

‘Outsiders’ After Accession: The case of Romanian migrants in Italy, 1989-2009

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates media perceptions of the emerging tensions between Romanian migrants and the host community in Italy as Romania exits Communism and enters the European Union. Romanian migration to Italy is a relatively recent phenomenon, but the volume of migration has been so great that now Italy hosts the largest numbers of Romanians abroad. This has created tensions which have not disappeared with Romania’s accession to the European Union. Although Romania is now legally ‘within’ the European Union and will enjoy full rights to freedom of movement in all countries by 2014, an analysis of articles in Italy’s most widely read newspaper, *La Repubblica*, shows that Romanian migrant populations in Italy are still marginalized, creating a novel position for Romanians as both ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ in Europe. The continued marginalization of post-accession Romanian immigrants may have implications for other highly mobile nationals seeking EU membership.

Keywords: Romania, Roma, Italy, European Union, outsiders, marginalization, media reporting, freedom of movement

Introduction

Romania's accession to the European Union on 1 January, 2007 was greeted with enthusiasm in Bucharest and trepidation elsewhere in Europe. Fears of mass emigration from Romania, a country with a relatively short history of migration but one characterized by large numbers of irregular circular migrants in other EU countries, limited Romania's post-accession right to free movement of people despite its membership in the Schengen zone. Even after they obtained membership in Europe's exclusive club, Romanian citizens are still 'outsiders' in the EU, and are likely to remain so until all European countries open their borders to Romanian workers in 2014¹.

The Italian media demonstrate most clearly this dichotomy of Romanians as both 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in the European Union. Due to linguistic and cultural similarities, geographical proximity, and a widespread acceptance of the underground labour market, Italy has become the primary destination for Romanian temporary workers. Therefore, one might expect that there would be an increase in negative representation of Romanian migrants as the quantity of migrants increased, but that this effect would be countered by an increase in tolerance when 2007's accession granted Romanians legitimate 'insider' status in the European Union. However, an examination of articles from 1989 to 2009 in *La Repubblica*, the most widely-read newspaper in Italy, shows that the negative image of Romanians in Italy increased immediately after EU accession, rather than decreasing as might be expected. Although the image of Romanians in the Italian press has shifted since the end of Communism and the opening of the Romanian border, the negative image of Romanians as 'outsiders' persists despite the legal and social factors which determine their 'insider' status.

Methodology

To better understand the Italian media's representation of Romanian immigrants and the effect that EU membership may have had, I searched Italian newspaper articles from 1989 to 2009, covering the crucial years of the intensification of Romanian migration in Italy, the pre-accession years, and immediately post-accession. Due to space constraints, the findings presented here have been drawn from a content analysis of fifty articles from only one newspaper – *La Repubblica*, Italy's most popular newspaper. The centre-left views espoused by this paper ensures less anti-immigrant rhetoric than some of the right-wing papers and may present a more balanced image of Romanian migrants; its wide distribution also suggests that the views presented in *La Repubblica* resonate with the Italian public, both shaping and reflecting public

¹ Free movement of Romanian workers after 2007 was restricted in many Western European countries, although the borders of all Schengen members were opened to students, tourists, and the self-employed. States must accept Romanians in the labour force by 2012, but they may petition to prolong the adjustment period until 2014 if there is cause to believe the presence of Romanian workers would seriously disrupt the national economy. In the case of Italy, by 2009, Romanian workers were granted free movement in certain sectors, particularly the agriculture, construction, catering, hospitality and care sectors.

opinion (for more on these media processes, see dal Lago, 1999 and Buonfino, 2004). A search through the paper's web archives for 'immigrazione della Romania' (immigration from Romania) returned eighty-one articles; filtering out those which mentioned Romania only tangentially or provided only transcripts of interviews with public officials resulted in a sample of fifty articles from 1998 to 2009. Each article was examined for three potential threats to Italian security posed by Romanian migrants (based loosely on Wæver's conceptions of societal security; see Wæver, 1993): the socio-cultural, criminal, and economic threats, as well as for evidence of the connection between Romanians and the EU.

