

Industry production essay



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Industry Production

The structure of industrial production and the service industries is

characterized by the prevalence of small force, 30% being small and medium-sized

companies (94% and 5.6% according to 100 workers) though (981 data), employing,

however, only 70% of the workforce, 30% being monopolized by large companies

(more than 100 workers) though these comprise only 0.4% of the total. This means

that companies are widely dispersed over the whole country, obviously with

significant location and concentration of industry, and more than half the

industrial companies operate at little more than workshop level, as is seen by

the small workforce in each production unit.

On the other hand, the small number of large companies is explained by increased

concentration, at that level also indicated by the high number of employees.

There is only a limited number of cooperative companies (food sector and the

transformation of agricultural products), while large companies tend to become

multinational. The presence of companies with foreign capital monopolizing specific commodity sectors (pharmaceuticals, photographic materials, electronics, cosmetics etc.) is far from rare.

One particular kind of development regards medium-sized companies, frequently

derivations of small family-run businesses with a specialized production, which

as a result of management flexibility have succeeded in reconverting production

and using technological innovations which, with increased competitiveness, enable

them to penetrate international markets, in this way contributing to the consolidation of the Italian image and presence throughout the world.

The Industrial Sectors

The steel and metalworking industries

The country's economic revival in the immediate postwar period was essentially

sustained by development and expansion of the basic industries, particularly the

steel industry, itself conditioned by the importation of raw materials such as ores, scrap iron and coal.

Membership of ECSC enabled the Italian steel industry, which had installed the

integral processing cycle, to attain extremely high levels of production thus satisfying increasingly greater domestic demand, such as that of the engineering

industry, as well as the export market. Following plant reconversion steel and

metal production is now stagnating due to the international economic situation

dominated by strong competition from Japanese industries and plastics, leading

to overproduction in the principal European countries.

The engineering industries

Mechanical engineering production is extremely varied and includes companies

such as shipbuilding, aerospace, carbuilding etc. with complex work cycles,

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together with the manufacturers of simple tools. Component manufacturing is also

well developed and closely allied to companies producing durable goods not easily classified in any one sector (for example, non-metallic materials used in

the car industry: rubber, glass, plastics etc).

In practice, mechanical engineering with its diversification and multiple relationships with other industries is considered the mainstay of the national productive system also in terms of the large workforce employed (over 2, 2 million according to the 1981 census, including small workshops). Apart from

cars and other vehicles, the most highly developed industries are tools, household appliances, electronic equipment, precision instruments etc. The industrial machinery sector is particularly active with extensive overseas markets, and includes components for complete process cycles.

The chemical industry

The chemical industry is closely linked to mining and quarrying and uses prevalently liquid (oil) and gaseous hydrocarbons (methane) from which an

immense range of materials is produced (rubber, plastics, synthetic resins, synthetic fibres, fertilizers et c.), apart from traditional utilization as heating fuel, engine fuel etc.).

Like the steel industry, the chemical industry has been going through a critical

period due to over-production and problems related to modernization of plant.

One serious additional condition is the need to resort to large-scale importation of raw materials for transformation, and consequent submission to fluctuating conditions on the international market.

The textile industry

Textiles are the oldest Italian industry, widespread throughout the former States on the peninsula and frequently linked to the rural community which provided plentiful low cost labour. In the postwar period, this sector faced a period of crisis caused primarily by the use of old machinery and inefficient working methods, though also by competition by foreign producers, particularly

in developing countries which were already raw material suppliers (cotton, wool, jute etc.).

In actual fact, the crisis in the textile industry has deeper roots in the progressive decay of some traditional related activities, such as silkworm breeding and the cultivation of hemp and flax. The utilization of artificial fibres derived from cellulose, and later of synthetics derived from hydrocarbons, together with renewal of production plant (mainly automated) and job reorganization, has enabled far higher levels of productivity to be reached, offset by a considerable decrease in the workforce and concentration of companies.

For its raw material supplies (synthetic fibres) and the utilization of the fabrics produced, the textile sector is closely allied (also by vertical merging of companies) to the chemical and garment manufacturing industries.

The latter, in particular, is still scattered over the country, in the form of small firms.

