To answer the question what has changed in the last 10 years it is important to give a view of the situation of 10 years ago. The Italian mafia has a business model where they deal in a lot of different crime based activities. A mafia organisation can be defined as an organisation that, a: uses violence to extort people and have power over them, b: have a family type structure bound by secrecy, and c: have a strict hierarchal structure, (Calderoni, 2011). One of the activities is the smuggling and trafficking of people to and through Europe. Because geographically Italy is close to Africa and a lot of the refugees, both political and economic, are coming from Africa, it is logical that the refugees travel to Italy. For the Italian mafia this is an opportunity to make money and gain power.

First we will take a look into the financial situation in these dealings. When looking at the total profit made of the trafficking of human beings, it was estimated in 2005 that the total at that moment was around 32 billion dollars every year (Belser, 2005). This is the money made through the forced labour of these trafficked individuals. This gives an order of degree of how much money the smugglers and traffickers make on the movement of these people. This proves that it is a lucrative business for those that do not shun criminal activities. Since the mafia is one of those organizations, it is more than logical that they are part of the human smuggling and trafficking going on in Europe. To zoom further into the revenues made by the Italian mafia in these deals, we will consider the total revenues made by different mafia organizations. According to a research done by the Confesercenti (Wise, 2008) the combined mafia organizations in Italy make an estimated profit of around 90 billion dollars in a year. Their main business is drug trafficking, followed by environmental offenses (for example the disposal of waste), loan sharking and extortion. This means that smuggling and trafficking of people was definitely not one of their main ways of income. However there is evidence of their involvement in the smuggling of human beings even more than 10 years ago (Cilluffo & Salmoiraghi, 1999). Pinpointing the money gained through these dealings is an impossible task due to the secretive nature of the mafia.

Besides the financial part of the smuggling, the scale and spread of these dealings is also an interesting subject. It is known that there has been deals between the Nigerian and Italian mafia concerning the trafficking of humans (Cole & Booth, 2004). Their Nigerian counterpart deals with a big part of the human trafficking within Africa and towards Italy and Great Britain. Besides the cooperation with the Nigerian mafia they also have a connection to the Albanian mafia. The Albanian mafia traffics people who travelled from the Middle East through Turkey or Greece and try to gain access to the further developed countries in Western Europe. Besides these The main deals the Italian mafia has with both these other organizations, are concerning territory deals or trading. The Albanian mafia, which grew a lot after the conflicts in the region concerning Kosovo, has claimed some territories that were previously used by Italian mafia organisations, for that the Italian mafia receives payments, mainly from brothels. For the Albanian mafia, contrary to the Italian mafia, human trafficking is one of the bigger parts in their business (Cilluffo & Salmoiraghi, 1999). The relationship between the Italian mafia and the Albanian mafia could be viewed as a symbiotic one. The Albanian mafia gains ground and with that places to make money through prostitution. In return the Italian mafia receives money to allow them to use their territory for prostitution. Because they normally do not deal a lot in prostitution themselves (Paoli, 2004), this is very beneficial for the Italian mafia.

The motivations for crime organisations and as such for the Italian mafia to invest their time in the smuggling of refugees are basically money. But it might be interesting to look if the drivers behind these activities might also have changed over time. The drivers that might have contributed around 2007 towards these are both political and economic, besides that there are internal drivers working at the growth of the involvement of the Italian mafia in this smuggling and trafficking (Galeotti, 2004). An internal driver is the opportunities the Nigerian and Albanian mafia have given the Italians. These opportunities lead to easy ways to gain profit and besides that power. They have something to say in other organisations due to these deals. A political driver is the strengthened immigration laws in Europe that have been created in the nineties and keep getting more strict. Due to these laws it is harder for people to get to Europe in a lawful way. Because of that criminal organisations see ways to get money out of the refugees that do not have a fully legitimate reason to get to Europe. In that same manner the economic drivers are mainly those of the refugees. The refugees live in poor circumstances due to either war or living in a less developed country. They want a better life for themselves or to be more direct more wealth. This wealth is promised by the smugglers to the refugees.

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