex. Molise, the South and Italy.**

Areas	Males from year 0		Females from year 0		Males from 65 years old		Females from 65 years	
	2005	2008	2005	2008	2005	2008	2005	2008
	Molise	78,2	78,7	84,2	84,7	17,6	18,1	21,5
Southern Italy	77,6	78,3	83,0	83,6	17,2	17,8	20,7	21,2
ITALY	78,1	78,7	83,7	84,0	17,5	18,0	21,3	21,6

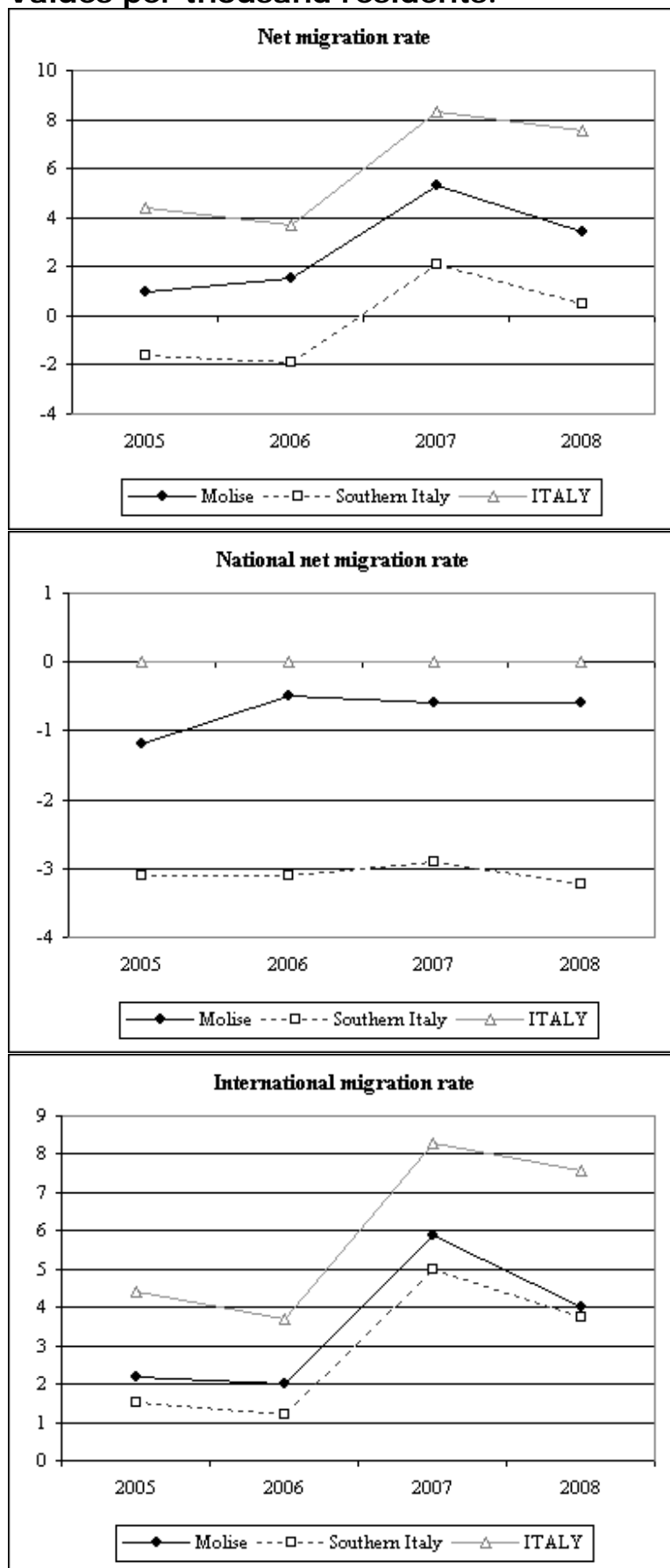
Source: ISTAT

### 3.3 Net migration and migration flows

Between 2005 and 2008 the net migration in Molise is constantly positive (Fig. 4) thanks to the number of foreign migrants (from 2.2 and 5.9 per thousand), that has widely compensated a slight negative domestic net migration (around 0.5 per thousand). The internal net migration in Molise is negative, though less so when compared to the whole of the Southern regions (in 2008: -3.2 per thousand). Although that data concerns just those migrations that have led to a change in registered residency. The phenomena of temporarily migrations completely escapes the official statistics and sees Molise amongst those regions that are mostly interested in the transfers of young people with a high school diploma or university degree (Casacchia, Crisci, 2008).



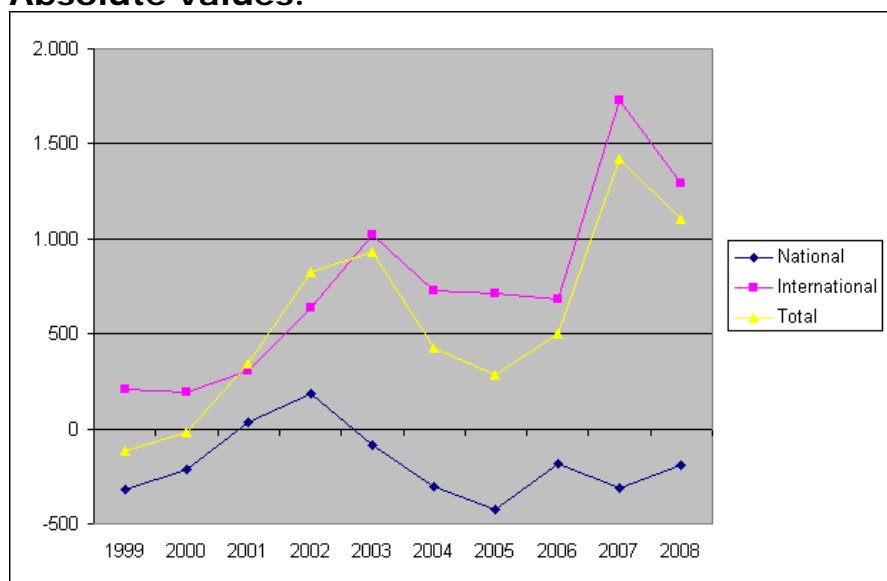
**Figure 4 – Net migration rate. Molise, the South and Italy. 2005-08. Values per thousand residents.**