The food industry

Development of the food industry is a direct consequence of the expansion of

large urban centres and progressive industrialization. Strictly allied to the

primary sector (agriculture and livestock) it makes considerable use

nevertheless of imports, the result of insufficient national agricultural and

livestock production. A scattering of small artisan-type firms generally oriented

towards meeting local demand is now flanked by numbers of medium-sized companies

operating at a national level, using advanced systems of processing,

conservation and packaging, themselves flanking the pasta, wine and oil

producers, and other traditional companies. The food conservation industry

is in

a special position, connected with agriculture, livestock and fisheries.

Certain sectors of the economy such as wines, bakery products and confectionery,

are particularly renowned abroad. A number of big multinationals monopolize

supplies and are thus in a position to influence market conditions, while mass

distribution (super markets) is interdependent with certain food manufacturers,

while frozen and vacuum packed foodstuffs have helped to extend seasonal consumption, particularly of fresh fruit, vegetables and perishables.

Here is a chart showing the dramatic changes in Industry.

The Geological Substratum

Even if it is not very extensive, the Italian territory is distinguished by the considerable variety of its substratum rocks. The Alps are largely formed from

crystalline rocks (granites, gneisses, mica-schists, porphyries, etc.) but there are also sedimentary rocks (limestones, dolomites and sandstones) that are widespread in the eastern sector and the pre-Alpine belt. Sedimentary rocks are

also prevalent throughout the Apennines (limestones, dolomites, sandstones, clays, marls, etc.), including Sicily, and are found in Sardinia too, where crystalline and volcanic rocks predominate. There latter (formed from ancient

and recent lava and tufa) also appear in Sicily and along the peninsula's Tyrrhenian margin (where there is a considerable concentration of volcanic phenomena, in part still active) as well as in the Alps. Finally, the flat areas, including the great Po-Venetian Plain, are basically formed of mixed deposits that are mainly fluvial in origin (conglomerates, gravels, sands, clays). The great variety of rock types characterizing the Italian framework is mainly the result of a complex geological past, distinguished by marked environmental alternations – now marine, now continental – as well as frequent changes in climatic conditions. Furthermore, even if present mountain forms are considered

to be rather recent, Italy does contain extremely old rock formations. Some of

the metamorphic outcrops in the Alpine arc and in the Sardinian-Corsican and

Calabrian-Peloritan massifs were formed before the Palaeozoic era, that is more

than 600 million years ago, and therefore do not contain significant traces of organisms. During the Palaeozoic era (lasting from circa 570 to 230 million years

ago) the area now occupied by Italy was largely covered by a tropical sea (called Tethys by geologists) from which must have emerged some mountain folds,

as those of the Caledonian period, begun some 500 million years ago and whose

traces remain in southwestern Sardinia (Iglesiente and Sulcis). The next mountain building period, the Hercynian, occurred during the last 100 million years of the Palaeozoic era and was accompanied by considerable volcanic activity. This provoked the formation of the original nucleus of the Alpine chain together with the emergence of the Calabrian-Peloritan mountains (Aspromonte and Sila in Calabria and Peloritan in Sicily) and the Sardinian-Corsican massif. The volcanic activity of this period also affected the Alpine arc (porphyry effusions in the Adige Valley), as well as in the northern Apennines (Garfagnana and Apuan Alps) and Sardinia and Corsica. Following the Hercynian orogenesis, the mountains formed by it were subject to intense erosion.

Thus at the end of the Palaeozoic era there emerged from the waters of the Tethys (the extensive oceanic basin separating the Euro-Asiatic continental

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plate from the African) the remains of the palaeo-Alpine chain, part of the northern section of the peninsula – probably connected with the Sardinian-Corsican massif, and, further south, the other great island fold of the Calabrian-Peloritan massif. During the course of the succeeding Mesozoic era, lasting for over 160 million years, almost all the present area of Italy remained covered by a large marine basin on whose bottom (which varied considerably in depth) was deposited on different occasions material of various types. This was to produce, following a process of compaction and orogenesis, disparate rock formations: limestones, dolomites, sandstones, marls, etc. In particular, in the northeastern area there formed extensive coralline reefs from which the present Dolomites are derived. Towards the end of the Mesozoic era the progressive moving together of the African and European continental plates reduced their common marine space and caused a folding of their respective

margins and part of the bed of the Tethys. This was to produce the Alpine and

Apennine chains whose curvature reflects the anticlockwise movement of the

contact line between Europe and Africa produced by the particular forces of their respective plates. Their collision took place some 40 million years ago (between the Eocene and Oligocene periods) in the first-half of the Cenozoic era,

which is considered to have lasted from circa 65 million to 2 million years ago.

