



Media Summary

The Italian National Council for Economics and Labour (CNEL) and the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) present the second edition of the “Report on Equitable and Sustainable Wellbeing” (BES 2014) analysing the fundamental dimensions of wellbeing and progress in Italy and its territories. With its continued work BES seeks to become a reference point for citizens, for civil society, media and politicians, providing an overall view of the main social, economic and environmental phenomena which characterise our country.

The proposed framework for the analysis is the result of extensive work conducted between 2011 and 2013 by representatives of civil society and associations working together in the Steering Committee, and by the scientific community in the Scientific Commission. Over the years citizens were asked for suggestions and observations through a survey with opinions gathered *en situ* and during dozens of regional meetings. Dialogue with citizens did not end after the presentation of the first report: over 100 public meetings have been held, during which it has been continued to collect criticisms, comments and suggestions in order to further refine the indicators which have been proposed, and their analysis.

The BES2014 report is based on the analysis of the 12 dimensions of wellbeing in Italy, using 134 indicators. Reading these together enables us to understand where our country is heading, identify critical points, possibilities, and the positive dynamics in play. Each chapter presents an analysis of the evolution of the data and details variations within the country's different regions. In this way it shows both if wellbeing is increasing or decreasing and also if inequality is increasing or decreasing. Differences are systematically categorised according to gender, age and geographical origin. The level of detail of the information in each section allows an analysis of the changes in quality of life in Italy focussing on 12 different aspects.

The creation of BES has provided an opportunity to improve statistical information. Numerous indicators have been refined, some have been taken into account for the first time in years (the index of physical condition and the index of psychological condition on the health front), others have returned to annual samples (the potential support network, sense of security felt by citizens), and others have been newly introduced (feeling of job security and job satisfaction). All this serves to guarantee the production of common indicators which allow an understanding of the evolution of the status of wellbeing in our country.

HEALTH

Physical health conditions improve, but inequality persists

The indicators in the health section have been created with three fundamental dimensions in mind: health conditions, the main causes of death in the various stages of life and lifestyle factors creating a risk to health.

Italy boasts **improving health conditions** and life expectancy levels which are amongst the highest in the world (79.6 years for men and 84.4 for women). This represents one of the most positive results of the trend of wellbeing in the population, and is a very important asset we must defend. Life expectancy for those in good health bears witness to the improvement in health conditions for Italians: between 2009 and 2012 the average number of years lived in good health increased by 2.1 years for men and 2.2 years for women.

Improvements have also emerged for some of the mortality indicators. Child mortality has declined in recent years, falling from 34.2 deaths per 10,000 live births in 2009 to 30.9 in 2011. Deaths caused by tumours amongst adults continue to decline (9.9 deaths per 10,000 inhabitants in 2006; 9.1 in 2011). At the same time, it appears that the growing trend in deaths caused by dementia and diseases of the nervous system has abated, despite the increased ageing of the population. On the other hand, the positive trend in reduction of vehicle-related deaths has come to a stop.

In 2012 **psychological wellbeing fell**. The psychological condition index rose from an average of 49.8 in 2005 to 49 in 2012, with – above all – a worsening for adults and young men (for 18 to 24 year old men, the index fell from 53.4 to 51.7).

Many types of behaviour which constitute health risks continue to be widespread. The **number of overweight people** shows no sign of decline – in 2013, 44.1% of people aged 18 and over were overweight or obese – and the same applies **to lack of exercise** which continues to affect a similar portion of the population (41.3% of people aged 14 and over). The **consumption of fruit and vegetables**, however, is still below the recommended level.

The figures for **regular smokers** and **overconsumption of alcohol** continue along the **declining trend** of recent years. The number of smokers fell from 23.3% in 2010 to 21.3% in 2013, while the number of people who show at least one risk factor in alcohol consumption fell from 16.7% in 2010 to 13.8% in 2013.

Regional and social inequality persists. In the South and the Islands, people have shorter average lifespans and live longer in worse health conditions or with restrictions on their everyday lives. Also, many of the risk-bearing types of behaviour are more apparent amongst people of low social background.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Training slightly increasing, but the number of NEETs grows and there is less participation in cultural affairs

This section looks at four aspects: formal education, continuing education, levels of competence and participation in cultural affairs. These illustrate the main changes.