Source: Elaborations based on ISTAT data

From 2002 onwards the migratory dynamic in Molise was revitalised by a very positive migratory flow from abroad, moving from +300 units in 2001 to +1000 in 2003 (Figure 5). After a few years of stagnation in 2007 the international flow increased again to +1700 units, as a consequence of the entrance of Romania and Bulgaria into the EU. Between 1999 and 2008 the inner migratory total was negative, although not by much, between +200 and -400 units.

**Figure 5 - National and international net migration. Molise, 1999-2008. Absolute values.**



Source: Elaborations based on ISTAT data

### 3.4 The presence of foreign migrants: provenance and characteristics

The net migratory balance is positive thanks to the influx of foreign citizens that mainly took effect after the regularization laws of 2003 to 2004. Such regularization has led to the legalization of immigrants who were already living in Italy. The enlargement of the EU has stimulated the influxes of Eastern European citizens, mainly from Romania growing to more than 2000 persons.

The percentage of foreign citizens is close to 2.5% in Molise and in the South, whereas on a national level it is much higher (6.5%). The age structure of the foreign population is, obviously, the one of a working age population, mainly consisting of young adults and with few elderly (Fig. 6). Molise and the South in general show a smaller proportion of very young members when compared to the Centre–North regions. The sex distribution, clearly unbalanced in favour of women, shows a type of work insertion “the female way”, tied to the demand for care and help of ageing families. The ageing process and the strong incidence of elderly people living alone, above all in the very small municipalities, produces a specific request of women workers to employ as caregiver (“badanti” in Italian), often in cohabitation with the Italian families (Bagnoli, 2009). The very wide base of the pyramid when referred to the

national data, is a result of the evolution of the immigrant's integration process. Such immigrants tend to see Italy, apart from working, more and more as a place suitable for "raising a family."

Half the growth of the foreign residents that took place between 2002 and 2009 is due to the arrival of more than 2,000 Romanian citizens who increased from 100 to 2,400. Nowadays they represent one third of the foreign residents in Molise (Table 7). Just like in the rest of the country, in Molise we notice remarkable differences between the communities in the distribution by sex: Polish and Ukrainian immigration is predominantly female, Indian and Macedonian immigrants are more often men.

As regards the territorial distribution of foreign population (Map 6), the coastal municipalities show the higher shares, greater than the average percentage of the region. The preference of foreigners for a settlement by the coastal area is due to the better connection with the rest of the country through railway line and motorway and to the presence of more job opportunities than in the rest of the region, above all in the tourist sector.

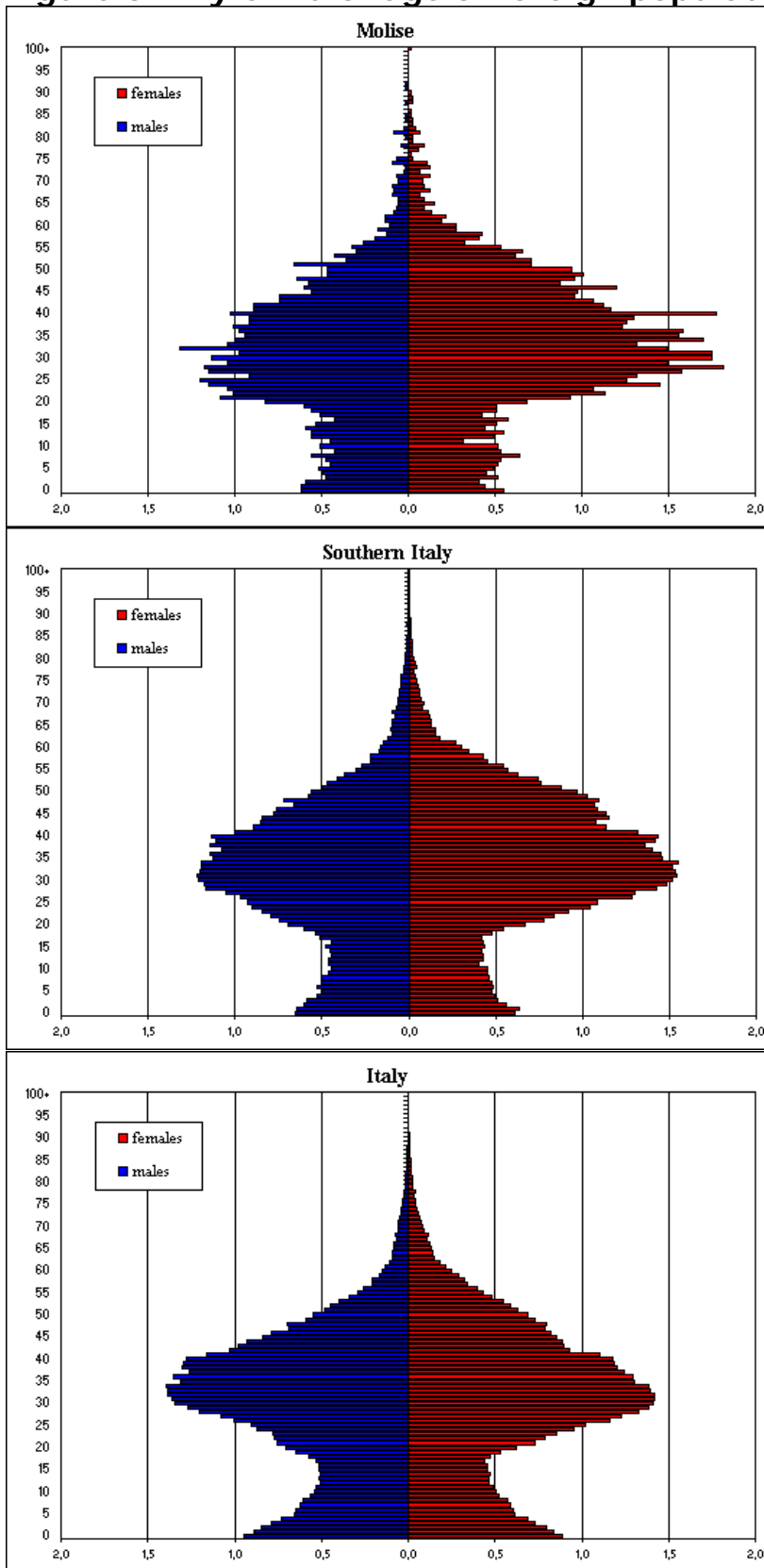
One aspect that appears to be symbolic of the change occurring in the type of foreign presence in the region regards the Argentinean residents who recall a historical period of Molise emigration and that in 2002 alone formed the third community per number of residents, almost equal to the Romanian one, whereas in 2009, they "decreased" to ninth position with the emergence of new countries of immigration. The recent flows from Argentina to Molise could be in part interpreted as "return migration" linked to the economic crisis that during 2001 affected the country. However, the Molise administration aimed to keep a contact with the third and fourth generations of the regional migrants in Argentina, through the institution of the "Council of young Molise people in the world" and through provisions as the teaching of Italian language.

