



# *Ministry of Education and Research*

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION 2004 – 2008**

### **National Report of ITALY**

**Prepared by**

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## NATIONAL REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING (2004-2008)

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### “EDUCATION IN ITALY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION”

The Italian school system has been lately marked by a deep and somewhat tortuous process of change intended to bring the country in line with European standards and overcome the shortcomings and contradictions which have been building over the past few decades.

Governing and managing change in education is not an easy task for the institutional actors involved at various levels: Central Government and Parliament, Regional authorities within their institutional boundaries, and the whole of Italy's “educating” community, including the Ministry, the Regional Directorates, the Unions, Professional Associations of School heads, Associations of teachers, Associations of parents and students, and finally schools themselves. The common goal agreed upon, regardless of the differences in approach and methods to reach it, is to bring the Italian educational and training system to successfully tackle the challenges of the new Millennium.

Within this frame of reference, enhancing social inclusion is one of the most compelling tasks. The educational sector is to be on the forefront in this issue, given today's difficult historical phase.

Achieving social inclusion requires medium and long-term perspectives; however, meaningful actions and provisions are a priority and should be implemented in the short-term.

The Italian Ministry of Education and Research has had – *pour cause* - a key role in the matter; such a role has become all the more important in the past decade, when the call for a reform of the system has become a top priority.

The key role of Italy's Ministry of Education and Research has been and is still being played on two different levels: that of the structural change of the overall system, and that of a certified revision of content and standards, including learning outcomes, skills and competences of the teaching/learning process.

## 1) MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM GOALS

### 1.1 The present reform of the Italian school system.

Law 53/2003 and the subsequent amendments made to Law 40/2007 changed Italy's school system radically. More specifically, the Legislative Decrees of 2004 and 2005, linked to Law 53/2003 provided:

- Definition of the general regulations governing pre-primary and primary education.
- The creation of a National body for the Assessment and evaluation of the Educational system.
- The general principles and regulations on the right/duty to education and training of all citizens up to the age of 18.
- Definition of general regulations concerning “*alternanza scuola-lavoro*” (the mix of formal instruction and work placement)
- General framework and regulations concerning the standards (minimum learning outcomes) to be achieved in lower secondary school and secondary school. (At present such regulations and standards are being reviewed for amendments and further additions).

Law 53/2003 is adamant in stressing that in Italy schools must be socially inclusive. The Law begins by stating that “*life-long learning is to be promoted; the same opportunities are to be given to each and everyone, so as to make it possible for each and everyone to reach high*”

*cultural standards and develop competences, through knowledge and skills, both general and specific, consistent with the aptitudes and personal choices, and adequate to a successful integration in society and professional environments: locally, nationally and with the Union”.*

In the light of the recently passed Law-Decree n.137/2008, and of Law 40/2007 which re-designed vocational and technical education, the new Italian educational and training System is to be shaped as follows:

- Pre-primary school (for children from the age of 3 to the age of 5).
- An eight-year first cycle, (including 5-year primary school and 3-year lower secondary school).
- Secondary school which includes upper secondary “licei” (in art; in humanities, in modern languages; in music and coreutics; in maths and general sciences; in social sciences) and upper secondary vocational or technical schools.

Both the Primary cycle and the Secondary cycle end with a national exam. The certification earned after passing the national exam (*diploma di Esame di Stato*) at the end of upper secondary is necessary to move on to higher education (University system).

The certification earned at the end of the fourth year of upper secondary school (*ammissione al quinto anno*) is necessary to move on to IFTS (Higher Vocational and Training system).

Besides the above-mentioned general principles stated in Law 53/2003, inclusion will be specifically implemented through a series of opportunities offered to students, namely:

- Flexibility. Students may transfer from one study track to a different one by benefiting from what is referred to in Italian as “*passerelle*” (special tutorship meant to aid the acquisition of the competencies needed to profitably join the target course).
- Acquisition of credits, as points earned upon achieving success along any given time-frame of the secondary cycle. Credits are valid either for transferring from one track to a different one of the same level, or for moving back to school after dropping out
- Recognition of lab experience, stages, on-the-job training, periods of work, either at home or abroad. The competencies and skills acquired through such experiences are to be formally certified either by schools or training institutions.

At present the “*Indicazioni Nazionali*” (national standards) are being reviewed, so as to better specify the cultural background, the declarative knowledge, the skills and competences the pupils studying in Italy should acquire at the end of every segment of their schooling.

The Ministerial Decree of December 28 2005, confirmed by the subsequent Ministerial Decree n.47 of June 13, 2006 allows schools to use up to 20% of the compulsory school time for determining their own choice of curricular activities, on the basis of the needs of the local student population and families. Such flexibility fine-tunes activities aiming at social inclusion and allows schools to design adequate settings for remedial work aimed at reversing academic underachievement.

Flexibility in school-time, which is currently being re-appraised, is also a factor in favour of social inclusion, as schools tend to meet the local families’ needs and wants.

The recently passed Law decree n.137/2008 (September, 1, 2008) started a nation-wide experimental plan to be complemented with a teacher-training program aimed at developing and enhancing education for citizenship and constitutional values.

Raising active citizenship awareness and educating children to awareness of constitutional values are part of a highly-distinguished educational goal, aiming to consolidate in young generations the culture of living together, which should result in attitudes, talk, behavioural patterns and thinking in line with the fundamentals of the Italian Constitution.

The content of "Citizenship and Constitution" may be taught either as a separate knowledge-domain, or embedded in the domain of history and geography, or history and social studies. It may also spread cross-curricularly across the entire teaching/learning process.

The objective of the introduction of "Citizenship and Constitution" is also to help students develop a positive attitude towards learning, while raising the awareness that the acquisition of knowledge and skills is a condition for achieving social inclusion.

However the reforms and innovations Italy had in the past decades have often suffered from unwelcome twists and turns, resulting in confusion and slowdown in the overall process of modernization.

Therefore a new phase of revision, order and "essentialization" of the entire and far too complex system, at organizational, operational, administrative and legislative level, is being started. Such revision may possibly result in more efficient and effective choices on the part of the student population within the entire system, which is a pre-requisite for preventing early school leaving.

The current revision of school levels, as stated in article 64 of Law 133/2008, should limit the proliferation and fragmentation of curricula in secondary schools (upper secondary), reducing the plethora of courses and study tracks and make syllabi more essential, thus reducing students' sense of confusion, leading to a tendency to dropout and underachieve.

The amount of time children are to spend at school is currently being reviewed, in the perspective of making school hours more sustainable for students. This will gradually be coupled with teaching methods aimed at developing skills and competence (rather than transmitting knowledge), for better adjustment to students' personal learning abilities and styles.