Between 2011 and 2013 nearly all educational training indicators improved, but the growth is slow and too small to bridge the substantial gap which separates Italy from the rest of Europe. In 2013, 58.2% of 25-64 year olds had at least a high-school diploma, compared with a European average of 74.9%; the percentage of people aged 30-34 who have been awarded a university degree is only 22.4%, while the European average is 40%.

Moreover there are still very significant critical points. The number of **youths who neither study nor work (NEET) continues to grow**, as it has throughout the years of financial crisis, above all in the South and the Islands where in many regions more than a third of young people are in this situation. The percentage of NEETs, which was 23.9% in 2012, reached 26% in 2013, over six percentage points higher than before the recession.

The index of cultural participation continues its downward trend – from 27.9% in 2012 to 25.9% in 2013 – while significant internal differences continue to exist which, in some cases, tend to become even more pronounced, above all on a regional and gender basis.

Men, residents in the South and the Island area and young people from lower social backgrounds are the most heavily penalised. **The Southern regions and the Islands are strongly behind on various levels of competence**, both on literacy, numeracy and IT competence. OECD data draws an alarming picture, with only a third of Italians between 16 and 65 reaching an acceptable level of literacy and another third at a level so low that they are incapable of summarising a piece of written information.

WORK AND LIFE BALANCE

Employment levels fall, the quality of work declines and regional inequality increases

Moving from the quantitative analysis of employment levels to the subjective assessment of job satisfaction, the section covers four aspects: participation and social inclusion, quality of work, work-life balance, job security and job satisfaction.

The worsening of the economic crisis has entailed a **serious reduction in the use of labour in the country** and an increase in regional and generational inequalities.

The gap which separates Italian and European (EU27) levels of employment and rates of non-participation, which was already high, has further increased in the last two years. In 2013 the employment level was 59.8%, while in the EU27 it is 68.5%.

A large part of the **indicators of work quality show a worrying worsening** in workers' conditions. Job instability is still widespread; the incidence of people working long-term on short-term contracts is linked to an ongoing decreasing tendency in converting short-term contracts to stable employment, above all for young people. The presence of workers with an educational qualification superior to that required by the work has increased (22.1% of those in work in 2013), while the percentage of workers with low or irregular wages stayed roughly unchanged.

Most of those in work, while not fearing losing their jobs, say that it would be difficult to find a similar job if they were to lose it (78.8%).

Nevertheless **job satisfaction is reasonably high**, even though in 2013 it fell because of issues linked to pay and job stability, in particular amongst men.

The economic crisis has led to increasing regional, generational and nationality inequalities, both in terms of entering the workforce, and also in relation to the various facets of the quality of work. Because of the worsening of the work indicators, which is felt most by men, **the gender gap continues to close**. The gender gap for non-participation has gone from 11 points in 2008 to less than eight points in 2013, but still far surpassing the European average; indeed, amongst the sectors which are most affected by the crisis are building and manufacturing in which more men are employed.

Italy is characterised in Europe by the significant exclusion of young people from the labour market, and the South and the Islands shows a marked incidence of workers in irregular employment situations (in 2012 it was 19.1%, compared with the 10.5% national average). Furthermore it is the young people and workers from the South and the Islands who are the least satisfied with various aspects of work, even though, in 2013, following the worsening in the satisfaction figures for adults and workers in the regions of the North, the divide has narrowed. **The satisfaction level is very low amongst women whose work has been forcibly reduced to part-time**, the number of which has increased significantly during the crisis.

The quality of work is also strongly linked to the difficulty of balancing work and life. Although the non-symmetrical nature of work within families is gradually reducing, the **difficulties of maintaining a balance can be seen with greater intensity when there are small children involved**, as shown by the recent growth in the gap between the employment levels of mothers of

children in pre-school age and that of women without children (in 2013 the respective levels for women aged 25-49 were 54.6% and 72.6%), above all in the South and the Islands (36.8% vs. 52.8%).

ECONOMIC WELLBEING

The economic conditions of families are not improving, despite positive, albeit weak, signs seen in 2013

The indicators of the economic wellbeing domain were developed with two fundamental issues in mind: disposable income and wealth; consumer spending and material living conditions.

Italians continue to have **one of the highest net real wealth figures in Europe**, largely a consequence of widespread home ownership. However, the intensity and duration of the economic crisis has both reduced the value of this wealth and also increased economic inequality, poverty and material deprivation.

