

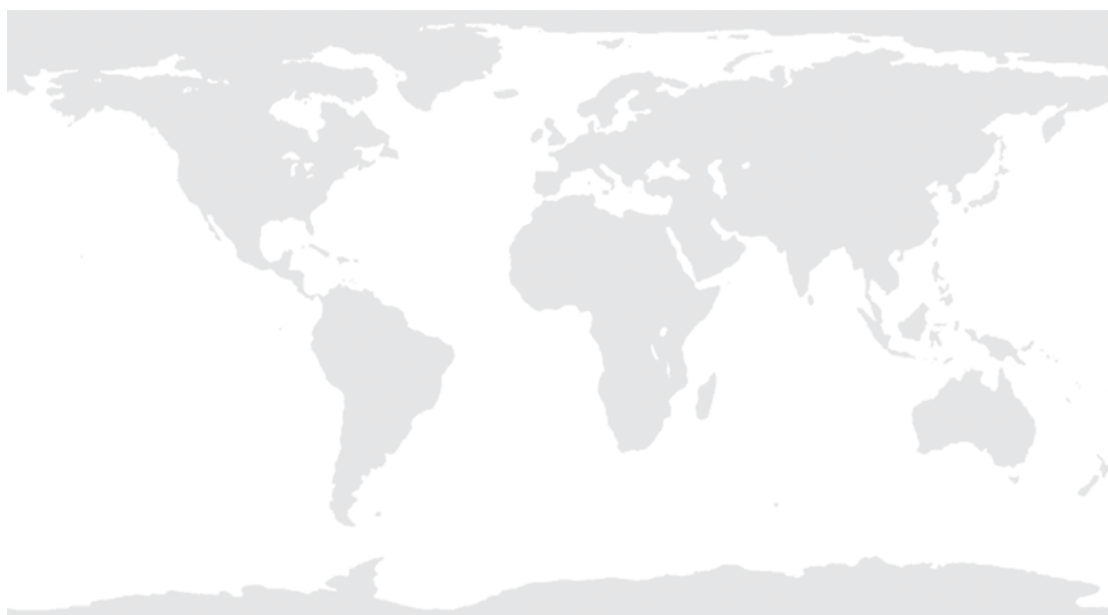


World Data on Education

Données mondiales de l'éducation

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Principles and general objectives of education

The fundamental educational principles, sanctioned by the Constitution of Italy which came into effect on 1 January 1948, are: the freedom of education; the duty of the state to provide a network of educational establishments of every type and level and open to everyone with no discrimination of any type; the right of the universities, academies and cultural institutions at higher level to lay down independently their own regulations; the right of private individuals to establish schools and educational establishments; the right-duty of parents to provide education for their children. Teachers are free to teach according to methods and criteria which in all cases ensure that students have the possibility—and thereby the freedom—to develop individual critical abilities, free from any psychological or ideological conditioning. All capable and deserving students, even if they lack the necessary means, have the right to reach the highest levels of education.

The Policy Guidelines for the year 2012 of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (*Atto di Indirizzo* of 8 November 2011) recognize that, in the context of the global economy, the continuous improvement of the quality of education is one of the key priorities for ensuring development and social and economic growth. While ensuring equal access to all young people and promoting processes of social mobility especially in disadvantaged areas of the country, the school and the university systems shall increasingly acknowledge the value of merit, which can be viewed as the highest expression of democratic principles and, at the same time, as the necessary foundation for guaranteeing effective possibilities of access to a highly competitive globalized labour market. Initiatives to be developed will aim at improving the quality of education and training provision and offering guidance to young people for continuing their studies and entering into the labour market on the basis of their aptitudes and potentials, mainly through a more effective interaction and collaboration with the institutions in the territory and the world of work as well as the development of the school-work alternance (internship) methodology.

The (draft) National Guidelines for the curriculum of the pre-primary school and the first cycle of school education (i.e. primary and lower secondary) of 2012 indicate that the general objective of the educational process in the public school system is the achievement of the eight key competences for lifelong learning recommended by the European Parliament and the Council in December 2006, i.e.: communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; social and civic competences; sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and cultural awareness and expression. (MIUR, May 2012).

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Constitutional Law No. 3** of 18 October 2001 modified the responsibilities of the state and the 20 regions in the field of education by stipulating that general education falls under the exclusive competence of the state as for the definition of general rules, essential levels of performance and fundamental principles of legislation to be applied at regional level, while vocational education and training falls under the responsibility of the regions, although the definition of essential levels of performance remain under the responsibility of the state.