Re-organizing the school network at regional and local level aims at limiting the proliferation of small-scale schools. Such re-organization is intended to make management more effective, guarantee a better use of resources and create bridges between primary and secondary school. Such a bridging process is to be obtained by creating a high number of "*Istituti comprensivi*" (comprehensive school establishments which include different levels of schooling under one single head), especially in remote and underprivileged areas. Another objective is to make a better use of human resources; therefore support to the professional development of school teaching staff through distance training and e-learning will be further increased.

All these measures are to be considered in the light of the drive to integrate resources at National, Regional and Local Authority level, with the aim of enhancing flexibility and local autonomy effectively, so as to guarantee organizational solutions suitable to the real needs of students and parents on the ground. Meeting the local needs and knowing the local agenda bears extreme importance to the multi-faceted reality of Italy. Thus, any debate regarding social inclusion must be seen in the light of what future shape the Italian Republic will take on, also meaning what role and differences there will be within the local/regional administrative levels.

## **1.2 Policies regarding access to Education and training, reduction of disparity and evaluation of learning outcomes.**

### ***a) Reducing dropout, early school leaving rates and regional disparities.***

The issue has been the focus of debate in Europe for some time and has now become a top priority in the Lisbon agenda. It is one of Italy's greatest challenges targeted at bringing thousands of pupils back to school and promoting academic achievement.

In relation to this, schooling was made compulsory for young people up to the age of 16 (Law n.296/2006), and education and training (both a right and a duty for young people up to the age of 18) leading to formal education or vocational training certification was implemented. (Law 53/2003).

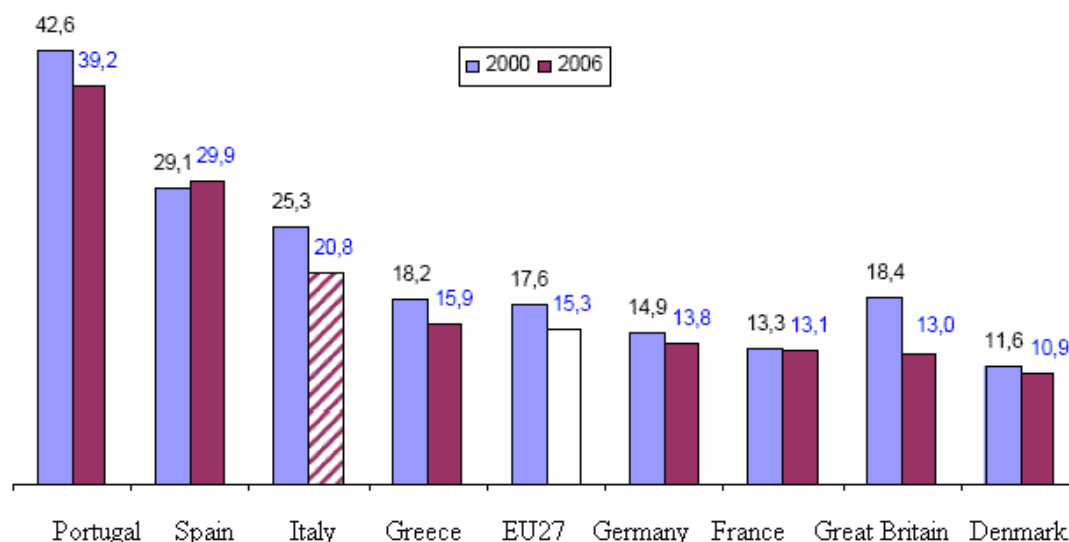
The early school leaving issue can be analyzed from two perspectives: the first focuses on the number of dropouts in a single school year; the other, in line with the European indicator, considers the number of young people aged 18 to 24 possessing an ISCED 2.0 diploma only (lower secondary school diploma) and not attending any training course or school.

According to this second perspective, in spite of the improvements since 2000. Italy is still lagging behind. In 2006 the percentage of young adults with a lower secondary diploma (ISCED 2.0) not within vocational training was still as high as 20.8%, against the European mean value of 15.3% (Chart 1). The data available in 2007, however, mark some progress which narrows the gap between Italy and the other EU member countries.

The national way of looking at the phenomenon shows the school dropout rate as being represented by the number of students/pupils who leave school at any time during a single school year with no prior notice to the school administration. The annual data gathered by the Ministry of Education at the end of every school year show a more or less considerable gap between the number of pupils enrolled at the beginning of the year and the number of pupils who have actually been graded at the end of the school year.

The difference between the number of enrolments and the number of real attenders gives the number of "withdrawn" pupils (dropouts or stopouts). This group includes both those who applied for a *nulla osta* (permit) in order to transfer to a different school/institution/college and those who have formally enrolled but have stopped attending classes, have poor attendance records, have never shown up altogether and have failed to formally notify the school administration or have stopped attending classes after March 15. Therefore, the phenomenon is analyzed in Italy on the basis of the number of students who fail to formally notify the school administration about their decision of giving up class attendance.

**Figure 1: percentage of youth aged 18-24 with lower secondary school diploma (ISCED 2) only (early school leavers) – international comparison – years 2000-2006.**



Font : "Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training" Indicators and benchmarks 2007

In terms of the progress made towards the Lisbon benchmarks, Southern Italy is still critically lagging behind. With such a grey scenario to work against, the Southern regions of the country are supported by Regional policies and benefit from additional financial resources, both on the European (Structural Funds) and national levels. The Funds are intended to narrow the developmental disparity among regions. In the 2000-2006 programming period, specific resources were devoted to the prevention of early school leaving, to remedial work with stopouts in the regions of Southern Italy (NOP "School for development" – "La Scuola per lo Sviluppo"). This very hot issue is again being tackled by the regional policies in the framework for the **2007-2013** programming period.

The present National Operational Programme is based on the priorities of the National Strategic Plan for the **2007-2013** regional policy for development.

Assuming that low levels in competences and skills shown by adults and youth are among the factors behind the persisting stagnation in economic development and poor social mobility, the Programme considers education and training a top priority of the regional policy for **2007-2013** and, for the regions included in Convergence (Calabria, Puglia, Campania, Sicilia), it labels them an essential service. The measure of effectiveness of such a service is "an increase in students' competences and the population's learning ability". Evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the NOP is gauged using three indicators:

- Reduction of early school leavers from **26% to 10%**,
- Reduction of 15-year-old low achievers in reading skills from **35% to 20%**,
- Reduction of 15-year-old low achievers in maths from **48% to 21%**. The dropout rate variable is also considered here, seeing the high proportion of 18 to 24-year olds with no formal certification above the ISCED 2.0 level.