In 2012, **net total wealth fell 2.9% in real terms compared with the previous year**. This fall can be attributed in large part to the drop in the value of property. Also, in the five years of crisis income per person, in real terms, has fallen in the Centre-North (down 4% in the North and down 2.9% in the Centre) and stayed practically the same in the South and Islands area (up 0,1%) but still at only 65% of that in the northern regions.

With the persisting of the crisis, the effectiveness of available protection systems – the social security cushion and family support – has progressively weakened. In 2012, economic difficulties faced by families worsened: the fall in real disposable income and in real net total wealth led to a decrease in consumer spending and an **increase in poverty indicators**, above all absolute poverty and deprivation.

The indicator of absolute poverty, based on consumer spending in 2012, shows an increase of as much as 2.3 percentage points: the **percentage of people who live in families in absolute poverty** has gone from 5.7% to 8% and has increased in all geographical areas, from 4% to 6.4% in the North, from 4.1% to 5.7% in the Centre, from 8.8% to 11.3% in the South and the Islands. The increase is fairly generalised but particularly affects larger families, those with three or more children, especially if they are still minors, single-parent families or those with additional dependents.

The **indicator of severe deprivation**, which was at 11.1% in 2011 (up 4.2 percentage points from 2010), reached 14.5% in 2012 but **showed an improvement in 2013**, falling to 12.5%, because of the decrease in the percentage of people in families which state they cannot pay unforeseen expenses, afford a nutritional meal every two days or adequately heat their home.

In 2013 **the tendency to save increased (12.8%) and it appears that resorting to debt had slightly decreased (around 5%)**. Families have thus reduced their consumption, in order to save or avoid or reduce debt.

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

More use is made of support networks, but social participation is falling and trust in other people is still low

The indicators put forward for the social relationships domain are grouped according to a three-sector plan. They are the drivers of the wellbeing of individuals, families and social groups in specific local and national contexts: civil society, social economy, and family.

Informal networks, and in particular family networks, provide fundamental support throughout life, not just for the most vulnerable people. The role of solidarity networks is also crucial to stand up to the effects of the crisis: in 2013 **the percentage of people who say they can count on family members, friends or neighbours increased** from 76% in 2009 to 80.8% in 2013.

At the same time, the **satisfaction derived from family relationships and friendships has decreased and the level of social participation has reduced** compared with the previous year. The percentage of the population which is very satisfied with family relationships fell from 36.8% in 2012 to 33.4% in 2013; the percentage which is very satisfied with relationships with friends fell from 26.6% to 23.7%.

The 2011 census data on non-profit institutions show the significant presence of these organisations, even though there are significant geographical divergences. On average, there are **50.7 non-profit institutions for every 10.000 people**, with 57.8 institutions in the North and 55.8 in the Centre, the figure falling to 38.5 in the South and the Islands.

The percentage of people who participate in volunteer activity is stable, after the growth recorded previously. In 2013, the percentage of the population that said they had undertaken unpaid work for associations or groups of volunteers was 9.4%. Voluntary work was most widespread in the North (12.1%), less in the Centre and in the South and Islands (9% and 6.1% respectively). The work of associations and volunteers thus continues to be least relevant in the areas where the needs are greatest, like in the South and the Islands.

A feeling of deep caution and mistrust of other people continues to characterise the population. In 2013 only 20.9% of people aged 14 and over thought that most people were trustworthy. **Italy is one of the OECD countries with the lowest levels of trust in other people.** The lowest levels are recorded in the South and the Islands (17.2%), with the most critical levels in all the indicators relating to social relations.

POLITICS AND INSTITUTIONS

More women and young people in economic and political decision-making positions, the average age of parliamentarians falls, distrust of institutions remains high

The indicators which are examined in this section refer to the institutional area of the State as a driver of wellbeing, broken down into the following aspects: civic and political participation; distrust of the institutions; the presence of women and young people in decision-making positions.

The presence of women and young people in the houses of Parliament and in the most important decision-making positions of the public sphere has increased. One parliamentarian in every three is a woman (31.3% of parliamentary deputies are women, and 29.8% of senators), one senator in four is under 50 and one deputy in four is under 40. Women who are elected are, on average, younger than the men: more than half of elected women (58.1%) is under 50, compared with 41.3% of elected men. Also, one man in five is 60 or over, as against one woman in ten.

The presence of women in regional government and in quoted companies has grown, reaching 15.1% and 17.8% of board members respectively. There are still some grey areas in some institutions, where the presence of women has fallen because of posts lost by women who have not been replaced.