**Table 7 – Foreign residents in Molise. Main communities. Absolute values and percentages.**

Community	Foreign residents		Variation 2002-09 (v.a.)	% of total foreign residents (2009)	% female (2009)
	2009	2002			
Romania	2.455	107	+2.348	33,6	58,8
Morocco	955	613	+342	13,1	42,5
Albania	828	641	+187	11,3	47,7
Polond	527	89	+438	7,2	67,4
The Ukraine	429	67	+362	5,9	77,9
China	195	17	+178	2,7	41,5
India	185	60	+125	2,5	37,3
Macedonia	124	29	+95	1,7	19,4
Argentina	114	108	+6	1,6	54,4
Tunisia	112	78	+34	1,5	38,4
<b>Total foreigners</b>	<b>7.309</b>	<b>2.436</b>	<b>4.873</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>56,8</b>

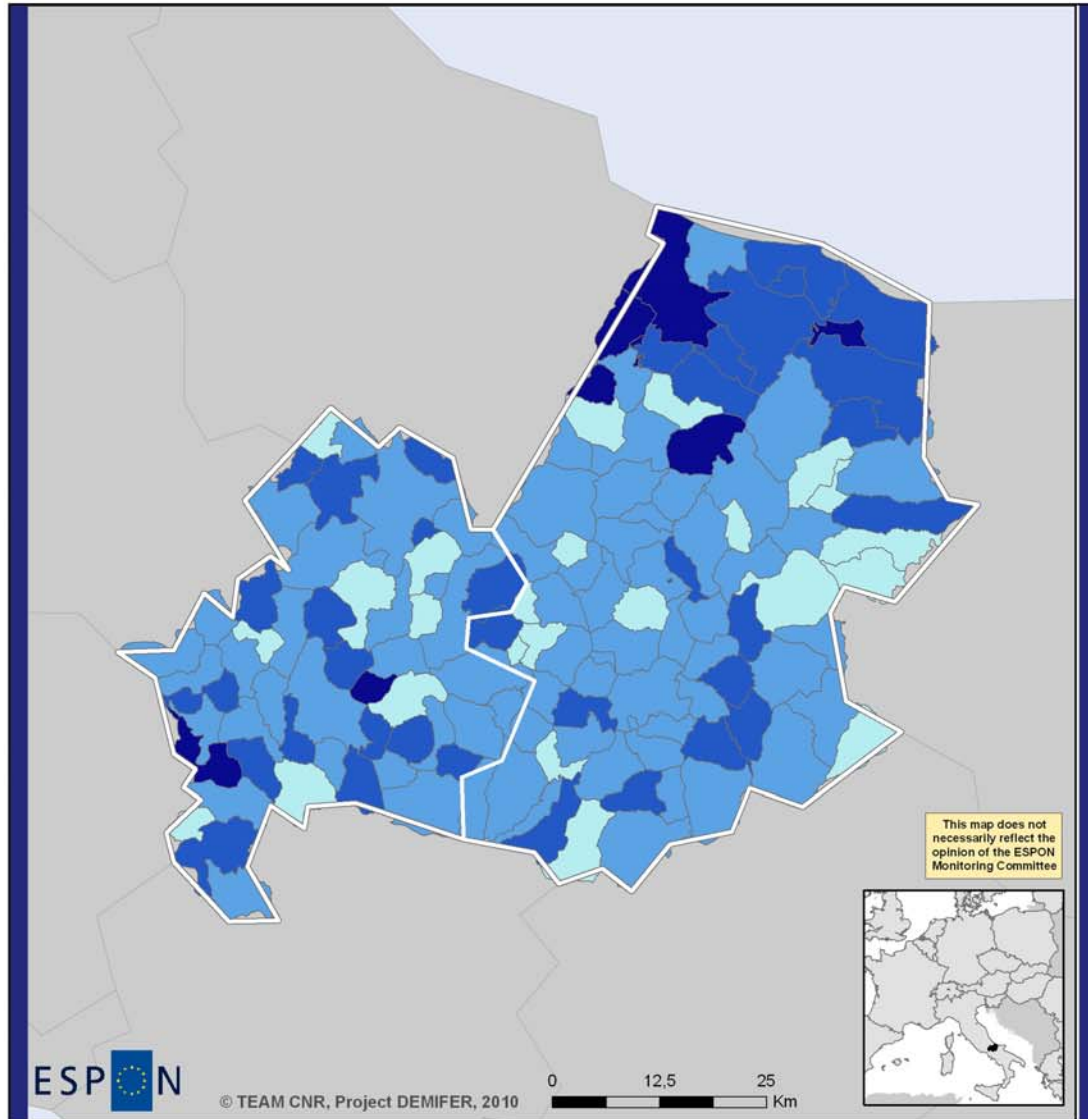
Source: Elaborations based on ISTAT data

