

Italy reports rise of mammoni generation

The number of Italian “mamma’s boys and girls” neither working nor studying rose in 2010 as Italy’s young became increasingly dispirited by a sluggish post-crisis job market, official data revealed yesterday.

“Unlike in other countries, Italy’s Neets... reflect a situation of worrying despondency among young Italians faced with the difficulty in finding work,” the Institute of Statistics said in its annual report on life in Italy in 2010.

The number of Neets – those between 15 and 29 years old not in education, employment or training – was already significantly higher than the European average in 2009 at 20.5 per cent compared to 14.7 per cent, ISTAT said.

But by 2010 the number of unemployed or economically inactive young people rose by 134,000 to 2.1 million, bringing Italy’s quota to 22.1 per cent of the age group who were not engaged in either employment or study.

“Italy is the only country (with)... a prevalence of inactive over unemployed,” ISTAT said, pointing out that the problem was worst in southern Italy and among young women forced to choose between family and jobs.

It warned this rising number of young Italians risk “social exclusion.”

Over half of young Neets in 2010 were inactive “in a persistent fashion,” the report found, warning that the longer they stayed out of the job market or education system, the harder it was for them to break back in.

Most of those who remain inactive for an extended period of time still live with at least one parent, making them part of a growing Italian trend of 20-something hangers-on at home nick-named mammoni, or mother’s boys.

While some want to move out but have no way of paying the rent – a problem facing increasing numbers of youths as the recession bites – others stay with their parents for their love of home-made pasta and washed and ironed clothes.

“The Neets dedicate more time to sleeping and other bodily activities such as eating and washing compared to their contemporaries,” ISTAT said, adding that young people from all backgrounds could fall under this category.

It also pointed out they were less likely to read than others their age, and rarely go to the cinema or visit museums. They tend to smoke and drink and do little sport, leading ISTAT to point out their lifestyle was “not the healthiest”.