Political participation has also grown through people seeking information and exchanging opinions on the subjects of civil and political life, especially in central Italy. In 2013, 68.6% of people aged 14 and over took part in civil and political life. The number of people who talk about politics increased from 40.1% to 48.9%, and who look for information on politics at least once a week, from 61.5% to 64.3%; but Internet participation has declined. Even though it is men who are the most interested and who take most part in these aspects of citizenship, women are more active than in the past, reducing the gap with men. Women active in this kind of activity went from 60% to 62.2%, while men showed an increase of less than a percentage point (from 74.7% to 75.3%).

Mistrust in political parties, Parliament, regional, provincial and municipal government and the justice system remains high. This is a transversal phenomenon from all segments of the population, all areas of the country and all social classes. The only trust reported by citizens which reaches and passes levels of sufficiency is that held in the Fire Brigade and in the law enforcement bodies, which as a whole reach an average of 7.2, as a combination of the trust felt in the Fire Brigade (7.9) and that in the law enforcement organisations (6.4).

The low level of trust in the institutions is also reflected in the **significant reduction in voting levels:** the percentage of people who voted at the last elections to the European Parliament was 58.7% (66.5% in 2009).

SECURITY

Fewer murders but an increase in theft and armed robbery

A number of different factors have been considered in relation to this section, from criminality to physical and sexual violence experienced inside and outside the home, to fear of criminality.

In recent years, **there has been an increase in the number of crimes against property**, in part as a consequence of the recession, **while the number of murders continues to decline** as proven by the number of official complaints made by citizens to law enforcement bodies and from investigative work conducted by police forces.

Crimes from which economic gain can be derived (theft, armed robbery, fraud, extortion, drug trafficking, usury, possession of stolen goods, etc.) have both increased since 2010, while non-economic crimes have decreased, with the exception of an increase in reported injuries and threats in 2011 and 2012.

Amongst reported crimes it was particularly **burglaries** which **surged ahead in 2012**, with an increase of nearly 40% compared with 2010. The increase affects all areas: 61% more in the two-year period in the North-East, 42% in the South and the Islands area (with a spike of 52% in the Islands), 31% in the Centre and 30% in the North-West.

Official reports of pickpocketing and bag-snatching are also growing, by 40.5% and 28.6% respectively. Compared with 2010, the former increased throughout the country, with levels between 52.9% in the North-West and 28.4% in the Centre. For bag-snatching, however, there were significant increases recorded in the North-East (39.8%) and in the Islands (20.3%) and while figures for the South and the Islands were broadly unchanged (-1,3%). In 2012 there was also an increase in frauds and technological crime (21.2%). On the other hand, vehicle thefts have not changed notably.

Violent robberies once again continue to rise since 2011, reaching 42,631 in 2012. Above all there has been an increase in the number of violent robberies in homes (up 22.1% from 2011 to 2012 and up 65.8% from 2010), violent robberies on the road (up 25.7% from 2010) and robberies in businesses (up 20.7% from 2010), while the trend for bank robberies is still downward (-5%). In this case again the Islands and the North-East show the largest increase, especially in violent robberies at home (up 88.4% and 69.7% respectively) and in those on the road (up 37.3% and 41.2% respectively). **But the number of murders has fallen further**, although only murders between men; murders of women remained basically stable, with the end result that, as a total of the number of victims, the percentage of female victims has increased and the percentage of male victims decreased.

From 2011 the **feeling of security has also declined**, above all for women, and families report an increasing feeling of the risk in the area in which they live. 55% of people feel very or fairly secure to go out alone in the dark; this figure was 59% in 2010 and 60.8% in 2011.

SUBJECTIVE WELBEING

Levels of life satisfaction are stable, but falling amongst young people and in the North

The concept of subjective wellbeing is determined by a cognitive dimension and an emotional one, but the indicators used in the BES only refer to the cognitive component.

The satisfaction of citizens with regards to life as a whole continued to be relatively high. However, the prolonged difficult economic and social situation has worsened the perception for some groups of people.