Figure 1
Quantity of articles referring to Romanian immigration in La Repubblica

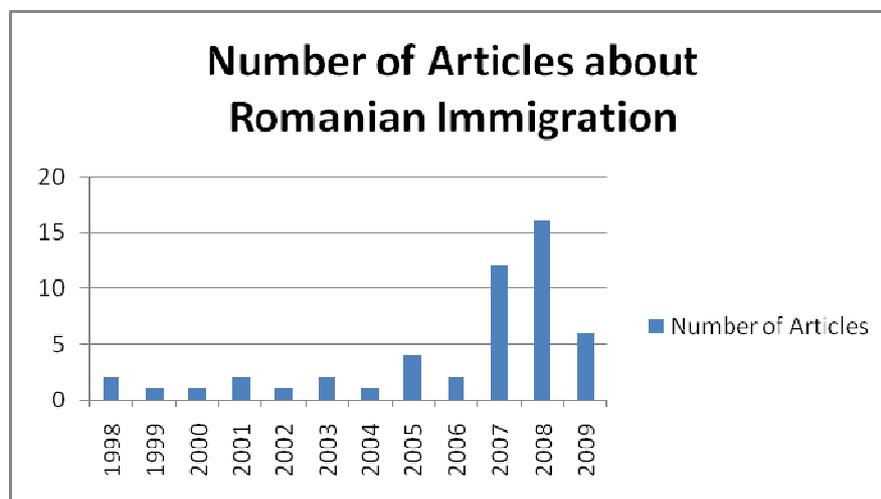


Figure 1 demonstrates that the quantity of articles referring to Romanian immigrants increased dramatically after Romania's accession to the European Union on 1 January, 2007. Although this information alone cannot provide accurate insights into the perception of Romanians as 'outsiders' in Italy, it does suggest increased concern about Romanian migrants once they have entered the Schengen zone. The actual content of these articles, however, demonstrates an interesting shift in the Italian media portrayal of Romanian migrants. By searching for information in the categories listed above, it is possible to understand that Romanians have transitioned from the 'unfortunate outsider' of the pre-accession years to the 'dangerous criminal "insider"' (who by nature of his criminality must still be kept somewhat 'outside') after 1 January 2007. To fully understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to briefly discuss securitization of the migration debate in the EU before progressing to the effect this has had on Romanian migrants in an historical context. The next section will present the findings of anthropologists and sociologists who have studied Romanian migration to Italy, and will give a much different image of the typical Romanian migrant than that given by the Italian media. Finally, the results of the content analysis will be presented, and some conclusions drawn about the future of Romanians in the EU and in Italy in particular.

Securitization in Europe

The securitization of migration in the European Union is a process which began before the fall of the Berlin Wall and the ensuing turmoil in the former Communist countries of the East. Migrants had been invited from the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa as 'guest workers' (a term suggesting the temporary nature of their stay in Western Europe) to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed during World War II, but their welcome only lasted while the economy boomed (Jordan and Düvell, 2002: p. 39). The recession of the 1970s and the rise in the 1980s of far-right anti-immigrant parties like France's *Front National* or the British National Party in the United Kingdom put pressure on governments to view immigration as a security dilemma, sowing discord in their host societies and draining the resources of the welfare state. When Eastern European Communism collapsed in 1989, a general fear spread throughout the European Union that a flood of migrants from the former Warsaw Pact countries heading West would bring with them the problems of corruption and crime that had plagued their governments. Now, with problems such as international terrorism, organized crime, drug cartels, and human trafficking affecting the European states, the fight against illegal immigration has become entangled in the fight against these associated evils (Bort, 2002: p. 192).

The securitization of European immigration had been steadily increasing since the Treaty of Rome established the free movement of people as one of Europe's principle freedoms. The Schengen Agreement, signed in 1985, broke down borders between signatory states (at the time only France, Germany, and the Benelux countries) while strengthening the area's external borders (Bort, 2002: p. 192). This emphasis on external security was later incorporated into the body of the EU's *acquis communautaire*, prompting a standardization of visa regimes and new exclusionary policies towards groups that had heretofore benefitted from historical ties to member states (such as Latin American immigrants in the Iberian countries, or North Africans in France). Critics such as Andrew Geddes describe this process as creating 'fortress Europe', whereby the external borders are completely fortified against new arrivals as a method of preserving the security of those lucky enough to be inside; however, as the findings presented here demonstrate, even those legally accepted as 'insiders' may still be *de facto* 'outsiders'.

