**How has the involvement of the Italian mafia organizations in the smuggling of African and Middle Eastern refugees in to Europa changed over the last 10 years?**

Over the years the migration to Europe has become a real problem.

That there are a lot of refugees today in Europa will every one know, but how can it be, that there are so many refugees, and where are they all coming from?

According to the BBC[[1]](#footnote-1), has the conflict in Syria being the biggest driver for migration to Europe. The violence in the middle east today ensures that many people want a safe life, what they can find in Europe.

The most refugees go to Germany, Germany received more than 476000 Refugees so far.

But the question is: How do the Refugees get to Europe?

A lot of Middle Eastern refugees come with a boat1 to the coast of Greece or Italy, they are risking there one life, to have a better life in Europe. For this countries the immigration is a real problem, they are the first ones that come in contact with the refugees. For example:

‘Italy on track to surpass Greece in refugee arrivals for 2016, with nearly 160.000 arrivals so far in 2016, Italy had received almost the same number of refugees as Greece this year, and by year’s end it may surpass Greece as Europe’s new focal point for refugee flows, according to recent statistics from the United Nations High commissioner on Refugees.’[[2]](#footnote-2)

As above described Italy is a country that seems to have problems with the arrival from a lot of refugees. Beside the problem of Refugees these days, Italy have more problems. The famous mafia from the south of Italy, origin from Sicily are still active.

With the smuggling of refugees a lot of money is being generated, but what are the influence of the mafia in the South of Italy in the smuggling of refugees? Is there a bigger influence from the mafia in the smuggling of refugees because the amount of refugees increased? We will do research to the situation 10 years ago, and to the situation these days.

**What was the situation around refugees 10 years ago, and had the Italian mafia any influence?**

**What is the situation around refugees today, and what is the influence from the mafia?**

According to a research from the UN Refugee agency in 2005 there were 37.5 million refugees, but in 2016 the number of refugees increased to 65.6 million.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Today a lot of refugees travel to Europe by boat, often to the south of Italy.

Because of the increase of refugees true the years, and the money that the refugees are paying for a boat trip, criminals are interested to help the refugees to travel Europe.

But in first of all the question is, is the travel from the refugees today, and the help they get from criminals, human trafficking or human smuggling?

Human Smuggling is the illegal import/export of person from one country to another, it is a open business to all with appropriate connections, courage and opportunities. So people pay for the service to get illegal to another place.

Human Trafficking in related to the transport of a person with beyond the national frontiers, whose end goal is extract labour or services with the use of violence.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The difference between these two is that human trafficking has direct victims and smuggling do not. In first place the most refugees pay for a illegal boat trip, and there is no direct victim, because the smuggler gets his money and the refugee his service.

However, there has been a change in the past years. We will see that criminal organisations traffic also ‘refugees’, to let them work for them in other countries.

Boat trips are often organised by smugglers, who tries to make money without much preparations. They buy a cheap boat, where they get as much refugees as possible on, so they have a lot of profit on a trip. Some mafia in Sicily have also influence in boat trips[[5]](#footnote-5), they are trying to get them on the land of Sicily, so they can smuggle them further to the North of Europe. Without much effort, the mafia can use the problem of the refugees, to get a lot of money.

But the South-Italian mafia find out that there are more ways to earn money from refugees.

The South-Italian mafia, the Cosa Nostra, have found ways to integrate migrants into mafia-related criminal enterprises in Sicily.[[6]](#footnote-6) In 2015 and 2016 there went 400.000 migrants to Sicily, this was a great opportunity for the Cosa Nostra. The Cosa Nostra build camps for refugees on Sicily, they did this with cooperation from bribed officials and secured contracts.

They pay the officials a good amount of money, what they easily can, because they get an amount of 37.50 per refugee per day, for housing them. The influence of the Cosa Nostra Grows this way, and they will earn a lot of money from the Government. The Italian government pays for the refugee camps, because the refugees are mostly to poor to pay it by them self, after the long and expensive trip.

The Cosa Nostra is very interested in this business and they tried to build as much as possible, to earn as much as possible.

That the refugee camps are a real business we can see because the Cosa Nostra has bribed not only officials for the build of refugee camps but also bribed officials to let them buy products from the mafia owned companies. The companies are normal companies who develop products for the refugee camps, the only difference with the other companies is that these companies sell the products for a lower price than the other services. The Government will buy the products from the cheapest companies, so they are under there budget, which means that the mafia will earn a lot of money.

The Cos Nostra also tries to win refugees for themselves, so they can put them into there own illegal companies. An example is that the criminals (in this way Nigerian gangs) put young and poor Nigerian woman on a boat trip. This boat trip is organised by the Nigerian gang and the Cosa Nostra and is under authority from the Cosa Nostra. When they arrive in Italy they will tell the woman’s that have to pay for there boat trip organised by the Cosa Nostra and that they have to work in the prostitution companies from the Cosa Nostra. The Nigerian woman can’t do anything about it because they arrived in a country where they have never been before, and there is no way back, to pay the trip they will have to go in the prostitution.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Another example is that they let Nigerian male refugees work for them and involve them to there company and there crimes, often before they have a legal status, and offer them protection. These protection is not for nothing, they have the permission to sell drugs like marihuana in the streets, and have to give the biggest part to the mafia boss.

The above described problems, let us see that there was and is always human smuggling. In the situation nowadays, people have to leave there country, and they see one only option and that is risking there live, to live hopefully a safer live. But times changes and criminal organisations, seeing money in the refugee problems nowadays. So there is a switch from human smuggling to human trafficking. People are forced by criminal organisations to cross the Mediterranean, so they can work for them and make a lot of money for the gangs.

1. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/02/italy-on-track-to-surpass-greece-in-refugee-arrivals-for-2016/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2015/6/558193896/worldwide-displacement-hits-all-time-high-war-persecution-increase.html [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/refugee-crisis-a-multibillion-dollar-honeypot-for-italian-mafia/article27186445/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com& [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/community/2017/08/01/the-real-migrant-crime-wave-mafia-exploitation-of-migrants-in-sicily [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. http://www.newsweek.com/mafia-nigeria-migration-sex-work-trafficking-629627 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)