The **Law No. 59** of 15 March 1997 provides the principles and guidelines for the autonomy of educational institutions. According to Article 21 of this Law, all schools having full legal status are autonomous with regard to their organization and programmes, within the framework of the general goals and objectives of the national education system and national standards. School autonomy also means that school managers are responsible for the school's budget and outcomes, and for managing, coordinating and improving the school's human resources. The **Presidential Decree (DPR) No. 275** of 8 March 1999 regulates the autonomy of educational institutions in the areas of pedagogy, organization, innovation, research and experimentation, including the organization of curriculum time (lesson timetables) and the part of the curriculum which is defined by the school within the framework of national guidelines and the orientations provided by the regions. The **Ministerial Decree** of 28 December 2005, further confirmed by **Decree No. 47** of 13 June 2006, stipulates that 20% of the compulsory curriculum time is reserved for the schools in accordance with the school autonomy.

The **Decree Law No. 444** of 18 March 1968 on setting up state preschool/nursery school (*scuola materna*), and the subsequent guidelines of 1969 regarding educational activities, were instrumental in increasing awareness about the value of early childhood intervention. The establishment of preschools led to a gradual and increasingly broad provision of services. The guidelines regarding educational activities, issued by the Ministerial Decree of 3 June 1991, confirmed the educational and institutional autonomy of preschools. The Law 53/2003 and the Legislative Decree 59/2004 provide for the full integration of the pre-primary school (*scuola dell'infanzia*) into the education system, also reforming some aspects of its organization. The reform of pre-primary education was applied in 2004/05.

During the period 1985–1990, primary education underwent a process of profound renewal which was completed by the new programmes adopted in 1985 (Presidential Decree No. 104), replacing the curricula of 1955, and the new primary school system as stipulated in **Law No. 148** of 1990. This Law outlined the new educational and organizational features of the primary school, and allowed for adjustments to meet cultural complexities and social needs. The Ministerial Decree of 28 June 1991 provided for the gradual introduction of a compulsory foreign language at the primary level. The **Ministerial Decree** of 9 February 1979 established the new programmes for lower secondary education, modifying the formulation and content of the programmes adopted in 1962 through Law No. 1859, which also extended the duration of compulsory education up to eight years as of 1963/64. In 1994/95, new criteria for pupil assessment were introduced, concluding a long experimental phase started in 1977 with the adoption of **Law No. 517**, which abolished the traditional



grading system replaced by analytic and synthetic evaluations. Primary and lower secondary education were reformed in 2004 (i.e. Law 53/2003 and the Decree 59/2004). The **Ministerial Decree No. 139** of 22 August 2007 provides for the extension of the length of compulsory education, and also describes the competences and knowledge that pupils are expected to have acquired at the end of compulsory education. The **Decree of 31 July 2007** introduced the curriculum guidelines for pre-primary education and for the first cycle of school education (primary and lower secondary) on an experimental basis. The **Presidential Decree (DPR) No. 89** of 20 March 2009 provides for the revision of the organization and the pedagogical process at pre-primary, primary and lower secondary levels (e.g. admission age, lesson timetables at primary and lower secondary levels, number of teachers per class at primary level, and groups of subjects taught by the same teacher), starting from school year 2009/10. The DPR 89/2009 also regulates the composition of classes including pupils with special educational needs. The **Law No. 104** of 5 February 1992 provided for the assistance, social integration and right of disabled people, granting the right to education in mainstream classes at every educational level, including university.

With regard to upper secondary education, the **Presidential Decree (DPR) No. 419** of 1974 gave schools the possibility of introducing experimental innovations in terms of programmes and methodology. Many innovations introduced at the initiative of teachers' committees, as required by the law, have been incorporated into the ministerial programmes, which have thus rationalized projects and resources. This Decree defined the type of activities and modalities of in-service training for school heads, inspectors and teaching staff, and the ways to implement innovations. The Decree also established several institutions to act as support structures for these activities, i.e.: the Regional Institutes for Research, Experimentation and In-service Training (IRRSAE, subsequently transformed into the Regional Institutes for Educational Research—IRRE), in charge of technical advice and support; the European Centre for Education (CEDE, subsequently transformed into the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System), which conducted studies and research at the national and European levels; and the Educational Documentation Library (BDP, subsequently transformed into the National Documentation Institute for Educational Innovation and Research, INDIRE). Following the adoption of the **Financial Law No. 296** of 27 December 2006, the INDIRE was replaced by the National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy, and the IRRE by Regional Offices (*Nuclei Regionali*) of the National Agency.

The **Decree No. 4018/FR** of 31 May 2006 provided for the suspension of the implementation of the Ministerial Decree No. 775 of 31 January 2006 on the innovation of the upper secondary school (i.e. lyceum) and the related study pathways, that is, the experimentation of the new system introduced through the Decree Law No. 226 of 17 October 2005. The **Decree No. 7** of 31 January 2007, converted into **Law No. 40** of 2 April 2007, reintroduced the technical schools and the vocational schools (i.e. *istituti tecnici* and *istituti professionali*) and abolished two types of lyceum (specializing in economic studies and technological studies) initially foreseen by the Decree Law No. 226/2005. The **Presidential Decree (DPR) No. 89** of 15 March 2010 provides the revised regulations for the reform of the upper secondary school (lyceum, technical school and vocational training school) being implemented from 2010/11.