As the Single European Act (1986) targeted completion of the Single Market by 1992 and guaranteed the free movement of people to fulfil these objectives, state governments became more concerned about the breakdown of internal borders. The danger of people slipping past the external border controls and then travelling freely throughout Europe necessitated an increase in border security, and as the defence against international criminal cartels has become closely linked to the issue of illegal immigration, many of the new technologies employed in combating the one are also used to fight the other. Surveillance technologies, including databases like Eurodac and visa regimes dependent on biometric data, are seen as crucial to secure the EU's external frontiers from both illegal immigrants and international criminal networks (Bort, 2002: p. 199). The military, used in strategic missions abroad to guarantee European security, have received domestic policing powers from the national governments as well. While their use of force against illegal immigrants is limited, European militaries generally now have the authority to arrest, search, and detain foreigners suspected of

international criminal activities (Lutterbeck, 2005: pp. 244-245). These efforts have also contributed to the growing securitization of migration in the European Union. Although these tactics are generally condoned as useful tools in the fight against organized crime, the issue becomes much more sensitive when discussing immigrants. Bigo sees the integration of security and immigration issues as a result of the blurring between internal and external security in the European space, as the state increases its surveillance on a specific group of people (in this case, clandestine immigrants) to compensate for a loss of security in another area, such as the increase in organized crime (Bigo, 2000: pp. 179-180).

It is this blurring between clandestine immigration – particularly of the kind practiced by most Romanians who enter on a ‘tourist’ visa but then find employment in the informal labour market during their stay abroad – and international crime which has given rise to the securitization of immigration in the European Union. While it cannot be denied that these immigrants are breaking labour laws and therefore engaging in ‘illegal’ activities, it is unreasonable to assume that all such migrants engage in other illegal activities as well. The Italian stereotype that all Romanian migrants must be involved in crime ranging from petty theft to kidnapping and prostitution, resulting from this process of securitization, has severely impeded acceptance of Romanians as ‘insiders’ despite their European Union citizenship.

History of Romanian Migration

Unlike the North Africans and Albanians who have also frequently been set apart in Italian public opinion as ‘outsiders’, Romanian migration to Italy is a relatively recent phenomenon. Under the Communist regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu, few Romanians were granted passports or permission to leave the country, particularly for a journey to the West (Fassman and Münz, 1994: p. 12; Fihel, 2007: p. 8). However, the dictatorship was violently overthrown on Christmas Day, 1989, and the country’s borders opened shortly after. Millions of ethnic Germans, Hungarians, and Jews fled the ensuing turmoil for the sanctuary of their cultural homelands. At this time, these were the only groups with the funds and the kinship networks abroad to make the exodus from Romania feasible; their migration represented a permanent relocation to Germany, Hungary, and Israel, and particularly in the case of the ethnic Germans, left Romania almost completely drained of its historic minorities (Fassman and Münz, 1994: p. 28; Sandu, 2005: p. 39). Romanian asylum seekers fled to the United States and Canada as well as other Western European countries throughout the early 1990s, as post-Communist economic restructuring and power struggles between the remaining political factions continued to contribute to domestic insecurity (Baldwin-Edwards, 2007: p. 7; Sandu et al, 2004: p. 3). Although these ethnic emigrants and asylum seekers settled abroad permanently, this early period of Romanian migration also witnessed some temporary, circular economic migration. (For a statistical analysis of the three waves of Romanian immigration discussed here, see Table 1.) Many Romanians used the compensation given by the state during economic restructuring and the subsequent loss of traditional jobs (particularly in the mining industry) to fund their departures abroad, either for permanent resettlement or economic purposes (Anghel, 2008: p. 790). Circular migration slowly began during this period, as enterprising ethnic

Romanians moved between their homes and Germany, Israel or Turkey, attracted by economic opportunities in the services and construction sectors. These workers remained in the host country for the amount of time dictated by their work contracts, far from families or friends remaining in Romania (Ban, 2009: p. 5). The governments of these host countries strictly enforced the guest worker programmes, resulting in relatively few permanent resettlements of workers from Romanian to these countries in the early 1990s.