In line with the Strategic Plan, the **2007-2013 NOP “Competences for Development”**, managed by the Ministry of Education envisages a reduction to 10% of the target group with no formal certification above ISCED 2.0 by the end of 2013.

***b) Access to education and training for children and adults***

Early schooling is a factor favouring social inclusion, especially for the many families who need to benefit from earlier enrolment in nursery school, due to lack of flexibility in office and work hours. “*Early entry enrolment*” means that children under the age scheduled for regular enrolment may be allowed to access pre-primary education, (within the limits of the financial resources made available every year). The provision involves the following:

- ***“Primavera” classes (“Spring” classes)***

It refers to provision of educational service mid-way between infant care centres and pre-primary schooling. The target group is made of children aged between 2 and 3. The service is specifically tailored to the age group and aims at preparing the children to access pre-primary grades.

- ***Pre-primary school***

The target group includes children who turn 3 by December 31<sup>st</sup>. The operational plan referred to in art.64 of Law 133/2008 confirms that early enrolment be allowed to children who turn 3 by the end of April of the intended school year.

In 2006/2007 as many as 1,652,689 children were enrolled in pre-primary grades. Giving that attendance is not compulsory in pre-primary, the data confirm families’ increasing tendency to attach importance to this service as a vehicle for educational and social promotion. Also, the number of children under the age of 3 enrolled in either state-owned, secular or Catholic private pre-primary schools, has been steadily increasing.

- ***Primary school***

The target group includes both children who turn 6 by 31<sup>st</sup> December and children who turn 6 by April 30<sup>th</sup> of the following school year. Enrolment and attendance are compulsory. Under current legislation, children receive 27 hours of instruction per week. School time may be further extended by 3 optional hours a week, depending on teacher deployment models and upon families’ needs and requests.

School time may even span up to 40 hours per week (“*tempo pieno*”, namely full time), depending on the proportion of human and financial resources made available to the regional Directorates by the Ministry of Education each year.

The “Full time”, 40-hour-per-week model is to be maintained in the future. As from 2009 one single teacher is to be in charge of one primary class, instead of the current 3-teacher team, and the weekly regular school time load is to be brought down to 24 hours. (Roll-out Plan for art. 64 of Law 133/2008).

As far as *Adult education* is concerned, over the past ten years there has been a growing trend in terms of enrolments in evening classes. Adult learners have more than doubled: from 46,805 enrolments in 1996/97 to approximately 90,000 in 2006/2007.

Almost all the students enrolled in an evening course select a vocational or technical study track (67.1% and 28.3% respectively) in order to earn formal qualifications or improve their professional position. Observing the distribution of enrolments by region, the percentage of adults involved in training and education is higher than the national average (3.2%) in Sardinia (5.1%), Liguria (4.6%) and Puglia (4.2%). In some cases students are former stop-outs. Besides the regular evening classes opened in designated schools, Learning centres for adults operating in some lower secondary schools are being re-designed organizationally and methodologically.



***c) Evaluation of learning outcomes and competence-oriented teacher training models.***

In accordance with Legislative Decree 286/2004 instituting the National Evaluation Service of the Italian Educational system, run by the National Institute for Evaluation (INVALSI), and with Decree n.147/2007, as from the 2007-2008 school year, the Ministry of Education annually establishes the objectives for external evaluation, carried out by INVALSI, together with the achievement standards for Italian students at the end of primary and secondary school and the grades testing will be conducted on.

According to current legislation, which results from the evolution of norms and regulations progressively re-shaped to meet the growing needs of the educational system in terms of evaluation and assessment, INVALSI is the institutional body in charge of:

- carrying out systematic assessment of knowledge and skills of students, at the same time evaluating the overall quality of the curricula of all types of schools (including vocational and training centres and centres for life-long learning). It runs the National evaluation System.
- carrying out research into the factors behind academic underachievement, dropout and stopout-linked processes, also considering social contexts and school curricula.
- designing the National tests intended to evaluate the general and specific learning outcomes and skills (particularly concerning mother tongue and maths) of the students leaving primary school and moving on to the secondary, or upper, cycle.
- Evaluating the quality of learning outcomes of students leaving upper secondary school, by using internationally shared criteria to analyze the written tests from the national school-leaving exams

The implementation of a national evaluation system which focuses on the evaluation and assessment of acquired competences and skills should ensure less disparity in the learning outcomes achieved by students all over the country, thus reducing the performance gap between northern-central Italy and the southern regions. Moreover, this system should foster the rise of competence-oriented teaching models.

Moreover, in line with the national and EU priorities of inclusion and social cohesion, all the schools located in the southern regions of Campania, Calabria, Puglia and Sicilia are to be actively involved in teacher-training seminars intended to promote competence-oriented teaching and testing. This remains within the overall strategy of the above-mentioned 2007-2013 National Operational Programme "Competences for development" aiming to increase students' competences and the population's learning abilities.

To ensure a further dissemination of competence-oriented teaching and testing in schools nationwide, a number of national teacher training programs funded by the Ministry of Education are being carried out, with special emphasis on language competence, maths and science skills and ICT (M@tabel, ISS, ForTIC and Poseidon projects)



## 2) FURTHER INCLUSION-ENHANCING ACTIONS AND POLICIES

### 2.1 Measures supporting school communities

#### *a) support to the organizational and educational autonomy of schools.*

Such measures are substantial, since all of Italian schools' POFs (*Piani dell' Offerta Formativa*) (School Plans) provide activities aimed to fully guarantee the right to inclusion, education, training and academic achievement ("successo formativo") for each and everyone, on the basis of emerging local needs. Examples are:

- the opportunity each school has to devote up to 20% of curriculum time to specific projects, i.e.: increasing tuition time in specific knowledge domains in favour of underachievers<sup>1</sup>, designing remedial courses.
- Provisions of Law 1/2007, designed to help underachievers reach pass standards, and more recent ones designed to support students with weaknesses in several knowledge domains have made it possible for schools to organize a wide range of remedial courses and programmes to be carried out during the school year and in the summer. The national resources to sustain the afore mentioned measures totalled € 85mil. for the 2007-2008 school year.
- The opportunity for every school in Italy to take part in nationally-funded programmes, such as: the national reading project, programmes promoting scientific knowledge, promoting better knowledge of the Italian language; promoting ICT in the teaching and learning process, enhancing participation of students in international academic competitions and contests, rewarding top-achievers and excellency; supporting privately-run centres and schools.
- programmes and courses organized by schools for parents and the community.