The **Law No. 169** of 20 October 2008, converting into law the **Decree No. 137** of 1 September 2008, has introduced new criteria for the assessment and progression of students at primary and secondary levels from school year 2008/09. This law also provides also for the reorganization of school time at primary level, the introduction of the teaching of ‘citizenship and constitution’ on experimental basis, as well as new criteria for the choice of textbooks. In 2009/10, the teaching of ‘citizenship and constitution’ has been implemented in all schools, including pre-primary schools. The **Presidential Decree (DPR) No. 122** of 22 June 2009, issued according to Law 169/2008, coordinates all the provisions concerning student assessment at the primary and secondary levels. This Decree is being implemented from 2009/10, although some of the provisions were already applied in school 2007/08. The **Ministerial Decree No. 99** of 16 December 2009 modified the criteria for the award of full marks at the upper secondary level and of the school credit.

The **Law No. 30** of 14 February 2003 and the **Legislative Decree No. 276** of 2003 have introduced three types of apprenticeship, i.e.: for young people 16-18 years old as an accomplishment of the right-duty to education and training (the contract lasts a maximum of three years); profession-oriented or professional apprenticeship (young people aged 18+); and higher apprenticeship leading to a diploma or high training pathways. The **Legislative Decree No. 77** of 15 April 2005 regulates the school-work alternance training (internship). This is a didactic methodology that can be used in all pathways included in the second cycle of the vocational education and training (VET) system for students who are at least 16 years old. ‘Alternance’ includes different type of activities such as internships, classroom training, study visits at companies, and enterprise simulations. Schools are responsible for designing pathways, keeping contacts with enterprises, organizing and conducting courses. The role of apprenticeship as a crucial path linking VET and the labour market has been enhanced by the Legislative Decree of 28 July 2011 (Ministry of Labour), which foresees apprenticeship as a permanent employment contract. In the new legislation the first type of apprenticeship is named apprenticeship for a vocational qualification or diploma, and will be regulated by the regions. The length of the professional apprenticeship has been reduced to maximum three years (five for craft industries). (CEDEFOP, 2011).

The technical education and training system at the postsecondary, non-tertiary level, has been reformed by the **Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers (DPCM)** of 25 January 2008. The DPCM concerns the following aspects: the training programmes offered at the higher technical institutes; the reorganization of the higher technical education and training system and its courses; the standards, access requirements and the certification of the training pathways; and measures to help the development of technical-vocational centres. (Eurydice, 2009/10).

The need to maintain the university system up-to-date led to some important changes in its organization at the beginning of the 1990s. In order to give greater impetus to this process, the Ministry of Universities and Scientific and Technological Research was set up in 1989, and the **Law No. 341** providing for the reform of university education was approved on 19 November 1990. This law reorganized the system taking into consideration the cultural, economic and social changes at both the national and international levels. The **Law No. 390** of 2 December 1991 contains provisions concerning the right to access university education and regulates the



financial support and services provided to the students. It should be mentioned that Law No. 910 of 11 December 1969 granted access to university to all upper secondary school graduates. The autonomy of universities is regulated by **Decree No. 509** of 3 November 1999, amended by the **Decree No. 270** of 22 October 2004. The Decree of 1999 entered into force in 2001 and **Law No. 508** of 21 December 1999, complemented by the **Presidential Decree (DPR) No. 212** of 2005 on higher education institutions in the field of the arts, represent the main legislative framework for the implementation of the reform of the higher education system in accordance with the European three-cycle degree pattern outlined in the Bologna process. The **Law No. 296** of 27 December 2006 provides for the establishment of the National Agency for the Evaluation of the Universities and Research System. The **Law No. 240** of 30 December 2010 provides for the reform of university governance and funding and aims at making universities more autonomous and more accountable thus contributing to a better performance of the higher education system. The principles of the reform are: a better management of human resources (including performance-based careers and remuneration) and improved recruitment processes. (CEDEFOP, 2011).

The **Law No. 62** of 10 March 2000 contains provisions concerning the right to education and regulates the equality between public and private schools, particularly the *scuole paritarie* run by organizations (mainly denominational) or private citizens but officially recognized by the state (if the school applies for such a recognition and provided that certain requirements are met) and therefore authorized to award diplomas and certificates legally equivalent to those awarded by state schools. The financial support is directly given to the parents of pupils of state and non-state schools (*scuole paritarie*) through scholarships and tax relief instead of allotting funds to the administrators of non-state schools. **Law No. 27** of 3 February 2006 (not yet entered into force) stipulates that there are only two types of non-state schools: the schools which have obtained equal status under Law 62/2000 (i.e. *scuole paritarie*), and private schools without equal status (*scuole non paritarie*) which cannot award diplomas and certificates with legal value.