The country began to stabilize by the mid-1990s, encouraged by the Europe Agreement negotiated in 1992, which linked trade and cooperation agreements with the European Union to the propagation of democratic principles, human rights, and a market economy in Romania (Grabbe, 1999: p. 9; Phinnemore, 2002: pp. 225-226). As domestic conditions gradually improved, Romanian migrants began trickling into Western Europe for temporary illegal work (Baldwin-Edwards, 2007: p. 7; Popescu, Diaconu and Maxim, 2008: p. 3). These migrants faced considerable risk, paying huge sums of money (often the equivalent of €2,000) in cash to obtain a Schengen visa and often moving to a new country without the benefit of the experiences of co-nationals. Pioneering Romanian immigrants in the mid-1990s therefore helped to create the networks that would facilitate the movement of other migrants throughout the next decade (Oteanu, 2007: p. 38). Although the raw numbers of Romanian temporary economic migrants into Western Europe at this time remained low, the traditional flows to Germany and Hungary shifted towards Italy and Spain with roughly 31 percent of all Romanian migrants working in these two countries, while many other countries also became destinations for temporary workers (Ban, 2009: p. 5). Continued economic restructuring and de-industrialization through the latter half of the 1990s led to the closing of many traditional Romanian industries, particularly mining. This ultimately increased the overall outflow of migrants, as many of the younger employees began to search for new economic opportunities and used the funds from redundancy packages to facilitate their move abroad (Boswell and Ciobanu, 2009: p. 1351; Oteanu, 2007: p. 38). As the 1990s came to a close, Romanian immigration networks were active across Europe, making transit between home and host countries much simpler.

By 2000, Romania had opened accession negotiations with the European Union and in 2002 the policy requiring all Romanian citizens to have a visa for travel to other European countries was abolished (Anghel, 2008: p. 788; Phinnemore, 2002: p. 235). This led to a dramatic decrease in the financial cost of migrating from approximately €2000 to €200, as Romanians going abroad no longer needed to pay exorbitant visa fees but merely required a passport and a method of transportation (Anghel, 2008: p. 798). The new ease of movement for Romanian citizens resulted in an overall decline in permanent migration in favour of temporary, circular migration, as many migrants left the country to find illegal work in the construction or services sectors and returned before their three-month tourist period was finished (Sandu et al, 2004: p. 6). Although increased freedom of movement permitted Romanians to travel throughout the entire European space for up to three months, Italy and Spain rapidly became the preferred migration destinations with some estimates suggesting that almost sixty percent of all Romanian migrants (or between one and one and a half million people) were working in these two countries in the early 2000s (Ban, 2009: p. 6). As Ban notes in his article, this is the 'largest

demographic shock wave linking Southern Europe and Eastern Europe since the Roman times' (Ban, 2000: p. 6)

Table 1

Waves of Romanian immigration (percentages of total Romanian migration)

Destination Country	1990-1995 (%)	1996-2001 (%)	2002-2006 (%)	% of Total by 2006
Italy	8	22	50	40
Spain	2	9	24	18
Germany	7	6	5	5
Hungary	8	9	4	5
Israel	18	17	0	6
Turkey	10	7	1	3
Greece	2	4	2	2
Canada	2	7	1	2
Belgium	5	1	0	1
Others	21	10	9	11

Source: Sandu et. al., 2006

The Romanian flow into Italy was unprecedented. Prior to the 1980s, Italy had been predominantly a country of emigration as thousands of citizens left permanently for the Americas and neighbouring European countries. As border security tightened in the traditional countries of immigration in Europe (particularly France, Germany, and the United Kingdom), migrants had to find a different route into the Western labour markets (Lahav, 2004: p. 31). Italy's weak institutional structures for preventing migration combined with low Italian unemployment, resulting from post-war economic growth and a declining birth rate, to make Italy an extremely desirable destination for economic migrants (Fihel, 2007: p. 15; Gallina, 2007: p. 14; Weber, 2004: p. 44). Linguistic similarities between Italian and Romanian as well as Italy's close geographical proximity to Romania were additional socio-cultural factors facilitating the Romanian migrant's move to Italy (Culic, 2008: p. 155; Sandu, 2005: p. 559). Industrial centres, particularly in the northern regions of Veneto, Lombardy and Emilia-Romana, as well as the Lazio region around Rome itself, became home to thousands of Romanian immigrants (Anghel, 2008: p. 793; Gallina, 2007: p. 15; Stocchiero, 2002: p. 2; Weber, 2004: p. 49). The large influx of foreign workers spurred political action, and laws were adopted in 1986, 1990, 1996, 1998, and 2002 to provide a framework for ending clandestine migration. The 1998 Turco-Napolitano outline law, put forward by two leftist members of parliament, created the most comprehensive migration legislation in Italy and was amended in 2002 by the right-wing Bossi-Fini act (Weber, 2004: p. 45). Both documents aimed to limit illegal immigration by legalising workers already present in Italy (a process known as regularisation) and extracting a fine from their employers, integrating the underground economy into the labour market and giving authorities greater control over the immigrant pool. Regularisation occurred in Italy in 1995, 1998 and in 2002; over 141,000 Romanian workers came forward in the 2002 process, making them the largest group of regularised immigrants in Italy and bringing the total number of

regularised Romanians in Italy to 556,000 people by the time of Romanian accession to the EU (Ban, 2009: p. 7; Culic, 2008: p. 156).