In 2013, after the heavy fall recorded in 2012, the percentage of people who describe themselves as very satisfied in their lives, with a score between 8 and 10, is largely unchanged (35%). But it is by no means a small number who select scores showing a situation in further decline; it is a phenomenon which generally affects precisely those who used to show the highest levels of satisfaction. It is the case of young people aged 20-24, amongst whom the satisfaction indicator fell from 37% in 2012 to 32.5% in 2013 (in 2012 it had already fallen 10 percentage points compared with the 45.8% of the previous year). The same trend can also be seen amongst graduates (the satisfaction indicator fell from 43.4% in 2012 to 41.7% in 2013) and amongst residents in the North (the indicator fell from 40.6% to 39.5% after more than 8 points lost in 2012). In the North, moreover, the percentage of those who look to the future with optimism fell (from 27.1% in 2012 to 25.6% in 2013), compared with a broadly unchanged situation seen, on average, in the country as a whole.

Compared with fairly stable levels of satisfaction in one's own life and expectations for the future, **satisfaction in free time has shown a fall pretty much in the whole country.** The percentage of people who say they are very or quite satisfied with their free time fell from 65.9% in 2012 to 63% in 2013. The fall was most marked amongst the elderly in the Centre-North. Women again show themselves to be less satisfied than men (61.2% against 65%), with differences that became greater from the age of 45 onwards. Also, the differences between social classes tend to grow with respect to satisfaction derived from free time, to the disadvantage of people with lower educational qualifications, factory workers, the unemployed and the retired.

LANDSCAPE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

A priority which has not been recognised

The indicators on the subject of landscape and cultural heritage were developed focussing on the following aspects: urban landscape; rural landscape; perception of the quality of the people's surroundings.

Cultural heritage, of which landscape can be considered an integral part, is the product of a process of accumulation and stratification which is measured on a generational time scale. As a consequence, of the 12 dimensions of individual wellbeing identified by the BES Project, this is one of the least sensitive to change in the short term, particularly in its structural component (indicators on the presence of cultural goods, of green areas, of historic urban and rural landscape).

Italy has an extraordinary heritage of culture and landscape, which it does not protect adequately, nor does it make the most of, again proving to be one of the least generous countries in Europe in the financing of culture.

The last agricultural census gave positive signs, showing for the first time in forty years a **distinct slowing in utilised agricultural area (UAA)**, a necessary – albeit insufficient – condition for the conservation of rural environments. Between 2000 and 2010 the overall UAA was reduced by 2.5% (-0.3 million hectares, which in absolute terms is equivalent to the area of the Valle d'Aosta region), while in the previous decade there had been a reduction of 12.3%, the equivalent of a loss of 1.8 million hectares (more or less the area of the Veneto region).

Data on building work confirms a **reduction in new constructions** – because of the economic crisis among other reasons. By feeding the process of urbanisation, new buildings can be seen as one of the main factors of the unsustainability of the Italian development model, especially because of the forms and scope of the last decades. However, **the index of illegal building**, which in the North had dropped to 3.2 illegal buildings per 100 legal ones in 2008, **has risen**, in 2013, to 5.3. In the South and the Islands the proportion of illegal dwellings, which varied between 20% and 25% of legal ones before 2008, has recently risen beyond 35%. So the crisis has had greater impact on legal construction work than on illegal building, especially in the South and the Islands.

THE ENVIRONMENT

A green future with renewable energy, but levels of pollution which should be closely monitored

The environmental section focusses on six topics which are important to collective wellbeing: water quality; air quality; soil and land quality; biodiversity; a subjective evaluation of the quality of the natural environment; raw materials, energy and climate change.

The environment, and possible changes to it, have both an immediate and medium to long-term impact on people's existence. For our wellbeing we require the possibility to enjoy a well-preserved environment which has not been damaged, which is pleasant, has plenty of green space, which provides people with the opportunity to spend time surrounded by nature, to breathe air that is not polluted, to walk in parks in one's own city. These are all elements on which quality of life depends directly.

Italy has an extraordinary wealth of environmental, natural and landscape beauty, and the link between wellbeing and environment is particularly clear. Pushed by EU rules, **our country has taken a number of steps forward in protecting the environment.** But still the indicators taken as references show that Italy still suffers from obvious difficulties, owing in large part to the lack of harmonisation of local governance systems and to the lack of continuity in policy management.

Over the past year contradictory signals have emerged. **There has been an improvement, albeit a small one, in air quality.** The number of localities where air quality has been reported as a threat to human health, with levels of PM10 particles over the limit for more than 35 days a year, has fallen (from 59 to 52).

The availability of urban green space in provincial capitals has grown, albeit by only a little. The increase was around 0.5% from 2011 to 2012, while protected green areas are basically stable. The production of electric energy from renewable sources continues to increase, which increasingly satisfies the overall internal consumption of electricity, putting Italy above the European average.