Figure 6 – Pyramid of age of foreign population. 1.1.2009.



Source: Elaborations based on ISTAT data

## Map 6 Share of foreign population in the municipalities of Molise region



### Legend

#### Foreign population 1.1.2009

- less than 1.0 %
- 1.0 to 2.5 %
- 2.5 to 5.0 %
- more than 5.0 %

Source: Elaborations based on ISTAT data

## 4. Economic change and population

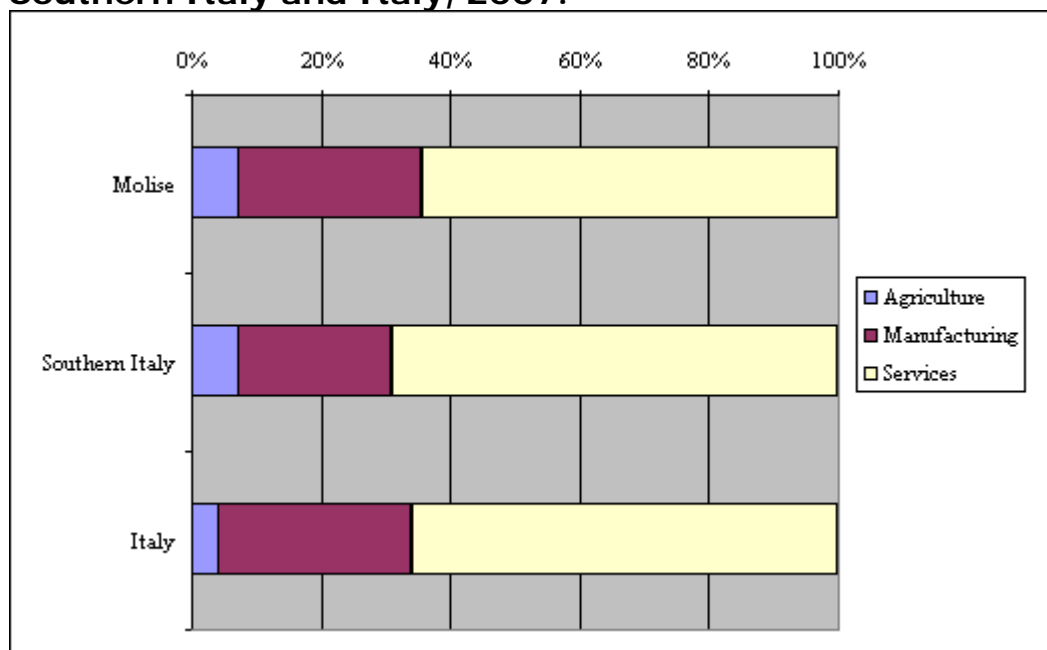
### 4.1. Economic characteristics and recent occupational trends

The rhythm of growth in Molise's GDP during this century is not very different from the national one and recorded a growth that halted in 2008 because of the international economic crisis that also affected Italy. The Italian labour market suffered from the recession, showing a slowing down in the employment growth and revival in unemployment. It also stopped the positive trend that characterised the previous years.

Molise, unlike other Southern Italian regions, overtook the 75% of the average GDP per person in the EU and is not more part of the group of regions included in the target "convergence", the so-called "Target 1" in the 2000-2006 EU program, receiving EU structural and cohesion funds. Such an objective concerned aid to the economic development of those regions. However the region's productive structure continues to show several fragile elements due to, among other reasons, the scarce diversification of activities and the limited ability to attract foreign investment.

The distribution of employment per macro sector of activity shows the service sector prevailing, with almost two thirds of the regional employees (Figure 7). Compared to the national average the workers in the agricultural sector have a higher importance in Molise than in the rest of the South with 7%. On the contrary, the industrial sector in Southern regions employs in general a share of workers lower than the Italian average.