The Romanian government also took steps to slow migration in the years preceding accession. In exchange for the lifting of visa requirements for Romanians travelling through the Schengen space in 2002, Romania implemented new criteria that must be met by all citizens when leaving the country. These criteria were similar to those most countries require of entering visitors: sufficient funds to support the traveller for the duration of his or her stay, evidence of accommodation, a return ticket, and health insurance (Culic, 2008: p. 158). For individuals caught overstaying their visas, punishment could include confiscation of their passport and a suspension of the right to free movement for up to twelve months, with the suspension period becoming increasingly longer for repeat offenders (Culic, 2008: p. 158). Enforcement of these criteria resulted in over 3,000 passports being confiscated and over one million Romanians being turned back at the border in 2005, while readmission agreements with several European countries have resulted in many illegal immigrants being sent back to Romania during this same period (Baldwin-Edwards, 2007: p. 10; Culic, 2008: p. 158; Rigo, 2005: p. 16; Romanian Academic Society, 2003: p. 36). These restraints on Romanian movement – persisting even after Romania's admission to the Schengen zone, as many other EU states continue to restrict Romanian migrants' right to work – have raised concerns that Romanians face humiliating treatment at border crossings and abroad which create obstacles in obtaining work permits and visas and reinforce the illegal nature of Romanian migration (Ferro, 2004: p. 386). Measures to protect the European public from the 'threat' posed by Romanians have thus contributed to the securitization of migration and entrenched the image of Romanians as 'outsiders'.

'Typical' Romanian Migrants: A Profile

The perception of Romanians as criminals and gypsies does not fit with the image of 'typical' Romanian immigrants presented by sociologists and anthropologists. The majority of Romanian immigrants have higher education and lower levels of pay than other Europeans in their field and are attracted to these jobs by the promise of higher earnings abroad. Therefore they feel they must leave Romania to receive an income equivalent to their education, which can simultaneously reduce the education-income gap while creating an education-occupation gap as the highly educated take unskilled jobs (Alexandru, 2007: p. 159; Romanian Academic Society, 2003: p. 37). Unskilled workers with lower levels of education often live in small towns or in rural areas, or belong to marginalised groups in larger cities where the opportunities for work are limited. Migrants find these jobs abroad – termed '3D' because they are dirty, demanding, and dangerous – easier to cope with than their domestic equivalents, primarily because they can conceal the less savoury aspects of their lives abroad from those remaining at home (Alexandru, 2007: p. 162). Although these jobs receive the lowest remuneration in the host countries, migrants typically spend their money in the home country where the cost of living is much lower and therefore they can earn a significant amount as temporary labour migrants. The short duration of stays abroad also help migrants tolerate harsher working conditions, as

they recognize that they will spend only a few months working abroad before returning to the comforts of home (Kaczmarczyk and Okólski, 2005: p. 19).

Young people are generally more likely to emigrate than the middle-aged and the elderly, who have already established themselves in the home community with a career, house and family; however, Romania has a larger average outflow of young people than many of the other new member states. The predominance of young Romanian migrants abroad can be partly explained by the unemployment rates among young people, which hover around twenty percent while the unemployment rate of the total population has stayed below ten percent throughout the 2000s (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2005: p. 9; Schreiner, 2008: p. 84). Unlike some other historic immigration waves (such as the Portuguese migrants to France during the dictatorship, or Turkish migration to Germany post-World War Two), Romanian migration is not dominated by men. By early 2000, Romanian women were also going abroad to pursue work in hospitals and elderly care, as waitresses, or as domestic workers (Stan, 2005: p. 8). Today, husbands and wives often migrate together and the vast majority of Romanian economic migrants are dependent on kinship migratory chains for their relocation needs (Weber, 2004: p. 66). The presence of entire families that have moved from Romania to Italy for work and study suggests that the temporary nature of contemporary Romanian migration may not be as 'temporary' as these families expect (Stan, 2005: p. 7). Conversely, husband and wife pairs can choose to migrate and leave their children in Romania under the supervision of relatives, friends or neighbours; although these children have adult supervision, the absence of parents is leading to an increase in behavioural problems among adolescents and placing an increasing number of Romanian children at risk according to the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights (Horváth, 2007: p. 7).