The reform **Law No. 53** adopted on 28 March 2003 delegated to the government the power of defining the general framework and the essential levels of services offered in the field of education and vocational training. On the basis of this Law, an overall reform of the education and training system through a series of legislative Decrees and Regulations has been introduced. The structure of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education has been reformed by the **Legislative Decree No. 59** of 19 February 2004. At the pre-university level, the new education system consists of two cycles. The first cycle lasts eight years, is compulsory and comprises five years of primary and three years of lower secondary education. At the end of this cycle pupils sit the national school-leaving examination. The oral and written examinations at the end of primary school have been phased out. The second cycle of school education (i.e. upper secondary education, general and technical-vocational) lasts five years.

The **Decree No. 227** of 17 October 2005 introduced new requirements for teachers' qualifications. According to the Decree, all teachers should be graduates of a specialized two-year, second-cycle degree programme (following a three-year first cycle degree) at higher education level. The **Law No. 244** of 24 December 2007 (i.e.



the Financial Law of 2008) repealed the Decree Law No. 227/2005 and the related provisions of the reform Law No. 53/2003 on initial teacher training and recruitment procedures, envisaging a further reform on the same issue. The recent **Ministerial Decree No. 249** of 15 September 2010, entered into force in February 2011, introduces the reform of initial training and recruitment of pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers. According to the Decree, all teachers must have completed a five-year university degree programme (*laurea magistrale*). Pre-primary and primary teachers are to be graduates of a first-cycle degree programme lasting five years, including a total of 600 hours of practical training (starting from the second year). Teachers at the secondary level (lower and upper) are to be graduates of a second-cycle degree programme lasting two years (following a three-year university degree) with an additional one year of practical training. The reform of teacher education is expected to be implemented starting from 2011/12.

Law No. 9 of 20 January 1999 extended the duration of compulsory schooling up to the age of 15, further extended to the age of 16 on the basis of the Financial Law No. 296 of December 2006 and by the **Ministerial Decree No. 139** of 22 August 2007. This includes the first cycle of school education (e.g. five years of primary and three years of lower secondary education) and the first two years of upper secondary education. On the basis of the reform Law 53/2003, the 'right-duty' to education has been raised to twelve years or until the student has obtained a qualification within the vocational education and training system (i.e. up to 18 years of age).

Administration and management of the education system

Traditionally, the administration of the school system in Italy has been rather centralized. Since the 1950s, however, a gradual process of decentralization of services and responsibilities to the local level started. During the 1970s, in particular, many responsibilities, including those related to education, were transferred from the state to the local authorities (regions, provinces and municipalities).

The **Ministry of Education, University and Research** (MIUR, previously the Ministry of Public Education) has the overall responsibility over the education system, coordinates and organizes educational activities of public and private establishments, and supervises of all educational institutions. The Minister is responsible for policy directions and he/she is assisted by one or more Under-secretaries of State (appointed by the Prime Minister) who perform duties delegated to them by the Minister. The Minister of Education is also assisted by the members of the various General Directorates and Services within the Ministry, and by a group of ministerial advisors. The organization of the Ministry of Education introduced by Regulation No. 347 of 2000 established two main departments (*Dipartimenti*), increased to three in 2003. The MIUR has been reorganized according to the Presidential Decree (DPR) No. 17 of 20 January 2009.

The Ministry of Universities and Scientific and Technological Research, created in 1989, has been responsible for university education until the year 2000. It was then merged with the Ministry of Public Education (which became the Ministry of Education, University and Research) according to the Decree Law No. 300 of 30 July 1999. In July 2006, the responsibility for higher education was re-transferred to the Ministry of Universities and Research. Following the approval of the 2008



Financial Law (Law No. 244/2007), the Ministry of Education, University and Research was re-established in 2008.

The current organizational structure of the MIUR comprises three main Departments. The **Department for Education**, which includes four General Directorates, is responsible for the general organization of the school system, the definition of the formative objectives and the legal and economic status of school staff. The functions of the Directorate General for the organization of the school system and school autonomy relate to curricula and study programmes, the definition of learning objectives, the tests for the recruitment of teachers, research and innovation, examinations, and the evaluation of the education system. The Directorate General for school staff deals with legal and financial aspects of the teaching profession, the setting of the number of teaching and administrative staff to schools, and the recruitment of school managers. The Directorate General for students, the integration, participation and communication mainly focuses on the implementation of youth social policies, the prevention of dropouts, the inclusion of students with special needs, and the relations with parents' associations and the institutional communication system. The Directorate General for higher technical education and training and for the relations with the training systems of the regions carries out tasks related to the development of technical-vocational education, higher technical education and training, as well as adult education. The other two Departments are the Department for planning and the management of human and financial resources, which includes four General Directorates, and the Department for the university, higher education institutions in the field of the arts, as well as research, which also includes four General Directorates.