National support to the organizational and educational autonomy of Italian schools is provided through Law 440/97, which establishes a permanent financial fund to be used to increase the quality and range of educational activities every school can design and promote, and to support schools with particular needs or that are lagging behind.

The Ministry of Education issues an annual Directive for fund allocation, on the basis of a range of priorities determined for the year.

For 2008-2009 Directive n.69 dated August 6<sup>th</sup> 2008 established the total amount of €53,355,276 to be divided among schools, according to dimension-based criteria, number of teaching and administrative staff units, and student population. More funds for special projects add up to the above mentioned provisions, for a total of approximately € 25mil.

#### *b) Schoolbook policy*

Action is also being taken in order to help students and their families afford schoolbooks, by limiting the price increase established annually by educational publishers.

While primary schoolbooks are distributed free, fixed price ranges for books have already been established nationwide for lower and upper secondary school. As from the 2008-2009 school year, the Ministry has established that schoolbook titles be selected and formally approved by each school's Teachers' Assembly (*Collegio dei Docenti*) early each year, in time to make braille accessible versions for visually-impaired students available. The Teachers' Assemblies

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, enhancing the teaching of standard Italian not only for immigrants, but also for natives coming from areas of Italy where dialects and regional varieties are normally used in communication. Enhancing the teaching of maths., of a foreign language and sciences, where Italian pupils still rank low in OECD – PISA research results.

are also being advised to choose schoolbooks that are either partially or totally available online. Teachers' Assemblies may also choose schoolbooks available in mixed form: sections downloadable online and sections in printed form.

***c) Parent-teacher-student commitment partnership  
(Patto di corresponsabilità scuola-famiglia).***

As from the 2008-2009 school year, a parent-teacher-student commitment agreement is to be drawn up, approved and enforced in every school. The agreement is aimed at increasing the parties' awareness of their share of responsibility in contributing to the student's academic achievement and personal development.

**2.2 Measures supporting learners belonging to particular categories**

***a) Special needs learners***

In Italy the educational system plays a crucial role in favouring the social inclusion of children with special needs. Disabled children are normally registered and placed in regular curricular classes. Mixing non-disabled and disabled children distinguishes the Italian school system from the systems of other member states. The actions and strategies for integrating children with special needs into regular classes are designed and included in the School Plan (*Piano dell'Offerta Formativa*) of each and every school. Integration of disabled children is achieved by way of projects in which teachers, experts, regional and local representatives of associations for the care of the disabled, operating in the permanent national Observatory, take active part.

The national and local projects targeted on achieving total social inclusion and integration of disabled people, in line with the legislation protecting the rights of the disabled, envisage better quality of education and training, reduction of physical and mental impairment and better quality of life. Admission of disabled children requires medical documentation issued by the local branch of the National health and care system (ASL) through a medical diagnosis of the case by a team of specialists.

Every school in Italy has a dedicated special team <sup>2</sup>(GLH: Working Group on Handicap) whose task is to fully profile the disabled pupil, examine his/her needs, potential and skills and custom-tailor what is called "Piano Educativo Individualizzato" (PEI), that is a personalized educational and learning program, which is carried out also with the professional help of an expert-teacher appointed by the local school Directorate.

The following tables and figures show the distribution of disabled pupils in Italian schools:

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<sup>2</sup> GLH were enforced by art.4 of the Presidential Decree of 24th February 1994.

**Table 2.1. - Disabled children (absolute figures, on 100 students) – school year 1996/97 – 2006/07**

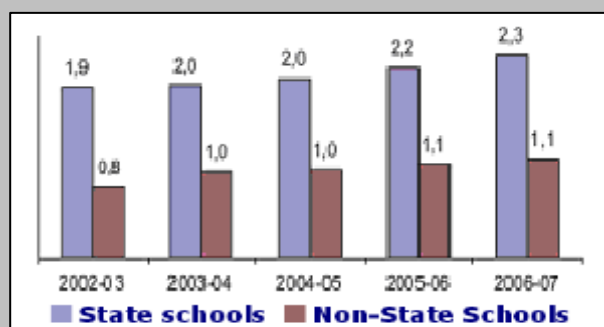
Scholastic years	Total	Pre-primary	Primary	Lower secondary school	Upper secondary school
Absolute values					
1996-97 <sup>(a)</sup>	119.101	13.145	49.860	43.244	12.852
.....					
2001-02	142.774	14.077	60.602	46.596	21.499
2002-03	156.009	15.044	62.795	29.741	48.429
2003-04	161.159	15.713	63.744	49.648	32.054
2004-05	167.804	14.876	66.315	51.334	35.279
2005-06	178.220	17.481	67.755	55.244	37.740
2006-07	146.786	18.656	71.383	56.747	40.783
Per 100 students					
1996-97	1,3	0,8	1,8	2,3	0,5
.....					
2001-02	1,6	0,9	2,1	2,6	0,8
2002-03	1,8	0,9	2,3	2,7	1,1
2003-04	1,8	1,0	2,3	2,8	1,2
2004-05	1,9	0,9	2,4	2,9	1,3
2005-06	2,0	1,1	2,4	3,1	1,4
2006-07	2,1	1,1	2,5	3,3	1,5

(a) The data does not include Valle d'Aosta or the autonomous province of Bolzano.

**Table 2.8.2. – Disabled children by type of disability and school level (percentage) s.y. 2006-07**

Type of disability	Total	Pre-primary	Primary	Lower secondary school	Upper Secondary school
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Psycho-physical	94,5	92,0	95,4	96,0	91,9
Visual impairment	1,8	2,5	1,5	1,2	2,8
Hearing impairment	3,7	5,5	3,1	2,8	5,3

**Figure 2.1 - Disabled children in state-owned and private schools s.y. 2002/03 – 2006/07)**



**Table 2.4– disabled children and expert teachers in state-owned schools – geographic distribution (absolute figures and percentages) s.y.2001/02 – 2006/07.**