Romanian sociologist Dumitru Sandu notes the importance of migrant networks in influencing the individual's decision to migrate, and has demonstrated that villagers from areas with a high level of migration are more likely to follow their neighbours abroad (Sandu, 2005: p. 569). Stan's research also points to the importance of the Catholic Church in creating networks for migrants abroad, particularly by sending priests to areas with large populations of Romanian Catholic migrants to perform religious rites and provide a communication link with the home communities. These religious networks became less important as Romanians established themselves in various host countries, and eventually even Catholic villagers began to rely on family networks for support (Oteanu, 2007: p. 39; Stan, 2005: p. 9). The family is often an important source of loans to finance the initial move abroad, while friends or relatives who have already migrated are important sources for information concerning migration and frequently provide support upon an individual's arrival abroad (Anghel, 2008: p. 791). Alina Fleşer estimates that over one third of Romanian households have had at least one family member live abroad in the years since 1989, creating an effective network of migrants abroad and returned migrants with detailed knowledge of the host country (Fleşer, 2008: p. 197). Networks abroad can help migrants find jobs and housing, reducing many of the economic and social costs to migration, while maintaining strong connections to those at home can help migrants channel investments and prepare for return (Boswell and Ciobanu, 2009: p. 1349; Chiuri et al, 2007: p. 4). For students and workers moving through official channels, the need for migration

networks is much less than for those engaged in illegal work abroad, as the state or another organization often ensures they have work and housing. In the case of Italy, where much of the economy, housing market, and welfare system operate on an informal basis, the importance of networking can be relevant for migrants and natives alike; illegal temporary workers are by nature drawn to these more informal channels, and therefore have a greater need for networks in Italy (Baldwin-Edwards, 1999: p.2; Boswell and Ciobanu, 2009: p. 1360).

Physical evidence of a migrant's success abroad, particularly the impressive houses built upon return and the financial opportunities mentioned to others in the community, provide strong incentives to other potential migrants. The costs of migration and the dangers and discomforts experienced abroad are rarely discussed, helping to perpetuate the cycle of migration as members of the home community often find the financial benefits of migration outweigh any potential disadvantages they may encounter (Alexandru, 2007: p. 162; Penninx et al, 2006: p. 46). Christina Boswell and Oana Ciobanu note in their case study of the community of Borșa, Romania, that migrants who have left to pursue work in Italy are frequently seen as hard working and 'more serious' labourers than the villagers who remain behind (Boswell and Ciobanu, 2009: p. 1352). These numerous positive associations with migration have created a 'culture of migration' in Romania, as young people see work abroad as a rite of passage (Alexandru, 2007: p. 161; Kandel and Massey, 2002: p. 982). Differences between migrants and non-migrants in the village are visible both in the presence of these grandiose new villas and in the commercial opportunities available for the returnees, shifting the social relations of village life and further inspiring young people to migrate (Anghel, 2008: p. 796). However, these social and economic reasons for migration are rarely presented in public forums, and even with EU accession the stereotype of the Romanian migrant in many parts of the EU remains the thief or prostitute, engaging in illegal activities abroad.

Media Perceptions of Romanians

While the results of this study supported the hypothesis that Romanian migrants are generally perceived as 'outsiders' by the native Italian populations, Romania's entrance into the European Union in 2007 did not have the positive effect I had expected. Rather, the analysis seemed to indicate that although the illegal presence of Romanians in Italy was a point of concern, the idea of illegal entry was not. Over one-third of the articles sampled referred to the illegal status of Romanian migrants in Italy, while only four articles mentioned their method of entry – typically overland, in vans through the Austro-Italian frontier. With the lifting of the Schengen visa regime in 2002, allowing Romanians to travel freely through the European Union for a period of up to three months, the entry into Italy was no longer illegal; instead, the 'crime' committed by Romanians shifted to the duration of the stay and the illegal activities pursued in the host country. An article published on 10 May 2008 seems to confirm the perception of Romanians as 'outsiders' in the European Union, noting that the 'problem is that Romanians and Bulgarians can enter freely in our country because they come from member states like France, for

example.² This suggests that while movement across EU borders is acceptable practice for French citizens, extending the right to Romanians and Bulgarians creates problems in Italy.