The **National Education Council** (*Consiglio Nazionale della Pubblica Istruzione*) is an advisory body to the Minister of Education in matters related to the planning and supervision of education policies. According to the Decree Law No. 233 of 30 June 1999, it was to be replaced by the Higher Council for Education (*Consiglio Superiore della Pubblica Istruzione*). However, as the Higher Council has not been set up, according to Decree Law No. 411 of 23 November 2001 the National Council will keep functioning until the Higher Council is constituted.

The **National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System** (INVALSI) was established in 1999. The Law No. 53/2003 indicates that, in order to improve and standardize the quality of the education and training system, the INVALSI regularly evaluates students' knowledge and skills as well as the overall quality of the educational provision. The National Institute is a public research body with legal status under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. At least every three years, the Ministry establishes strategic priorities that have to be taken into account by the INVALSI in order to plan its activities. As for the education system, the Ministry issues a specific directive, while for the vocational education and training system, the Ministry issues specific guidelines that are drawn up in collaboration with the State-Regions Conference and the Ministry of Labour. Within the process for establishing a national evaluation system, the Decree Law No. 213/2009 redefined the functions of the INVALSI as follows: the design of tools and objective methods for the evaluation of learning outcomes and the dissemination of the results of such evaluations; the promotion of periodical national tests for assessing learning outcomes for the use of schools and vocational education and training institutions, including the



support to schools and training institutions also through the creation of tests that can also be used for school self-evaluation practices; the research on models and methods for the evaluation of schools and training institutions and the study of factors influencing learning processes; the preparation of tests for national state examinations; carrying out studies and research activities, and coordinate the participation of the country in international projects in the field of evaluation; the provision of support and technical assistance to the regions and local authorities that carry out monitoring, evaluation and self-evaluation activities; and the provision of training to teaching staff and managers on issues related to evaluation in collaboration with the National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy (Eurydice, 2009/10).

The **National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy (ANSAS)** was established in 2007 replacing the National Documentation Institute for Educational Innovation and Research (INDIRE). The former Regional Institutes for Educational Research (IRRE) attached to INDIRE are now Regional Offices (*Nuclei Regionali*) of the National Agency. The main functions of the ANSAS include: carrying out educational research and providing didactic advice; providing school staff with training and updating; establishing services for pedagogical and didactic documentation, as well as for experimentation and research; participating in international initiatives related to matters falling within its competences; collaborating in the implementation of initiatives at national level in the field of adult education and higher technical education and training; and collaborating with the regions and local authorities.

The **National Institute for the Development of Vocational Training of Workers (ISFOL)**, established in 1973 as a public research institute under the control of the then Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies (currently the **Ministry of Labour and Social Policies**), is the main reference body for research and monitoring activities, policies and guidance to regions with regard to the three-year vocational education and training courses falling under the responsibility of the regions. The Institute, in particular, works in the field of training, social policies and labour market. It promotes and carries out activities related to research, experimentation, documentation, information, evaluation and technical assistance. It provides technical and scientific support to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and to other ministries, the regions and provinces, and to other national institutions, also for initiatives within the European Social Fund programme. (*Ibid.*).

The National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System was established by Ministerial Decree No. 178 of 4 April 2000 as an independent body that interacts autonomously with the universities and the Ministry. The Committee was in charge of the definition of general criteria for the evaluation of university activities, the implementation of an annual programme of external evaluation of the universities, as well as surveys, evaluations, definition of standards, parameters and regulations for the Ministry. Until the end of 2008, the evaluation of research activities both in universities and in public and private research bodies receiving public funding was under the responsibility of the Guidance Committee for the Evaluation of Research, established in 1998. The Presidential Decree (DPR) No. 64 of 2008 provides for the establishment of a single **National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research System (ANVUR)**, replacing the National



Committee and the Guidance Committee. The Agency is a public body with administrative and financial autonomy under the control of the Ministry of Education, and is responsible for the public national quality evaluation system for universities and research bodies.

The main advisory and consultative bodies for university education are: the **National University Council**—comprising representatives of rectors, university staff and students—which gives opinions and proposals on issues of general interest for universities, particularly in relation to university planning, the approval of teaching regulations, and the appointment of professors and researchers; and the **National Council of University Students**. On matters related to the right to study, the Minister asks the opinion of the **National Council for the Right to University Studies**, chaired by the Minister and comprising five representatives of the universities, five representatives of the regions and five representatives of the students. The **Rectors' Conference** gives its opinions on draft decrees prepared by the Minister concerning the objectives of the university system and the allocation of financial resources. The **National Council for Higher Level Art and Music Education** (CNAM), established in 1999, provides opinions and proposals on matters concerning the art, music and dance institutions at the tertiary level.