Scholastic Years	Supporting teachers hired:			Teachers fixed term	Support teachers	Handicapped students	
	open-ended contract	fixed-term contract	Total	per 100 support teachers	per 100 teachers	Per support teacher	Per 100 students
Italy							
2001-02	43.260	27.934	71.194	39,2	8,5	1,9	1,8
2002-03	42.639	32.649	75.288	43,4	9,1	1,9	1,9
2003-04	43.051	36.793	79.844	46,1	9,8	1,9	2,0
2004-05	41.506	38.464	79.970	48,1	9,7	1,9	2,0
2005-06	44.049	39.712	83.761	47,4	10,0	2,0	2,2
2006-07	43.285	46.747	90.032	51,9	10,6	1,9	2,3
North							
2001-02	11.561	11.841	23.402	50,6	7,6	2,1	1,8
2002-03	11.581	13.215	24.796	53,3	8,1	2,1	1,9
2003-04	11.781	15.316	27.097	56,5	9,0	2,0	2,0
2004-05	11.540	15.463	27.003	57,3	8,7	2,2	2,1
2005-06	12.884	15.769	28.653	55,0	9,1	2,2	2,2
2006-07	12.871	18.700	31.571	59,2	9,7	2,1	2,3
Central							
2001-02	7.947	3.744	11.691	32,0	7,6	2,1	1,8
2002-03	7.728	4.730	12.458	38,0	8,2	2,2	2,0
2003-04	7.461	5.872	13.333	44,0	8,8	2,1	2,2
2004-05	7.268	6.101	13.369	45,6	8,7	2,2	2,1
2005-06	7.674	6.769	14.443	46,9	9,3	2,2	2,2
2006-07	7.470	8.498	15.968	53,2	10,1	2,1	2,4
South							
2001-02	23.752	12.349	36.101	34,2	9,7	1,7	1,7
2002-03	23.330	14.704	38.034	38,7	10,3	1,7	1,9
2003-04	23.809	15.605	39.414	39,6	10,8	1,7	1,9
2004-05	22.698	16.900	39.598	42,7	10,8	1,7	2,0
2005-06	23.491	17.174	40.665	42,2	11,1	1,8	2,1
2006-07	22.944	19.549	42.493	46,0	11,5	1,7	2,2

The number of disabled children in regular curricular classes has been steadily increasing over the past 10 years, and registrations have increased by 57.5% so far.

The number of disabled children in regular classes of primary and lower secondary school level has been steady, due to the Law providing for free, compulsory education. The number of registrations of disabled students in upper secondary has increased as well (from 0.8% in 2001-2002 to 1.5% in 2006-2007), thus signalling the need for these students to acquire skills and competences necessary for a better integration in society and working life.

Approximately 87,000 disabled students attended different school levels in 2006-2007: 2.5 disabled students every 100 admissions at primary level and 3.3 at lower secondary level. Integration takes place mostly in state-owned schools, where 2.3% of students are disabled. However in the past few years integration of disabled children has been occurring in private schools as well.

Most disabled students attend regular classes, with 94.5% of them presenting either physical or mental handicaps. Integration is carried out with the mediatory work of a teacher specialized in dealing with specific handicaps.

With the number of disabled children increasing in state-owned schools, the number of the abovementioned support teachers has upped accordingly, reaching 10.6% of the total number of teachers in Italy.

### ***b) Non-Italian students***

Italy acknowledged the universalistic criteria for the rights of all children in the Nineties, and provided for such criteria to inspire all schools, on the basis of the following:

- the norms of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, approved in 1989, ratified by Italy in 1991 and confirmed in the Italian legislation protecting childhood and adolescence.
- The long tradition Italy has been nurturing since the Seventies in favour of experimenting social integration of every kind of diversity.

The presence of children from foreign countries has by now become structural in Italian schools. The educational system has quickly responded to the need for integration on the part of non-native children, who attend regular curricular classes together with their native peers. The Italian system has chosen to avoid separate classes, consistently with the assumption that all bearers of diversities should be allowed to learn and grow together. It is not only one of the actual applications of the general principle of Universalism but also evidence of the belief in the positiveness of social interaction between and among peers with different abilities.

Integration is still achieved through a number of teaching and learning strategies, such as temporary periods where homogeneous groups learn Italian together. Acquisition of Italian is an essential factor in the process of integration, as it is a pre-requisite to make oneself understood, understand one's peers and become part of the school and of the local community.

This cultural framework, as well as the richness of effective, innovative projects carried out by Italian schools, can help build an Italian way to integration.

However, the acceptance of such a framework is being currently and controversially challenged, especially in those areas with particularly high concentration levels of non-Italian pupils at different school levels. These phenomena are bringing about parental call for separate classes in some cases.

Law n.62/2000 states that all private schools certified as institutions included in the public educational system are to comply with the principles of the Italian Constitution and therefore accept all applications, provided the applicant is qualified to register for the intended grade.

As the proportion of foreign nationals in Italian schools has been steadily increasing, thus becoming structurally relevant, the school system has coped with the recent demand in

integration with complex experimental strategies, involving regional and local institutions and authorities.

As school integration of foreign children mostly depends on policies and investments which tend to greatly differ from region to region, the rights to integration are optimally guaranteed in those areas where authorities show full commitment to the issue. On the one hand, in some areas and some schools the needs of children from immigrant families are classified as one-off emergencies, which school staff try to cope with as best as they can, often producing controversial and far from quality outcomes. On the other hand school networks are successfully coping with the challenges of integration, especially in those areas where academic achievement of non-native children does not appear to be a priority. Networks are useful because they collect and exchange best practices, thus providing working ways, methods and strategies for ensuring adequate solutions towards successful integration.

Non-native children are fully entitled to receive education and training in Italian schools, which are therefore expected to grant them admission at any time during the school year, regardless of whether these children are legitimately or illegitimately in the host country. This in order to curb the risk for illegal immigrant minors to stay out of school and be used in illegal child labour or, especially in large cities, to be exploited as beggars in the streets.

Similarly, Rom and Sint children and children from other migrant populations are also included in integration actions under way.