This article continues by mentioning that European states may close their borders to other European citizens in the interest of public order and national security, confirming that by 2008 the view of Romanians as a threat to Italian society was a popular perception. Although the research cited above notes the importance of migration for economic purposes, the newspaper articles published consistently mention much more nefarious activities – drug smuggling, human trafficking, prostitution, and so on. Part of this can undoubtedly be attributed to the media's desire for scandalous stories to sell more papers, but this also suggests a connection between Romanians and criminality in the Italian print media. Early mention of Romanian crime in Italy often portrays Romanian women as victims of the Albanian and Italian mafia, trafficked into the country for prostitution or sex slavery. These articles employ words like 'nightmare' (*incubo*) and 'exploited' (*sfruttate*) to describe the lives of these trafficked women, and many of the earliest articles pointed to the fact that Albanian gangs were the ones primarily responsible for the suffering of Romanians in Italy. By 2007, the view that Romanians were also responsible for a great deal of crime in Italy became common. Although only one article prior to Romania's accession suggested the criminality of Romanians – a story of Romanian caretakers who drugged their patients so they could go out for the night, published on 4 August 2005 – five of the twelve articles published in 2007 (42%) mentioned Romanian crimes, while 2008 saw a decrease to four of sixteen (25%) and a slight increase in 2009 to two of six (33%). This is partially due to the heinous murder in 2007 of Giovanna Reggiani, who was raped and beaten into a coma as she walked through a transient settlement on the outskirts of Rome on her way home, and which became a topic for many newspaper articles in Italy and abroad. However, the furious Italian response – responsible for the deaths of four Romanian boys, numerous raids on migrant settlements, and violence against anyone appearing Romanian – was only covered in two articles (16.7%) in 2007. Further examples of Italian crime against Romanians were also rare in 2008 and 2009: two (12.5%) in 2008, and one (16.7%) in 2009. Although some editorials published in *La Repubblica* during this time deplored the racism of Italians, using terms like 'hunt' (*caccia*) to refer to the persecution of Romanians in the country, the absence of news articles discussing the anti-Romanian actions in Italy suggests that this behaviour, while not necessarily acceptable, is certainly tolerated by the Italian media.

Equating 'Romanian' with 'the other' is evident in other ways as well. Articles referring to Romanian immigration invariably include mention of other nationalities, particularly Albanians, Moroccans, Nigerians, Chinese, and Ukrainians along with other non-EU nationals from these regions. Three articles also mention Bulgarians, who became European Union citizens at the same time as Romanians, and three mention Poles, another highly-mobile population which acceded in 2004. This implies that Romanians share more similarities with these EU 'outsiders' than with other, more 'legitimate' groups such as the French or Germans whose presence in

² 'Ma il problema è superato dal fatto che i romeni e i bulgari possono entrare liberamente nel nostro Paese perché vi giungono da stati membri come, ad esempio, la Francia.' – 'Maroni, un piano anti-romeni: "Ridiscuteremo le regole Ue"' *La Repubblica*, 10 May 2008.

Italy is not questioned. Instead, associating Romanian immigration with the groups crossing the Mediterranean or Adriatic in boats and on rafts reinforces the perception that Romanians have no right to reside in Italy, despite its new EU member state status. However, in an interesting paradox, there were only five explicit mentions of Romanian cultural differences – instead the articles seemed to acknowledge that Romanians and Italians had many cultural traits in common (see below).

Perhaps the most important ethnic comparison, however, is the perpetual equation of ‘Romanian’ with ‘Roma’, a marginalized ethnic minority which faces discrimination in Romania as well as abroad. An editorial published on 16 May 2008 illustrates the ambiguities present in the terminology used by the Italian press: although there is great concern about high rates of criminality in the Roma population, there is no differentiation made between those ‘who have recently emigrated from Romania, or have been resident in Italy for centuries, or have been refugees from the ethnic cleansing in the Balkans.’³ Because Romania is home to large numbers of Roma citizens (who frequently face discrimination and persecution by ethnic Romanians), both ethnic Romanians and ethnic Roma are combined into one people in the Italian media. For example, while twelve articles discussed Romanian crime, almost an equivalent number of articles mentioned the Roma. Although only a few of these articles explicitly mentioned both Romanians and Roma engaged in criminal activities, the fact that Giovanna Reggiani’s murderer, called ‘Romanian’ in many of the articles, is ethnically Roma suggests a confusion of ethnicity and nationality. While it is certainly true that not all Roma are criminals, it is equally untrue that all Romanians are Roma, and this distinction is rarely made in the Italian press.