lc> The formation of the Alps and the Apennines continued throughout the Cenozoic,

slackening in the succeeding Miocene and Pliocene periods in which however some

uplifting continued. This was accompanied by intense volcanic activity that has

left traces in the Lessini Mts. (Venetian pre-Alps), Euganean Hills, Sardinia, Tuscany and Sicily (Iblei Mts.). Already, however, during the Miocene period erosion had considerably increased on the Alpine and Apennine peaks and this

also continued in the Pliocene period, resulting in the depositing at the feet of the chains of huge deposits of sand, gravel and clay. There then followed a

phase of general increased marine predominance, lasting a good part of the Miocene and all the Pliocene. At the end of this latter period, circa 1.8-2 million years ago, with the withdrawal of the sea and the filling up of the great Po depression the shape of the present-day Italian region and particularly

the peninsula and islands began to gradually appear. The Neozoic era, which is

still in progress, was characterized in its early part (corresponding to the Pleistocene period) by alternating warm and cold climatic phases, which resulted

on several occasions in the expansion and retraction of the Alpine and Apennine

glaciers with a consequent alteration in sea level. The last glaciation ended circa 10-12 thousand years ago, giving way to the current Holocene period characterized in Italy by temperate climatic conditions. During the Neozoic era,

usually called the Quaternary, volcanic activity has re-occurred very intensely

especially on the Tyrrhenian side. Surface erosion followed the relief modelling,

filling in with detritus the internal Apennine depressions previously occupied by lakes (Val d'Arno, Val Tiberina, etc.) and also forming the plains at the edges of the peninsula and islands. At the same time, while our present flora and fauna were evolving, there appeared the first known representatives of the

human species in Italy, whose traces have recently been found near Isernia (La Pineta) and date to some 730, 000 years ago.

Landforms

The complexity of its geological history combined with the wide variety of its substratum rock types, often dislocated by numerous fault-lines and folding of

the rocky strata by orogenic forces, have contributed to Italy's extremely diverse morphology. Less than a quarter (23%) of its total territory is formed by plains, while mountainous areas occupy over a third of its surface (35%).

Finally, over two-fifths (42%) consists of hill zones. Italy's maximum height above sea level corresponds with the summit of Mt. Bianco, 4, 810 m., on the border with France. The far eastern section of the Po Plain has in contrast some

zones slightly below sea level, which are generally subject to subsidence phenomena. However, physically, the Italian territory can be considered to consist of the following regional units, characterized by a certain

morphological similarity and at times also climatic: the Alpine system and Po-

Venetian Plain in the continental section; the Apennine system and anti-Apennine

reliefs in the peninsula section; and the large islands of Sicily and Sardinia.

The Alps

Almost the whole southern side of this great mountainous system belongs to Italy,

covering as it does a length of circa 110 km from the mouth of the Rhne to the

mid-Danube plains and varying in width from circa 150 to 250 km. This southern

side contains many longitudinal (Valle d'Aosta, Valtellina, Val Venosta and Val

Pusteria) and transversal valleys (Val di Susa, Val d'Ossola, Val Camonica and

Valle dell'Adige). It can be divided in three sectors: western, central and

eastern Alps. The first two of mainly crystalline rocks and the third of

sedimentary rocks. Their traditional groupings are still in use: western sector

of Ligurian, Maritime, Cottian and Graian Alps; central sector of Pennine,

Lepontine and Rhaetian Alps; and eastern sector of Adige, Carnic and Julian

Alps.

The first two groups contain the highest peaks, often exceeding 4, 000 m.

(Gran

Paradiso, Mont Blanc, Cervino, Rosa and Bernina). The pre-Alpine belt is

mainly

formed of sedimentary rocks. It stretches from the mouth of the Valle

d'Aosta to

the Valle dell'Isonzo and is particularly disjointed, especially in two zones:

the Lombard pre-Alps, where the landscape of valleys is enlivened by large

glacially excavated lakes (Orta, Maggiore, Lugano, Como, Iseo and Garda);

and

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the Venetian pre-Alps, which contain numerous plateaux (Lessini, Sette Comuni

and Cansiglio).