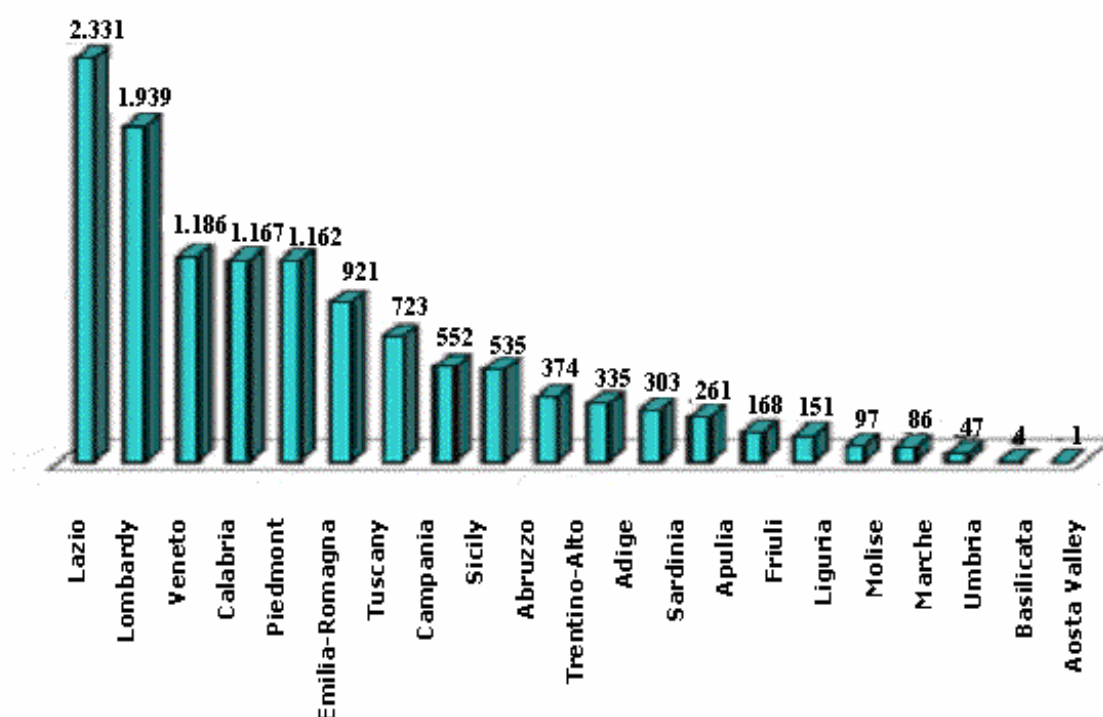
The tables and figures below show data on the proportion of non-native and migrant children in Italy:

**Table 3.1 – Distribution of non-Italian students in different school levels (absolute and percentage-based figures) 1996/1997 and 2007 -2008 school years.**

Scholastic years	Total	Pre-primary School	Primary	Lower secondary school	Upper secondary school
<b>Absolute Values</b>					
1996-97	59.389	12.809	26.752	11.991	7.837
.....					
2001-02	196.414	39.445	84.122	45.253	27.594
2002-03	239.808	48.072	100.939	55.907	34.890
2003-04	307.141	59.500	123.814	71.447	52.380
2004-05	370.803	74.348	147.633	84.989	63.833
2005-06	431.211	84.058	165.951	98.150	83.052
2006-07	501.420	94.712	190.803	113.076	102.829
2007-08	574.133	111.044	217.716	126.396	118.977
<b>Per 100 students</b>					
1996-97	0,7	0,8	1,0	0,6	0,3
.....					
2001-02	2,2	2,5	3,0	2,5	1,1
2002-03	2,7	3,0	3,7	3,1	1,3
2003-04	3,5	3,6	4,5	4,0	2,0
2004-05	4,2	4,5	5,3	4,7	2,4
2005-06	4,8	5,0	5,9	5,6	3,1
2006-07	5,6	5,7	6,8	6,5	3,8
2007-08	6,4	6,7	7,7	7,3	4,3

**Table 3.2 - Rom children in Italian schools. Distribution by region (2007-2008 school year)**

Geographic Area	Total	Pre-primary School	Primary	Lower secondary school	Upper secondary school
<b>Absolute Values</b>					
Italy	12.342	2.061	6.801	3.299	181
Northwest	3.252	532	1.868	832	20
Northeast	2.610	294	1.416	857	43
Central	3.187	624	1.681	819	63
South	3.293	611	1.836	791	55
<b>%</b>					
Italy	100,0	16,7	55,1	26,7	1,5
Northwest	100,0	16,4	57,4	25,6	0,6
Northeast	100,0	11,3	54,3	32,8	1,6
Central	100,0	19,6	52,7	25,7	2,0
South	100,0	18,6	55,8	24,0	1,7

**Figure 3.3: Rom children in Italian schools. Distribution by region (s.y.2007-2008).**

The Italian model is structurally dynamic, despite migrant populations tending to settle permanently in a single place, former migrant families changing their original lifestyles and sending their Italy-born children to school, from primary to upper secondary.

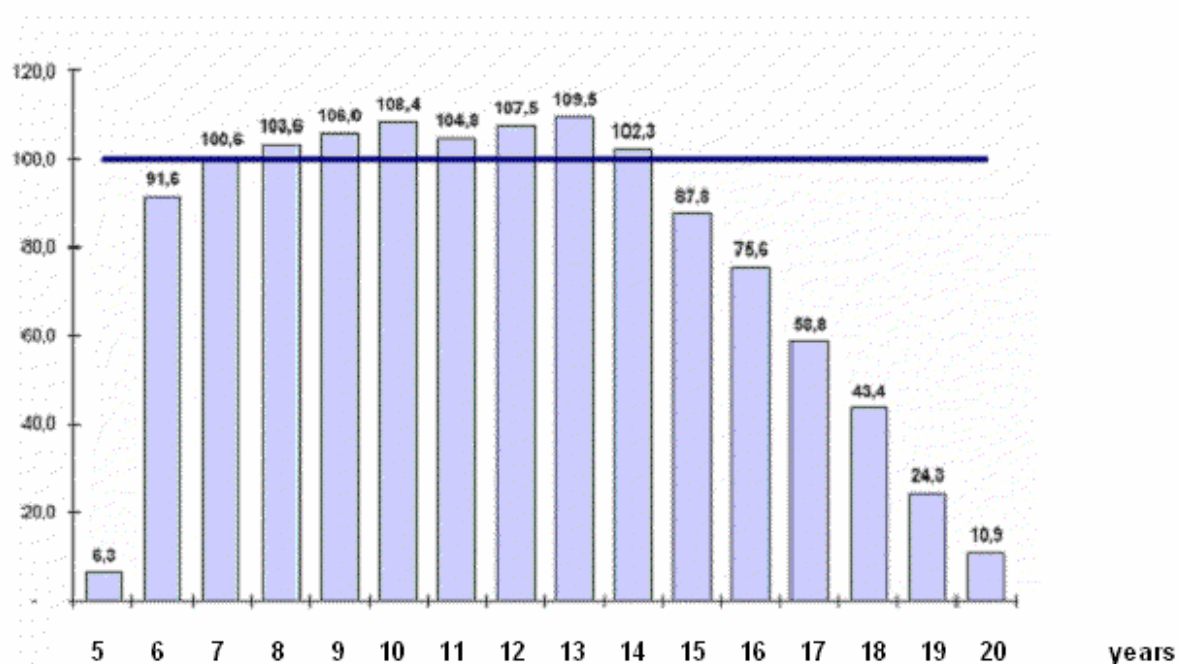
**Figure 3.4: schooling rate of non-Italian children as referred to 2006-2007 school year.**



Figure 3.5: Non-Italian students by school level (1996/97 – 2007/08)