**Figure 7 Distribution of the employees by economic sector. Molise, Southern Italy and Italy, 2007.**



Source: ISTAT

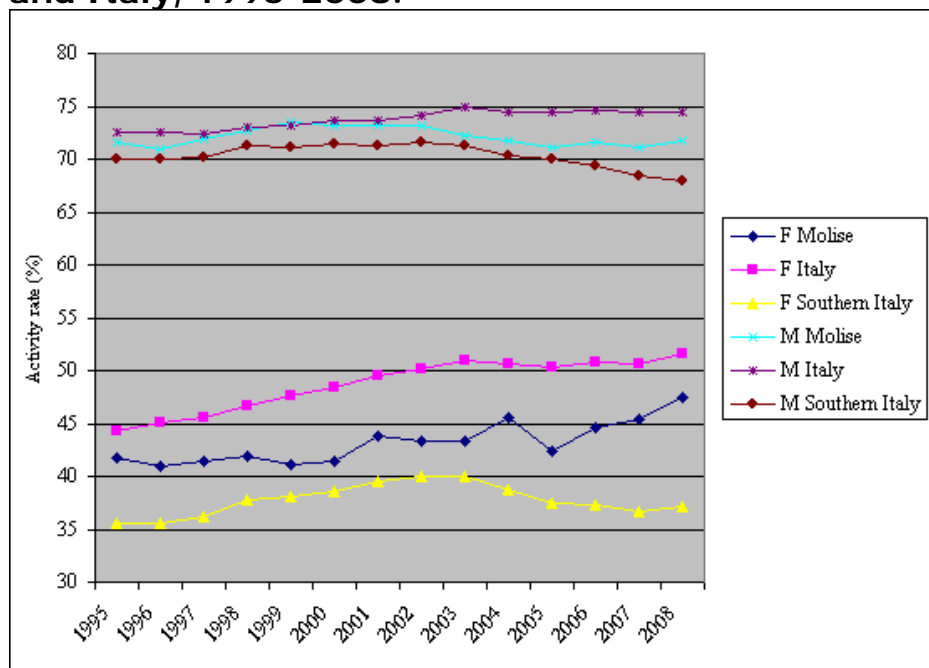
In Molise, and in Italy as a whole, persists a strong difference amongst the sexes in the level of labour participation (Figure 8). In 2008 the economic

activity rate of men in the region was 71.7% and it is halfway between the Southern and the national average. Although, in the period studied the Molise activity rate remains substantially unvaried compared to 1995 whereas the national level rose and, in Southern Italy slowed down. As far as women are concerned, Molise showed a growth in the activity rate by almost 6 percentage points, a little less than the national average variation, taking the rate to 47.4%, 24 points below the male rate. The Southern Italy, after a growth until 2003, showed an alarming decrease.

The employment rates by sex show a similar fluctuation to the economic activity rates, with a strong gap between men and women. Molise, from 2003 onwards, placed itself in a mid position between the South and the national average (Figure 9). Between 1995 and 2008 employment in Molise grew both for men (+1.5%) and, especially, for women (+6.8%). As a whole, from the mid 90's till today a certain convergence between the sexes in the employment rate has occurred although the gap is still consistent and the Lisbon objective of 60% for female employment remains very distant.

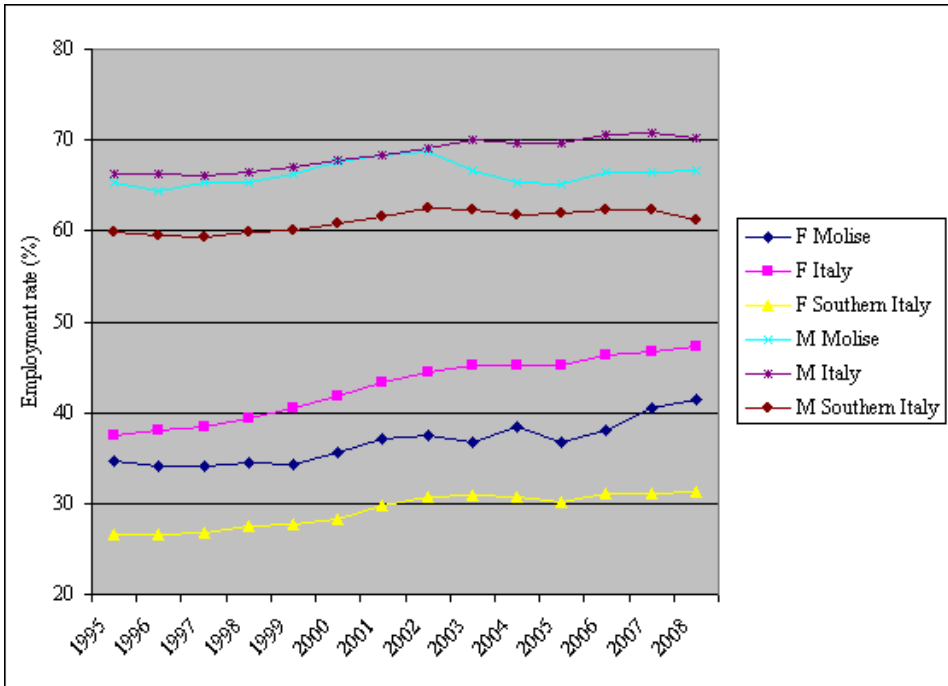
From the mid 1990s the unemployment rate has diminished everywhere (Figure 10). Particularly strong is the decline in female unemployment in the South, going from 25% to 15.7%, even if women could be discouraged to participate in the labour force due to the lack of jobs or the low salary offered. Even in such a case, in the period considered a convergence between the rates of the studied areas took place. We underline the growth in unemployment in 2008, the first result of the international economic crisis.