The Po-Venetian Plain

This is the principal Italian plain, extending for circa 42 sq km to the south of the Alpine arc and having its other border with the northern Apennines and

the Adriatic where it merges into a coast that is low and sandy on the Romagna

shore and ringed by lagoons on the Venetian shore. The Po River cuts across the

centre of the plain and, over the past two thousand years, has created a huge

delta on the edge of the Adriatic Sea. In this it has been assisted by many

Alpine and Apennine tributaries, as well as by other watercourses descending

directly to the sea from the Venetian pre-Alps (Adige, Brenta, Piave,

Tagliamento and Isonzo) and the northern Apennines (Reno, Lamone and Marecchia).

The Po-Venetian Plain has a mean altitude of circa 50 m, while in the marginal

belt at the foot of the pre-Alps and the Alps it exceeds 200 m. This is the point at which it is possible to distinguish a high (gravel and sand) from a low (mainly mud and clay) plain, separated by a row of springs that have had an important influence in the development of the plain's agricultural economy (cultivation of the rice fields, water etc.). This plain also has an extremely important economic and social role. Though it forms only a seventh part of the national territory it contains about a third of the Italian population.

The Apennines

The Apennine range extends for over 1, 200 km from the Colle di Cadibona (touching on the Ligurian Alps) to the extreme south of Calabria and then includes all the north Sicilian mountains. It forms the mountain backbone of the

Italian peninsula, unfolding in an extensive concave chain that opens towards

the Tyrrhenian Sea. Sometimes its mountains run parallel and sometimes they seem

detached in isolated groups, usually separated by wide valley and basins

(Valdarno, Val Tiberina, Valle del Volturno, Vallo di Diano, Piana del Fucino, etc.). Furthermore, these alternate with numerous transversal valleys that often

narrow into gorges. As with the Alps so with the Apennines, three sectors can be

distinguished: a northern one of largely sandstones, marls and clays, covering

Liguria, Tuscany and Emilia; a central one essentially of limestones, covering Umbria-Marches and Latium-Abruzzo; and, finally, a southern one of mixed rock

types, covering Campania, Basilicata and Calabria. Along both edges of the peninsula extensive depressions separate the Apennine chains from isolated

reliefs. These are usually given the name Antiapennine: Tuscan Antiapennine,

with the Monti del Chianti, Amiata and Colline Metallifere; Latio-Campania

Antiapennine, with its volcanic belt running from Cimini Mounts to Roccamonfina

and Vesuvio; and Puglia”> Apulian Antiapennine, with the Gargano, Murge and

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Salentina Peninsula. In Sicily, the Iblei Mounts can be considered to fulfil an Antiapennine position. Adjacent to the Antiapennine reliefs and generally opening on to the sea there are fairly extensive river plains. On the Tyrrhenian side of the Italian peninsula these consist mainly of the lower Valdarno, the Ombrone section of the Maremma, the Pontine Marshes and the Campanian plains of the Garigliano, Volturno and Sele. On the Adriatic side, the largest river plains are those of the Tavoliere in Puglia and the Piana di Sibari in Calabria. On the islands there are the plain of Catania in Sicily and that of the Campidano in Sardinia.

The islands

Besides the reliefs already mentioned, Sicily also has Etna, Italy's major active volcano, and a large and undulating inland plateau. The latter is mainly formed of chalk rocks and rich sulphur deposits that with the heights of the Monti Erei connect the Iblei to the northern chains (Madonie, Nebrodi, etc.). Sardinia in its turn is characterized by reliefs of no great height, mainly

formed from crystalline (granites) and volcanic (trachytes and basalts) rocks.

On the western side extend large flat areas like the previously mentioned

Campidano, limited by the gulfs of Cagliari and Oristano. The minor island

groups are mainly present in the Tyrrhenian Sea, such as: the Tuscan archipelago

(290 sq km), dividing the Ligurian and north Tyrrhenian seas; the Campanian

archipelago (71 sq km) with the Pontine Isles; Ustica (8.6 sq km); Aeolian Isles

(115 sq km); Egadi Isles (38 sq km); Pantelleria (83 sq km) and the Pelagian

Isles (25.5 sq km) in the Channel of Sicily. In the Adriatic, besides the

various low and sandy islands of the Po delta and Venetian lagoon, there emerges

the Tremiti archipelago (3 sq km) to the north of the Gargano. Finally, there

are numerous islands along the coasts of Sardinia (Asinara, La Maddalena,

Caprera, San Pietro, Sant'Antioco, etc.), mainly due to the sinking and

subsequent submersion of the margins of this major Tyrrhenian island.