In 2012, the percentage of the overall internal consumption of **electrical energy generated by renewable sources** was 26.9% and **shows a continual increase**, by 3.1 percentage points, compared with the previous year. Again in 2012, there was a fall in the consumption of internal raw material (the total internal consumption of raw materials is 30% lower than in 2006) and the emission of greenhouse gases (from 10.11 to 8.30 tons of CO₂-equivalent per head between 2003 and 2011). However these reductions are partly the result of the significant reduction in production caused by the economic crisis and the slowdown in work.

Some critical points emerge in the cleaning-up of contaminated sites and in the waste of drinking water from municipal public networks. Despite environmental information campaigns, there seems to be little improvement in the level of knowledge of citizens as to the importance of bio-diversity over time, an issue for which there is more awareness among young people than among adults. The percentage of people who feel that the extinction of animal and plant species is amongst the five most important environmental concerns was 16.5% in 2013 and rose to 24.6% amongst 14-19 year olds.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Research and development's share of GDP drops, regional differences grow

The indicators on research and development focus on two issues: the creation of knowledge; the application and sharing of knowledge.

The share of GDP devoted to research and development in Italy is dropping, increasing our lag behind the rest of Europe. Comparing the national expenditure with that of the main European countries, the Italian contribution to the European total falls from 7.9% in 2010 to 7.6% in 2011. 2011 saw a 6.1% drop in applications for patents and our country's patent capacity worsening compared to the European. **The gap between the North and other regions is growing.** In nearly all the northern regions expenditure on research and development is increasing and two thirds of patents stem from the North.

In Italy the financial weight of the high technology sector is among the lowest in Europe and the consequences are worrying. These sectors are characterised by a greater tendency towards innovation, research and development. They are an important financial growth factor and of increase in productivity of the system and can directly contribute to improving the quality of life of citizens. Italy does however have stronger signs of holding than Spain or France. The share of industrial research in the total is low despite a slight increase since the previous year.

As to the diffusion of technological knowledge, the **use of internet** is spreading (from 52.6% in 2012 to 56% in 2013) **but not fast enough to reduce the gap with the rest of Europe** (in 2013 the average in Europe was 72%). The technological gap sees the South and the Islands area, the elderly, women and lower status people at a disadvantage, but social differences are diminishing.

QUALITY OF SERVICES

Darkness and light in public services

The indicators focus on three main areas of services: welfare services (social and health services); public utilities (energy, water and waste management); mobility.

The indicators on the quality of services available in Italy show areas of darkness and light with improvement in some fields but also some less positive situations. There are important and widespread regional differences which translate into a substantial variance with European averages. The most preoccupying issue is the recent negative turn in accessibility of child care.

In 2011, after five years of improvement, we see a **reduction in the percentage of children in public or publicly funded child care**. The percentage, which rose from 11.2% in 2005 to 14% in 2010, drops to 13.5% in 2011. The availability of places in residential centres has also dropped, from 7.1% in 2009 to 6.5% in 2011, while the use of Integrated Home Care remained roughly unchanged with 4 in each 100 elderly people receiving assistance.

All social and health care services have **big differences between the Centre-North and the South and the Islands**: the gap is particularly wide in the case of crèches, with 18% of babies aged 0-2 in the Centre-North having places compared to only 5% in the South and the Islands; Integrated Home Care varies from 5% in the North to 3% in the South and the Islands; there are 10 places in residential care centres for every 1000 residents in the North compared to only three in the South and the Islands.

The financial difficulties of the municipalities has had an effect on local public transport, with a generalised reduction in service, especially in the central regions of Italy. The **overcrowding of prisons remains at alarming levels**; despite a reduction in the number of prisoners and an increase in places, there are 131.1 prisoners for every 100 places (139.7 in 2012).

There are **gradual improvements** in the availability and functioning of **public utilities**. On average Italian citizens endure two unannounced electricity cuts a year, an improvement compared to 2011 in nearly all regions, and the number of families connected to mains gas has increased, reaching 78%. However in 2013 the number of families complaining about irregular water supply increased, reaching 9.9%, nearly 2.5 million families, especially in the South and the Islands.

Although Italy lags considerably behind the rest of Europe, **urban waste management continues to improve**, with more rubbish sorted (from 37.7 to 39.9%) and more taken directly to dumps (from 42.1% to 38.9%).