**Figure 8 Labour force participation rate by sex. Molise, Southern Italy and Italy, 1995-2008.**



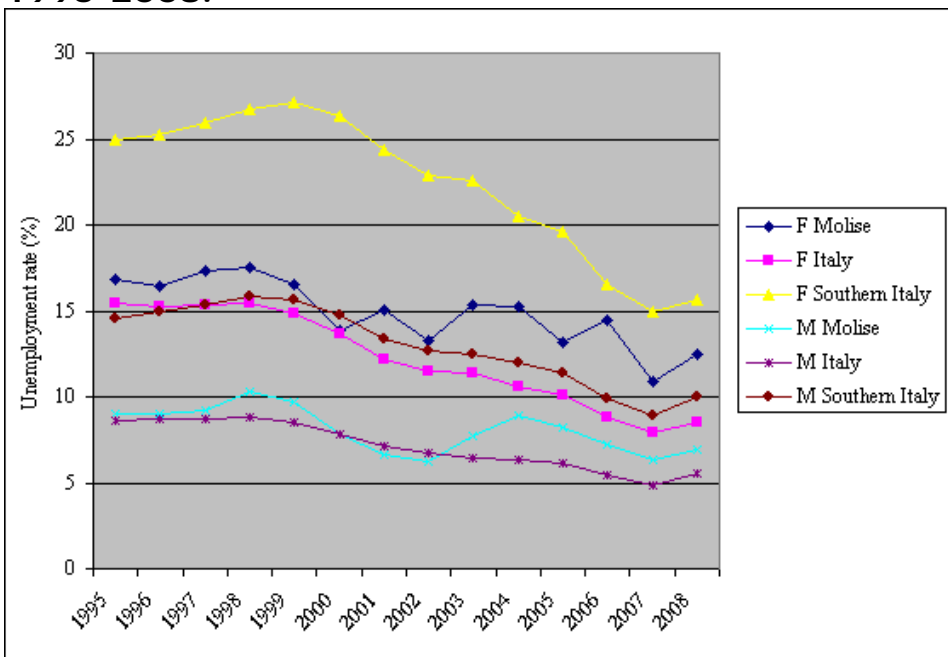
Source: ISTAT

**Figure 9 Employment rate by sex. Molise, Southern Italy and Italy, 1995-2008.**



Source: ISTAT

**Figure 10 Unemployment rate by sex. Molise, Southern Italy and Italy, 1995-2008.**



Source: ISTAT

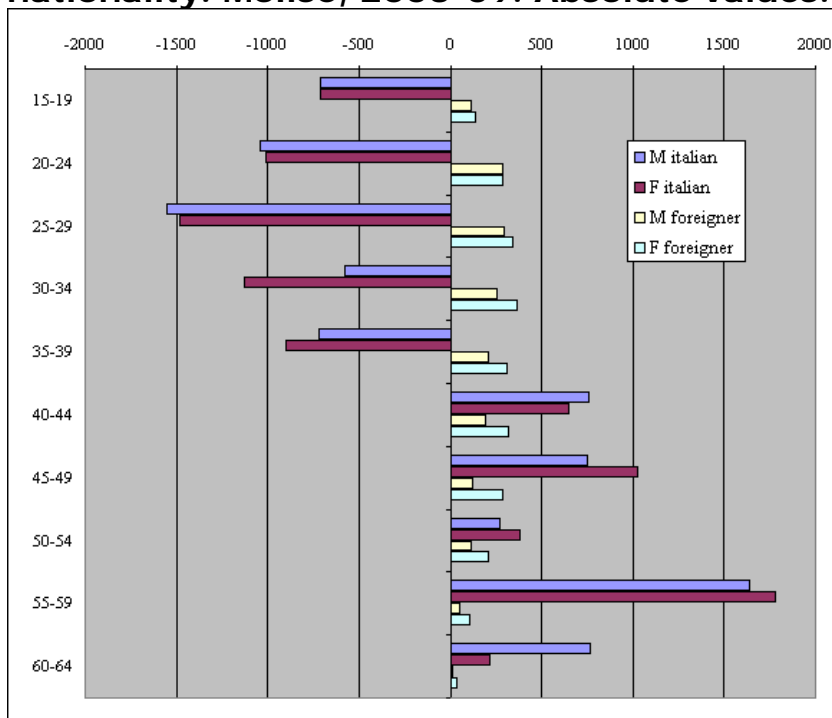


## 4.2. Characteristics of the working age population and role of migration

Between 2003 and 2009 the working age population of Molise increased by about 2500 units (+1.2%). Such an increment comes from a decrease in the Italian component and an increase in the foreign one (Figure 11). The increase in the foreign population in the age-bracket 15-64 interests all the classes per age and is more consistent between the ages of 20 and 49. As far as the Italian residents are concerned, a clear ageing in the structure per age takes place with a strong decline between the age of 15 and 39 (-10,000 more or less) and an almost equal increase from the age of 40 to 64 (+8 thousand more or less).

The demographic ageing and the tendency towards the exodus from some little municipalities located in particularly disadvantaged areas from the geomorphologic point of view, risk becoming a negative factor on local labour markets and a further socio economic marginalisation. Such negative factors may be partially compensated by foreign immigrant flows.

**Figure 11 Changes in the population of working age by age and nationality. Molise, 2003-09. Absolute values.**



Source: Elaborations based on ISTAT data

The share of population 25+ with tertiary education in Molise is the highest in the Southern regions (24%). However, it seems having a degree gives less and less guarantees for work opportunities. Between 1993 and 2005 the employment rate for Molise's residents with a degree decreased from 81% to 71% whereas the national rate was just above 80% (Gatto, Spizzichino, 2006). Also the length of time spent finding a job tends to increase. This is also due to

the just expectations of those who have invested many years in their training desiring to find a job that is compatible to that training (Gesano, 1999). 60% of Molisens who, after graduating remained in the South, are after three years still unemployed compared to just 2% of those who moved to the Centre-North (D'Antonio, Scarlato, 2007). It is the highest difference amongst Southern regions and it is very indicative of the intensity of the existing "push factors". Hence it can not surprise that Molise is the Italian region where graduates have the highest probability of moving to the Centre North three years after having received their degree (41%) with a tendency to emigrate that, during recent years, has tended to increase (D'Antonio, 2007). It may surprise the relative scarcity of the internal migratory flows developed during recent years, as the administrative sources state. On the other hand, the registered statistics only describe one portion of the phenomena since not all of those that move desire to register their change of residence. Moreover, often the expanding precarious work and temporary contracts and lodgings do not encourage the mid- and long-term projects that are normally associated with a change in residence. The "temporary migration", namely a not permanent movement that can be seasonal, intermittent and periodic, escapes official statistics leaving behind no administrative traces.