The coastline

The complexity of the peninsula's relief is echoed in the diversity of its

coastal profile. Along the low and sandy Adriatic shores this is generally rectilinear, with the exceptions of the bulge of the Po delta and of the two rocky promontories of the Conero and Gargano. The Ionian and Tyrrhenian shores are very different, their extensive sandy curves, corresponding to the edges of the coastal plains, alternating with high rocky coasts or steep promontories like those of Piombino, Argentario, Circeo, the Sorrento Peninsula, etc. The coasts of Sicily and Sardinia present a similar morphological picture, the latter having frequent rias or deep inlets resulting from the sinking of long stretches of the eastern coast.

Climatic Conditions

Despite its geographical position at the centre of the temperate zone, Italy has rather variable climatic characteristics. This is due to the presence of the Mediterranean, whose warm waters mitigate thermal extremes, and the Alpine arc, which forms a barrier against the cold north winds. Furthermore, Italy is

subject to both wet and moderate atmospheric currents from the Atlantic Ocean

and dry and cold ones from eastern Europe. The Apennine chain too, confronting

the wet winds from the Tyrrhenian, causes considerable climatic differences between the opposite sides of the peninsula. The differences in temperature between the winter and summer months are more marked in the northern regions

than in the south and along the coasts. The mean temperatures for the month of

January in the Po Plain fluctuate around zero, while in the Alpine valleys the thermometer can drop to -20 and snow can remain on the ground for many weeks.

In the southern regions, instead, the mean temperatures for January remain around 10, with the exception of the inland mountainous zones. Mean summer

temperatures throughout all Italy rise to 24-25 for July, only being lower in the highest zones. Rainfall distribution also varies considerably, due to the influence of both mountains and prevailing winds. The highest quantities are

registered in the Alpine arc (over 3, 000 mm pa in the Lepontine and Julian Alps)

and on the Apennines (over 3, 000 mm pa in the Apuan Alps). The plains, however,

including that of the Po, receive scarce precipitation. Generally it is less than 800-900 mm pa but in the southern regions (Tavoliere and southern Sicily)

it falls below 600 mm pa. The great internal Alpine valleys and the coastal plains of the Tyrrhenian (Maremma) and Sardinia also receive little rain.

Altogether, six large climatic regions can be distinguished, mainly characterized by mountain influence. 1) An Alpine region, strongly influenced by

altitude, with long cold winters and short cool summers having an elevated day-

time temperature range; precipitation is more intense in the summer months,

especially in the pre-Alpine belt. 2) A Po region, with continental conditions, consisting of cold and often snowy winters and warm and sultry summers;

precipitation is greatest in the spring and autumn months; the climate becomes

milder, however, around the pre-Alpine lakes; fog is frequent, due to the wetness of the land. 3) An Adriatic region, whose sea has little influence due to the inability of its shallow waters to trap the summer heat; consequently the climate has a continental character, with its winters being dominated by cold north-east winds (bora). 4) An Apennine region, also with continental tendencies and cold snowy winters; precipitation is more intense on the Tyrrhenian slopes and is abundant in all seasons apart from the summer. 5) A Ligurian-Tyrrhenian region, with a maritime climate and heavy and frequent precipitation, which is less in the summer and distributed irregularly; the winters are cool and the annual temperature range narrow. 6) A Mediterranean region, also with a limited annual temperature range; precipitation is frequent, especially in winter, and the summers are hot and dry. The interior and mountain zones of the islands and Calabria also have an Apennine type climate due to the altitude.