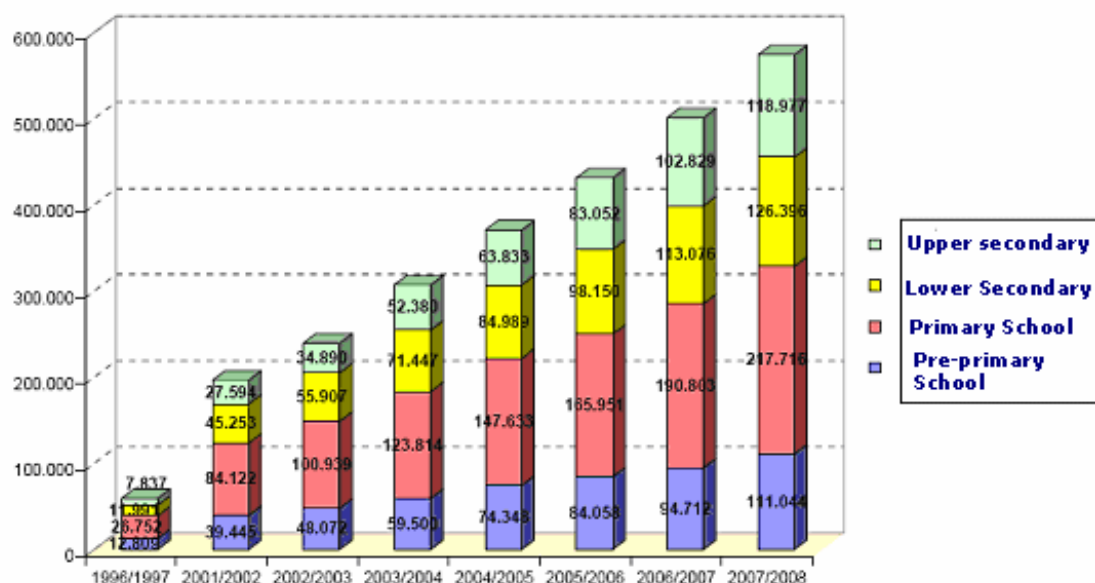


Figure 3.6: Children of non-Italian citizenship born in Italy by school level (percentages)

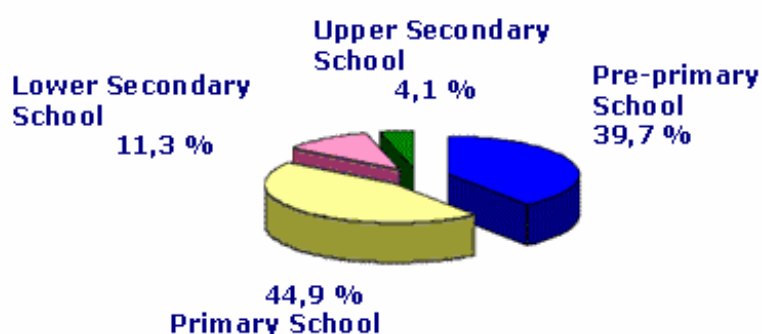
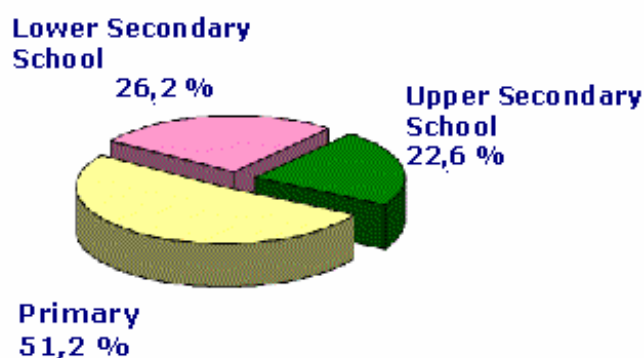


Figure 3.7: Non-Italian children newly admitted to Italian schools, distribution by school level (percentages) 2007/08.



The quality of the induction of newly-admitted non-native children is a crucial factor to successful integration. It is in the first weeks of school attendance that the foundations of a positive relationship between the children and the school community are built. While in most cases induction takes place at the beginning of the first semester, one fifth of the newly-admitted alien children start actual attendance at mid-term. For this reason, it is important for the entire school teaching and administrative staff to share the same views on how to manage the induction period and set rules, roles, contents and schedules, in short, determine who does what and when with the new pupils. Everyone must be familiar with the laws concerning admissions and registrations. Presidential Decree n.394/1999, Ministry Circular n.24/2006 and Ministry Circular n. 93/2006 state the following:

“non-Italian minors are equalled to Italian minors. Foreign-born children under the age of 18 are admitted to all levels of compulsory schooling under the same conditions established for their Italian peers. Application may be made at any time during the school year. Such minors are normally admitted to the grade corresponding to their official age, unless the Teachers’ Assembly deems a different class or grade to be more suitable to the case. Such a resolution is made by taking the academic level the student has reached into account. The applicant may therefore be admitted to a lower or upper grade than the one in line with his/her recorded age. The curriculum the applicant has followed in his/her country, the qualifications earned, the competences and skills acquired are also taken into account”.

By law the Teachers’ Assembly establishes the criteria of distribution of non-Italian students in the school classes. Such criteria envisage an equal distribution of non-natives and natives in each class, in view of guaranteeing effectiveness in learning and better social integration for each and everyone.

A good relationship between school staff and non-Italian parents is also crucial in determining social integration. The following three factors are taken into account in designing a satisfactory rapport:

- Families’ preferences with regard to the selection of the school.
- Active parental involvement during the induction period of the new students,
- Active parental participation in the curricular and extra-curricular activities of the school, committed sharing of the pedagogy of the school and acceptance of the teacher-parent partnership in enhancing the student’s personal and academic growth.

In this connection, the role of cultural mediators as parent-teacher relationship boosters is more and more appreciated.

### ***c) Linguistic minorities***

In 2009 the 10th anniversary of Law 482/99 will be celebrated. This piece of legislation organically safeguards the rights of twelve linguistic minorities in the country, thus respecting the Italian Constitution and European resolutions and recommendations. The main principle guiding the measures taken in these ten years is that linguistic diversity is a resource for both Italy and Europe itself.

The combined efforts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Strasbourg, 5 November 1992) and the Decree issued by the President of the Italian Republic (Number 45/2001), which contains the norms enforcing the Charter in Italy, have helped schools reach important objectives in safeguarding and preserving regional languages on a national and European level. It may be helpful to recall a number of these objectives on the issue:

- The setting up of networks with local, national and European communities and partners;
- The provision of lifelong learning opportunities;
- The use of minority languages in CLIL, making their learning more effective.