In 2001, in the Italian census, a question was posed to the residents on the transitory changes of lodgings compared to a usual long term stay during the past year and, in particular, on the cause and the length of such movements. The census data for the Campobasso province showed that one worker in every eight of the age class 25-34 had momentarily moved for work reasons from his town of residence for at least three months during the previous year (Casacchia, Crisci, 2008). This was a very high number compared to the national average. This sees one worker in every twenty to choose temporary migration for work reasons. Also amongst the 15-24 year old students, the temporary mobility concerns the people from Campobasso, one in every five, more often than the Italian average, one in every twelve (Casacchia, Crisci, 2008).

## 5. Future evolution of the population: DEMIFER policy scenarios

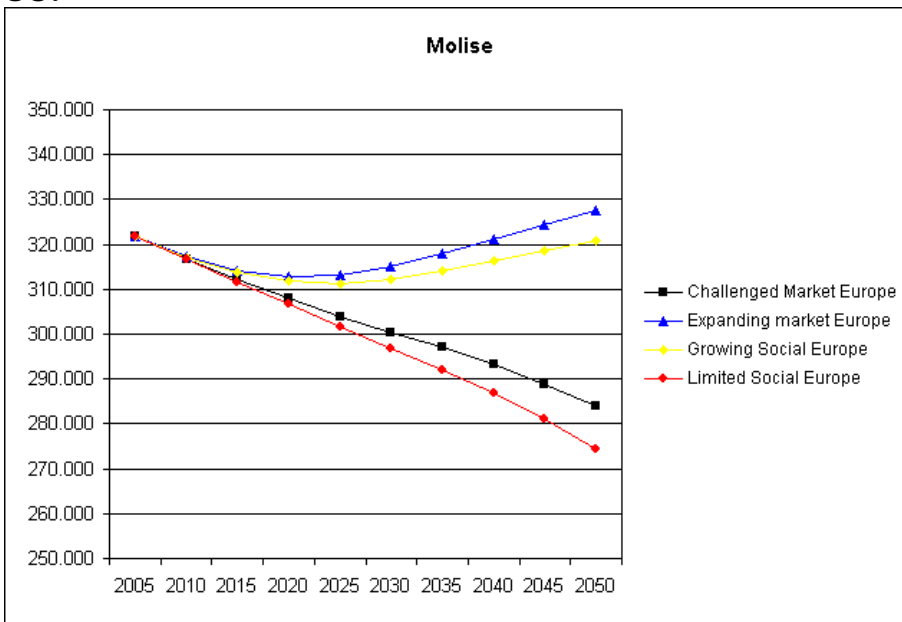
Four policy scenarios of demographic development have been developed within the DEMIFER project. The “Expanding Market Europe” and “Growing Social Europe” scenarios foresee an improvement in the economic and social conditions of European regions and, as a consequence, an expansive demographic dynamic. On the contrary, the “Challenged Market Europe” and “Limited Social Europe” scenarios foresee a less positive socio-economic future, which might lead to a depression in the demographic dynamic.

In the case of Molise the two expansion scenarios foresee an initial decline in the population (Figure 12), that should diminish by about 10,000 units by 2020 followed by a revival that, for the most optimistic scenario, should bring the number of residents by the year 2050 to slightly higher levels compared to the ones nowadays (328,000 units). The other two scenarios foresee a constant decline in the population that, in the Limited social Europe scenario the number of residents declines by 15% (around -50,000 by 2050).