Inland Waters

The characteristics of the Italian water network are closely associated with morphological and climatic conditions. There are only a few tens of watercourses

longer than 100 km, though the Po, which is also the longest of them all (652 km) has a rainwater basin almost equal to a fourth of the national territory (74, 970 sq km). Other important rivers are the Adige and Piave, descending from

the Alps and flowing from the north into the Po, and the Arno and Tiber, flowing

through central Italy into the Tyrrhenian. The other main tributaries of the Po are the Ticino, Adda and Oglio, arising in the Alps, the Tanaro, from the Apennines, and the Reno too, though it has its mouth to the south of the Po delta. The rivers running down the Tyrrhenian slopes of the peninsula are usually longer than those of the Adriatic, because of the Apennine watershed being further to the east. The Italian waterways are little used for transport due to their rather limited and variable flow. In fact the Alpine rivers have a cycle conditioned by the winter snow cover, being high in the summer and low in

the winter; while the pre-Alpine and northern Apennine source rivers are mainly

rain-fed and are only full in spring and autumn. Consequently, the cycle of the

Po River is the most regular and therefore best suited to navigation. The other

rivers of the peninsula and islands are heavily influenced by climatic

conditions, being full in winter and empty in summer. In the latter case it is not unusual for the bed to remain completely dry, as in the case of the typical

fiumare in Calabria and Sicily. Italy is fairly well supplied with lakes, having several thousand natural and artificial basins of different sizes and origins.

The largest and deepest occupy the bottom of the great pre-Alpine valleys at their junction with the Po Plain (from Lake Orta to Lake Garda, which is the largest of all, while Lake Como is the deepest) and they were all excavated by

Pleistocene glaciers. Also along the Apennine spine there are fairly frequent large lakes, such as Trasimeno the remains of an older lake that together with

others occupied the bottom of the internal basins of the peninsula. The numerous

small lakes scattered inside the spent craters of Latium and Campania are volcanic in origin. The coastal plains of the Tyrrhenian, Adriatic and large islands contain basins that are sometimes extensive and derived from lagoons.

Furthermore, the Italian Alpine slopes, above 2, 800 m., contain about a thousand

glaciers. Some of these are of a considerable size, such as the Miage Glacier, which is some 10 km long and descends the southern slope of Mont Blanc in Valle

d'Aosta. The glaciers are especially important for their function as water reserves, providing as they do a constant supply for the Alpine rivers. The

central Apennines also have a small glacier, under the northern walls of the

Corno Grande (Gran Sasso). Finally, Italy's water system is completed by the many underground water bearing strata of the numerous limestone karst massifs in

the pre-Alps and Apennines. These produce springs bearing a considerable volume

(as that of the Peschiera in Latium or the Sele in Campania, etc.). In addition, there are those reaching to varying depths under the Po Plain and the other alluvial plains.

The Italian Seas

With its extension from southern Europe towards Africa, the Italian peninsula almost divides the Mediterranean in two separate basins. Leaving aside the Strait of Messina, the shortest distance between Sicily and Africa (NE Tunisia) is circa 140 km, reduced to 70 km if it is measured from the island of Pantelleria. In this part of the sea (Channel of Sicily) the depth does not exceed 500 m. Furthermore, the eastern Mediterranean section, known as the Sea of Sicily and from which emerge the Maltese Islands, the Pelagian and Pantelleria, rarely exceeds a depth of 1, 500 m. Considerably deeper, on the other hand, is the Ionian Sea. This extends eastwards from Sicily and Calabria and southwards from the Salentina Peninsula, touching on the 4, 000 m isobath.

Equally deep is the Tyrrhenian Sea, within the triangle formed by Corsica and

Sardinia, Sicily and the Italian peninsula. At its centre it often exceeds a depth of 3, 500 m. A narrow channel (the Canale di Corsica) separates it, to the north, from the Ligurian Sea. This latter exceeds a depth of 2, 000 m in its western section corresponding to the Riviera di Ponente. The shallowest of the Italian seas is the Adriatic, which up to the level of Ancona does not exceed 80 m and only at Pescara does it descend below 200 m; off the coast of Puglia, however, it exceeds a depth of 1, 200 m. Finally, in the area of the Strait of Otranto the two shores of the Adriatic draw close together and here the Italian and Albanian coasts are only 75 km apart. As for the rest of the Mediterranean, the surface temperature of the Italian seas is on average rather high. In the northern Tyrrhenian, the Sea of Sicily, Ionian and southern Adriatic it is circa 13; in the Ligurian Sea circa 12; in the southern Tyrrhenian circa 14; but in the northern Adriatic, because of the shallowness of the waters, it drops to 9. The quality of the water is also rather elevated, re