Despite concerns about increased crime and insecurity, the dangers of excluding Romania from the ‘insiders’ in Europe are evident in these articles. Fourteen of the fifty articles (28%) mentioned Romanian economic activities, and several presented assurances from both Romanian and Italian officials that the economic exchanges between the two countries are incredibly important, as is maintaining good relations. Statements from Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of Italy from 2006-2008, assured readers that Italians and Romanians were ‘brothers’⁴ and were linked by language, history, and friendship. This was followed by a public relations campaign from Bucharest, which sought to ‘show that Romanians are more than just those who end up as news items.’⁵ Stories of Romanian and Italian police cooperation to crack down on international crime, as well as warnings of the dangers to the thousands of Italian firms operating in Romania if relations between the two countries cooled, seemed to acknowledge the importance of cooperation between Italy and Romania despite the strongly anti-Romanian sentiments expressed. An increase in stories about Romanian economic activities – working in factories or in construction companies in Italy – after EU accession from two in 2007 to four

³ ‘...che siano di recente immigrazione dalla Romania, oppure residenti da secoli in Italia, o ancora profughe dalla pulizia etnica dei Balcani.’ – ‘Con la scusa del popolo,’ by Gad Lerner. *La Repubblica*, 16 May 2008

⁴ ‘popoli fratelli’ – ‘Sicurezza, Prodi alla tv di Bucarest: “Diamo a italiani certezza di legalità,”’ *La Repubblica*, 10 November 2007

⁵ ‘...per mostrare che i romeni non sono solo guelli che finiscono sulle pagine dei giornali per fatti di cronaca.’ – ‘“Noi romeni brava gente”: Bucarest compra spot,’ by Cristina Nadotti. *La Repubblica*, 25 September 2008

each in 2008 and 2009 – inspires the hope that Italians are adjusting to the presence of Romanians in their communities and are obtaining a more accurate view of these migrants as labourers rather than criminals. However, an editorial from 1 February 2009, published in the midst of the economic crisis, implies that although Romanians may no longer be viewed as a security threat, perhaps they will come to be seen as an economic threat. This could lead to new tensions between the two countries as Romania moves towards full freedom of movement in 2014, particularly if the Italian economy does not improve.

Conclusion

Currently Romania occupies the disadvantageous position of being legally an ‘insider’ in most aspects of EU law (with the notable exception in certain restrictions on freedom of movement) while remaining an ‘outsider’ in public opinion. The securitization of immigration in Italy has played a major part in establishing this role for Romanian citizens living and working in the country. Although most migrants are temporary seasonal workers in the construction or domestic care industries, newspaper articles from the past eleven years show a portrait of Romanians as kidnappers, prostitutes, thieves, and violent criminals. Romania’s increasing rights in the European Union, beginning in 2002 with visa-free travel through the Schengen space for up to three months, accession in 2007, and the promise of free movement of workers through all EU states by at least 2014 have not increased Italian acceptance of Romanians as ‘insiders’ but have actually seemed to confirm Romania’s ‘outsider’ status. Many columnists warn against the increasing xenophobia in Italy and urge citizens to embrace a multicultural Italy, and officials in both Romania and Italy stand by their commitment to a strong partnership between these two economically-linked countries.

An analysis of articles in *La Repubblica* from the first mention of Romanian immigrants in 1998 until the end of 2009 suggests that the initial spike in concern about Romanians in Italy occurred during the year of Romania’s accession and immediately following, but data from 2009 suggest it may in fact be decreasing. Future studies may be effective for ascertaining whether or not Romanians are gradually accepted as ‘insiders’ by Italians in the same way that any other European citizen would be, although it will also be interesting to see the media’s reaction once Italy opens its doors to Romanian workers in all sectors of the economy, some time before 2014. Collecting data from more newspaper sources representing a variety of political opinions would also be useful to cross-check the findings presented here. Although *La Repubblica* is a widely-read and well-respected newspaper, its centre-left leanings may present a more sympathetic portrait of Romanian migration than papers from the right. With data from those papers as well, the image of Romanians as ‘outsiders’ within Europe may gain more depth and clarity.

We can only speculate as to whether or not Romanians will eventually be perceived as ‘insiders’, and studies conducted several years beyond accession may be more conclusive on this subject. For now, only three years after Romania entered the European Union, migrants from this country are still viewed as ‘outsiders’ in Italy.

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