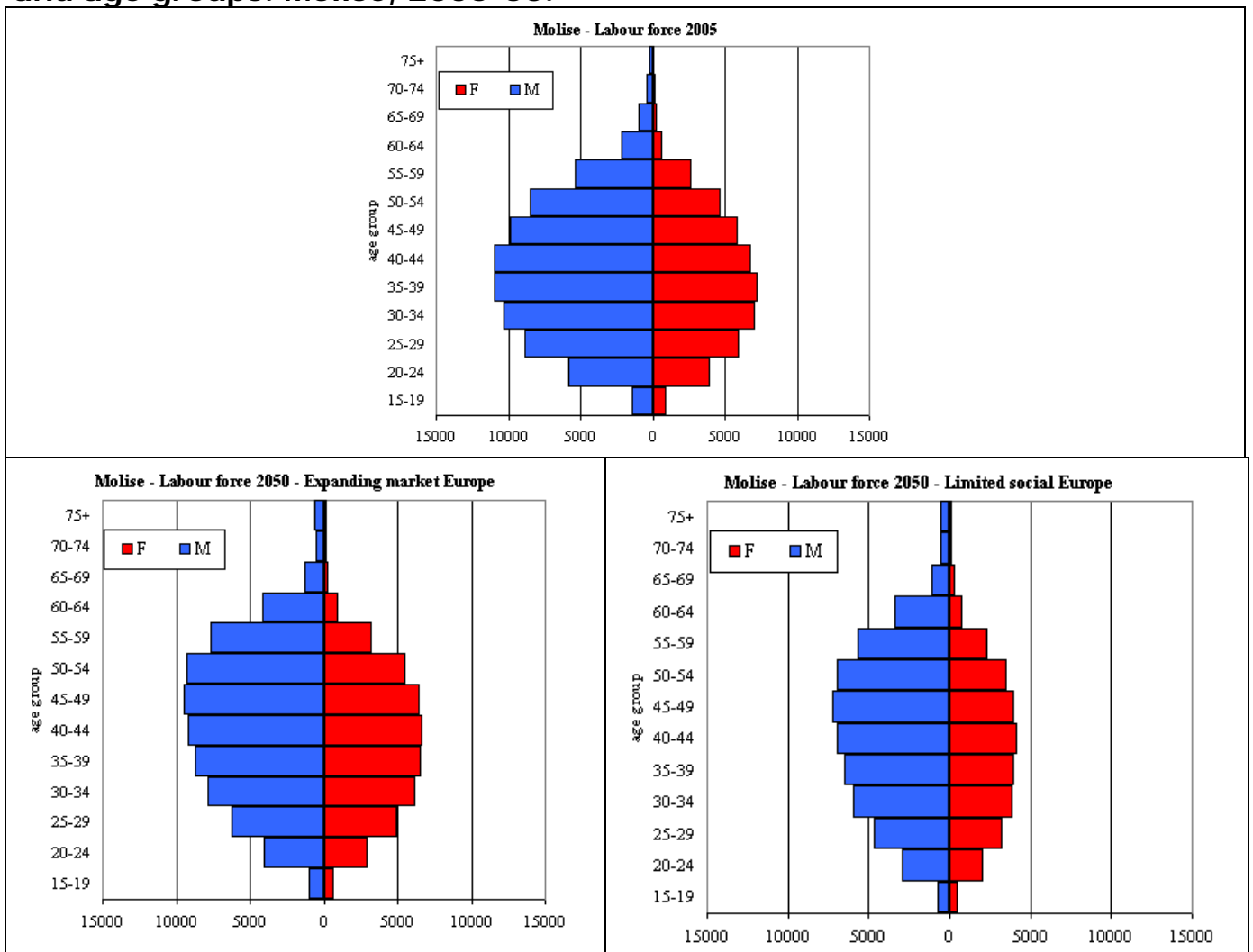
When considering the two extreme scenarios alone (Expanding market Europe and Limited social Europe) the labour force by 2050 should be destined to contract anyway, between -7,000 and -40,000 units (Figure 13). The Expanding market Europe scenario foresees the diminution of the labour force that should concentrate on the population between the ages of 15 and 44 (-18.9%), and foresees a partial compensation due to an increase in the active population amongst the over 45s. The Limited social Europe scenario foresees by 2050 a consistent decline in all the age classes between 15 and 54 (-38.5%) and a slight increase in the labour force over 55.

To sum up, all the scenarios agree in foreseeing a decline in the working-age population of Molise, particularly severe until 45 years of age, up to a level, which could be difficult to sustain within the framework of a socio economic balanced development of the region.

**Figure 12 DEMIFER policy scenarios. Total population of Molise, 2005-50.**



**Figure 13 DEMIFER policy scenarios. Age structure of population by sex and age groups. Molise, 2005-50.**



## 6. Conclusions and the demographic challenges in the case study region

The demographic framework of Molise underlines some problematic factors. The marked *demographic aging* will make more and more complex the management of care services towards the elderly population, especially in a territory with a complex orography like the one in Molise. The *emigration of young adults with a high level of education* impoverishes the social capital of Molise. The young graduates from Molise are not able to specialise and find work in their own region and tend to migrate permanently or temporarily, mainly towards Rome and the Centre-North. The persistent *low fertility*, one of the lowest in Italy, reflects the lack of faith in work prospects for young adults. This occurs alongside a migratory dynamic, always more intermittent, that indicates the instability of work prospects. Those who emigrate for short periods of time do not move their residency somewhere else, but remain citizens of Molise and hardly ever think of "starting a family". According to the Italian census 2001, one worker in every eight of the age class 25-34 had momentarily moved for work reasons from his town of residence for at least three months during the previous year. A very high number compared to the national average (one worker in every twenty).

The mismatch between the expectations of young Molise residents and the type of occupations offered by the local market continues to produce territorial mobility as a necessity. At the same time a more and more flexible labour market stimulates new forms of mobility characterised by transitory and intermittent movements. Such movements are difficult to study through the traditional sources.

Amongst the reassuring aspects of Molise's demography, it certainly can be count *the very high life expectancy*, that could be a symptom of a good quality of life in the region. A further reassuring aspect comes from the *foreign immigration growth* that, only a few years ago, represented less than 1% of the residing population. A helping hand to the local economy, whose labour market demand favourably meets the supply of lowly qualified and low paid immigrants, may come from the entrance into the international migratory circuit. The foreign caregivers, the so-called "badanti", for instance, might integrate with the work done by family caregivers and contribute to satisfy the necessities of an aging population, more and more numerous, and often lacking in adequate services. In substance, despite the familistic tradition and the social and geographical isolation of Molise, the weakening of welfare appeals international migrations.

The continuous decrease in the number of new generations certainly is a concern. Such a decrease may lead Molise into a demographic spiral of decline from which it will be difficult to return. The numbers of the new generations of women, born in the past few years, is just above half the amount of women in their thirties that are now at the peak of their reproductive lives. The very young today will be tomorrow's parents. That means that in order to maintain

the amount of childbirths we have today, which is already few, the average number of children per woman should almost double from a little more than one to two, and that is rather improbable.

The risk of *decline* for the region continues. In prospect, the Demifer policy scenarios foresee a stagnation or a decline of population, while the more optimistic demographic hypotheses in Italy (Istat, high scenario)<sup>1</sup> are not so positive and indicate a slow but inexorable decline from 2014 onwards. Such a decline should occur despite the hypothesis of a further increase in life expectancy at birth and a robust revival in fertility. Supposing that the present international migratory flows towards Molise should rapidly slow down and the foreign presence should stabilise within 5 years, Istat's hypothesis is that the main source of regional demographic growth in the recent years will fade away.

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