Until the end of the 1990s there were offices of the Ministry of Education in the regions (*Sovrintendenze Scolastiche Regionali* or Regional Education Superintendencies) and in the provinces (*Provveditorati agli Studi* or Provincial Directorates of Education). The main functions of these bodies included: implementing centrally-defined educational policy and administrative decisions; establishing contacts with other entities at the local level; and harmonizing the activities and services offered in the interests of the local population. Following the adoption of the Constitutional Law No. 3 of 2001 which modified the respective responsibilities of the state and the regions, and of Law No. 131 of 5 June 2003, the regional and provincial offices were replaced by **Regional School Offices** in 18 regions (in two regions with special statutes there are no regional offices of the Ministry as their functions are fulfilled by local bodies). These Offices are autonomous centres with administrative responsibility (including the planning of integrated education and vocational training offerings, the planning of the school network on the basis of provincial plans, fixing of the school calendar, contributions to non-state schools, as well as planning, management and offer of vocational training courses through accredited agencies) and additional functions which have been transferred neither to the regions nor to the schools (for example, the determination of the number of the schools' employees and the recruitment and deployment of educational staff); furthermore, they liaise with the regions, local authorities, universities and training agencies. The Regional School Offices (administratively equivalent to a Directorate General) can be present also at the provincial and sub-provincial level through the Centres for Administrative Services (CSA), which in 2002 replaced the Provincial Directorates of Education. The CSA were renamed **Provincial School Offices** in 2006. The Provincial School Office is an internal subdivision of the Regional School Office and it has no autonomy; managers at provincial offices also carry out any activity that is delegated to them by the head of the Regional School Office. The regions always work in collaboration with the state (mainly the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies) also through the **State-Regions Unified Conference**. Education and training issues



falling under the competences of the regions are dealt with by specific education offices (*Assessorati*) within the regions themselves. Their names can vary depending on the region considered. The main responsibilities of the regions concerning education and vocational training can be delegated to the provinces and communes on the basis of a trend which reserves to the regions functions of guidance, planning and monitoring and fewer managing functions.

The **provinces** are assigned specific functions only concerning the upper secondary level of education. In particular, provinces are responsible for premises, for the organization of the school network, suspension of school activities, constitution and control of collegiate bodies, and organization of services to guarantee the right to study (transport to sport centres outside the school, support for the purchase of textbooks, etc.). The **municipalities** (communes), under their own responsibility or delegated by the regions, administer the services required for the operation of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary schools within their jurisdiction, so as to ensure the school attendance of pupils, regardless of their economic or physical conditions. Welfare services run by the municipalities usually include: free transport to schools; the organization of school meals, either in or out of school, free of charge or at low cost according to the economic conditions of individual families; the supply of purchase vouchers for textbooks; and the granting of financial subsidies. In order to improve the offering of these services, smaller municipalities are often grouped together in consortia or inter-council associations.

Article 21 of the Law No. 59 of 15 March 1997 and the subsequent regulations (Decree No. 275 of 1999) concerning the autonomy of educational establishments grant to pre-primary, primary and secondary schools a considerable degree of autonomy with regard to the administration and management of education, including the organization of school time and classes, the adaptation of curricula to the local conditions on the basis of the national guidelines, research and experimentation, the use of teaching resources, etc. Each school prepares a plan (*Piano dell'Offerta Formativa*, POF), which reflects its own specific identity and the cultural, social and economic requirements of the local environment. The POF should take into account, among others, the educational staff, the teaching timetable, the annual timetable for educational activities, and the individualized study plans. The POF is prepared by the teachers' assembly on the basis of general objectives defined by the District/School Council and taking into account proposals and opinions of organizations, parents associations and, as far as upper secondary schools are concerned also of students associations. The POF must be approved by the District/School Council.

The main administrative, management and consultative bodies at the school level (pre-primary, primary and secondary schools) include: the **head teacher**, who is the school manager responsible for the overall management of the institution, including the management of financial, human and material resources and for the quality of the service provided; the director of general and administrative services; the **district** (pre-primary and primary level) or **school council**, comprising representatives of school staff, parents and students (in the case of upper secondary schools); the **teachers' assembly**, which defines the POF in consultation with the head teacher and the district/school council; and the **inter-section** (in pre-primary schools), **inter-class** (in primary schools) or the **class council**. These councils prepare educational and teaching plans for the class (especially concerning interdisciplinary matters), check