***d) Hospital schooling, at-home teaching and distance learning for young patients***

As a consequence of the National Health Plan for 2002 – 2004 aiming to reduce hospitalization whenever possible and also of heightened awareness of the particular educational needs of young patients, in recent years greater attention has been focused on the provision of alternative schooling services to seriously-ill young learners, so as to allow them to continue their education.

Too often, indeed, interrupting one's education for health reasons leads to early school leaving or failure. There are essentially two alternative schooling services set up by the Italian Ministry of Education for children and adolescents who are unable to attend regular schools for health reasons:

1. *Hospital schooling*
2. *at-home teaching and distance learning*

The first initiative deploys schools acting as regional provision centres for hospital schooling services. These schools are linked with hospitals to guarantee young hospitalized learners the right to continue their studies, this service thus representing a branch of public education services. Hospital schooling has grown from a sporadic service relying on the care and willingness of single organizations and professionals to a truly organized school structure, with the service being well-inscribed in the regional centres' school plans. Some of the features of the service may be interesting to note:

- it is designed so as to cater to scheduled therapy and medical check-ups and takes into consideration the type of illness the young learner is affected by and the routines of the different health services he/she depends on;
- it privileges learning in small groups when possible or provides one-to one teacher-pupil relationships for bedridden learners; it uses virtual IT learning environments instead of the physical classrooms, laboratories and work spaces typical of regular schools;
- it favours a tight link between the teachers working in the hospital environment and the schools acting as regional provision centres;
- it integrates health workers, volunteer organizations and other service providers into mainstream recreational activities.

Considering the fact that hospitalized young people require personalized learning tracks, the service takes on the following responsibilities:

- it fosters the education of long-term hospitalized learners;
- it helps learners hospitalized for short periods to catch up on their learning;
- it plans teaching provision for learners undergoing day-hospital therapy;
- it provides personalized pastoral care;
- in metropolitan areas, it aims to guarantee hospital schooling through the regional centres for every schooling level;
- in small/medium-sized urban centres, it links up with regular schools to plan hospital schooling provision where possible.

Links with local administration and health services are important for compensatory measures and for the provision of correlated services. There being now more and more information available on education and health, an increased demand for hospital schooling services at all schooling levels has emerged, and a greater number of home schooling projects for seriously-ill learners have also been implemented.

The home-schooling service for ill minors caters to their compulsory schooling and education while they are ill, so as to facilitate their going back to school once they are better, thus aiming to reduce one of the factors influencing early school leaving. Learners forced home on

account of health reasons for over 30 days and needing periodic treatment cycles are targeted in this service. On account of the tendency to reduce hospitalization whenever possible, demand for the service is increasing, which requires a coordinated effort by schools and health workers so as to respond to the young patient's needs in an organic way.

The main issues of this service are the following:

1. ways to integrate the work done by the hospital schooling service, the class the learner belongs to in his regular school and the lessons provided at home. Up to now teachers working in the hospital environment have been engaged in providing the home schooling services. However, at least theoretically-speaking, the aim is to put all the teachers of all the schools in the country in the position to be able to step in if called upon to provide home schooling to their students when seriously ill;
2. ways to link up the home and school learning environments, so as to help the learner feel part of his regular class, involving the appropriate teaching and relationship-building strategies;
3. ways to help all the schools in the country build up a culture of assistance to home schooling for students prevented from attendance for serious health reasons, seeing that any school could be faced with the problem;
4. how to set up standard quality service home schooling throughout the country, with the help of a detailed set of guidelines.

As mentioned earlier, nowadays with the reduced hospitalization time called for by the National Health Plan, young patients are sent home and usually continue their treatment in Day Hospital sessions. The HSH@Network Project (Hospital School Home Network) supports the previous two services through an innovative IT model providing hospital schooling with the technological infrastructure, the hardware, the software and the in-service training for teachers operating within these environments. The Network itself and the work carried out with the young patients through the use of ICT become part of the therapeutic process.

Through iMIUR – the area dedicated to the Ministry's most advanced IT system – the project aims to create a model with the following features:

- a virtual link with the young patient's regular class of schoolmates, to allow him/her to keep up with them;
- a support for the learner's motivation, through hands-on IT;
- an improvement in the quality of life of young long-term patients, periodic day – hospital patients or learners confined to their home environments for serious health reasons, involving them in learning experiences that are an integral part of the therapeutic process;
- less isolation through the creation of virtual links with classmates;
- on-line sharing of learning materials;
- on-line sharing of teaching methods and materials by teachers operating in the hospital environment and those operating at school;
- the setting up of in-service training for teachers on the specific issues related to teaching children affected by serious illnesses and on specific ICT aids;
- ways to better engage the network of regional hospital schooling centres in the service and better connect them to the regular schools originally attended by the young patients.

***e) Schools in prison – compulsory education provision and vocational training***

Prisons provide inmates who have not fulfilled their compulsory education requirements with opportunities to do so, whether at primary, lower secondary or upper secondary school level.

They also provide a range of vocational training courses using methods best suited to the inmates' conditions.

The tables below provide the absolute numbers of inmates enrolled in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school courses in the year 2005 (out of an approximate total of 59,000, with the females accounting for less than 5%) .

**General data on education provision in prisons in 2005**  
(source: Ministry of Justice)

**PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Males enrolled	Females enrolled	Male dropouts	Female dropouts	Males passes	Females passes
1898	232	529	91	467	84

**PRIMARY SCHOOL – NON-ITALIANS**

Males enrolled	Females enrolled
374	51

**LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL**

Males enrolled	Females enrolled	Male drop outs	Female drop outs	Males passes	Females passes
2763	233	829	88	621	73

**UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL**

Males enrolled	Females enrolled	Male drop outs	Female drop outs	Males passes	Females passes
1666	118	449	56	646	36

Primary school instruction is provided by primary teachers with specific qualifications who have passed a public competition (art. 132 of Legislative Decree 297/1994). Upon request to the Ministry of Education by prison authorities, secondary school instruction is organized by local schools, who open branches within the walls of specified prisons.

Moreover, since 2005 EU funds have helped the Ministry of Education set up a regional project in Sicily called "Prison Schooling" in order to pilot the setting up of training courses and learning environments for young people who have been temporarily deprived of their freedom. The organisation of the courses has been assigned to a lower secondary school in Acireale, Sicily, called Scuola Media Statale "Galileo Galilei". The courses, each lasting 25 hours and involving eight learners, cover a range of topics, from basic ICT skills to classical guitar, model ship-building and restoring antique furniture.

### 3) REFERENCES USED IN PREPARING THE REPORT

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ANSAS - National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy <http://www.indire.it/>

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