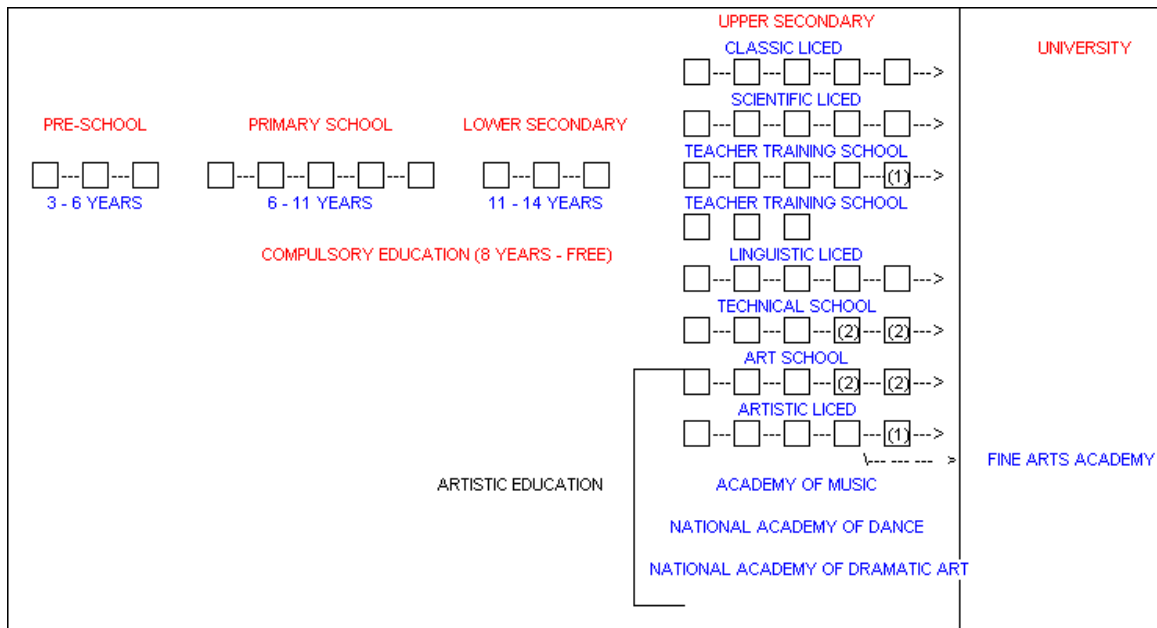


the progress of teaching and discipline in the class or section, approve innovations and support activities, propose and organize supplementary and extra-curricular activities. They also make proposals to the teachers' assembly on educational and teaching activities, organizational innovations, and the relations between teachers, parents and pupils.



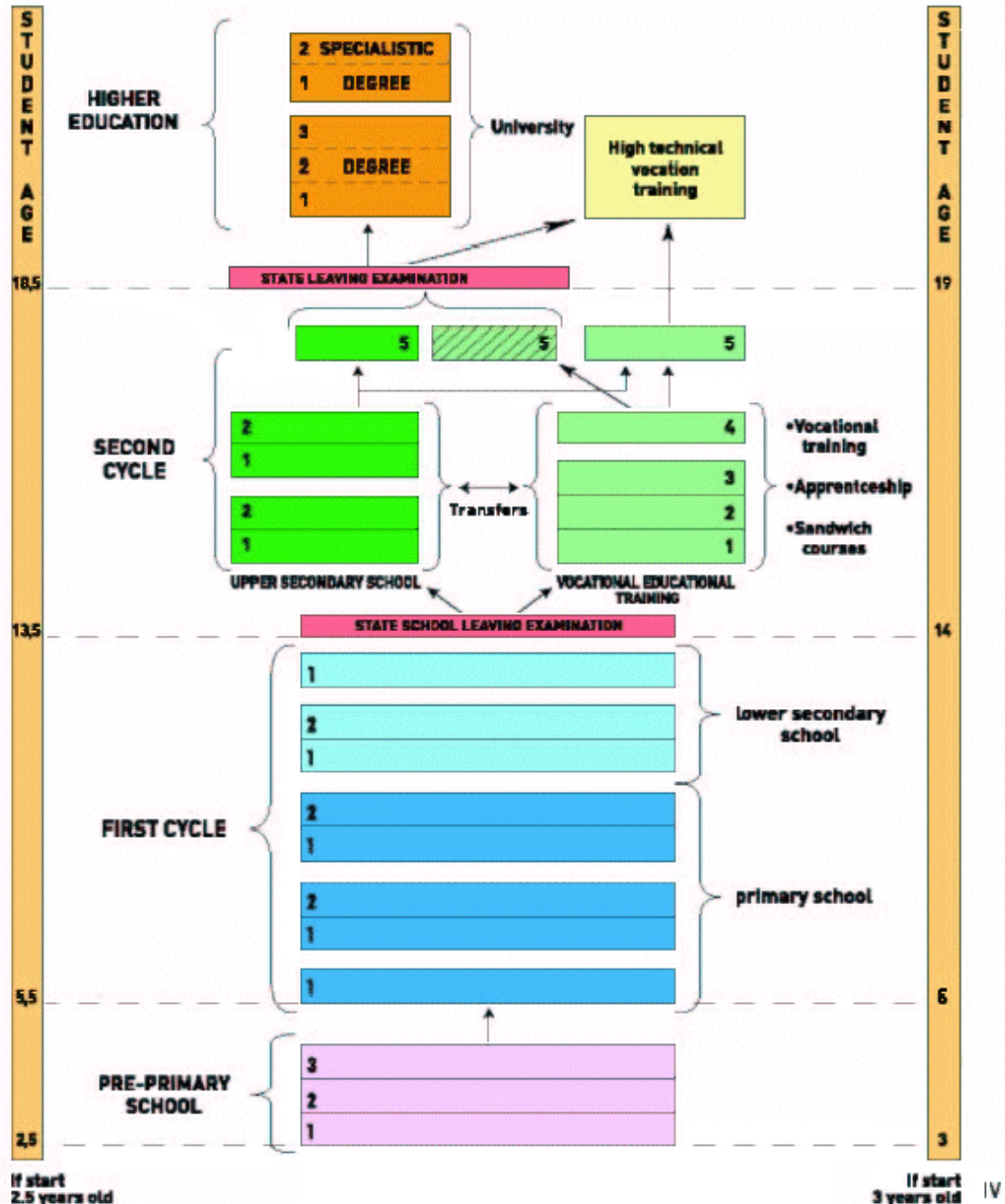
Structure and organization of the education system

Italy: structure of the education system (2000)



Italy: new structure of the education system (2003/04)

The new system of education and training in Italy
(Act no. 53 of 28 March 2003)



Pre-school education

The pre-primary school (*scuola dell'infanzia*) is for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years, including children with special education needs and learning difficulties, and is not compulsory. Attendance is free of charge in public sector preschools (i.e. state preschools and those recognized by the state); parents contribute covering costs



for transportation and meal services provided by the municipality. Non-state preschools operated by local organizations and associations receive subsidies from the state and the regions, provided that certain requirements are met (i.e. preschools *paritarie*). Classes called 'spring sections' for children aged 2 to 3 years have been introduced on an experimental basis in 2007.

Primary education

Primary education lasts five years and attendance is compulsory for all children aged 6-10. According to Law 53/2003 and the Decree 59/2004, the reformed school system consists of two cycles. The first cycle lasts eight years, comprising five years of primary and three years of lower secondary education. Primary education comprises the first year, which serves to ensure a smooth transition from pre-primary education, followed by two two-year cycles (grades 2 and 3, and grades 4 and 5). The oral and written examinations at the end of primary school have been phased out. At the end of primary education pupils receive a personal assessment paper, which specifies whether the pupil is admitted to the first grade of lower secondary school, together with a certification of the competences acquired by the pupil upon completion of primary school.

Secondary education

The lower secondary school (*scuola media*) is part of the first cycle of schooling and is for pupils aged 11-13. Lower secondary education lasts three years and is compulsory and free of charge. It consists of a two-year stage and a final year of guidance and transition to the second cycle of schooling. At the end of this cycle pupils sit the national state examination and if successful receive the first cycle completion diploma. As the duration of compulsory education was extended to ten years in 2006, the first two years of upper secondary education are compulsory for all students. Following the reform being gradually implemented since 2010/11, and expected to be completed by 2014/15, upper secondary education now comprises: six types of lyceum (specializing in the arts, classical studies, scientific studies, foreign languages, music and dance, and humanities) offering five-year programmes divided into two two-year cycles and a final year; technical schools offering five-year programmes mainly in fields of economy and technology (comprising 11 branches of study); vocational schools under the Ministry of Education offering five-year programmes mainly in the fields of services, industry and handicraft (comprising six branches); and vocational education and training courses of three years' duration (for an average of 1,100 hours per year) managed by the regions and offered in accredited training centres or in schools integrating education and vocational training (trainees can also gain a vocational diploma taking an additional year of training). Prior to the reform, upper secondary education included: different types of lyceum providing five-year programmes (four-year programme in the case of the art lyceum), normally divided into a first two-year cycle followed by a three-year cycle; art schools providing a three-year programme leading to a qualification diploma and an additional two-year programme granting access to higher education; technical schools offering a five-year programme divided into a basic two-year cycle and a three-year specialization cycle; and vocational schools providing a three-year programme leading to a diploma of qualification and a two-year post-qualification programme. At the end of upper secondary education (general and vocational), students sit the



national state examinations and if successful receive the upper secondary school-leaving diploma which grants access to higher education. Postsecondary, non-tertiary vocational training programmes offered to upper secondary school graduates (and also to adults) at higher technical institutes normally extend over four semesters (for a total of 1,800-2,000 hours) and lead to the award of the diploma of high level technician; some courses last six semesters. A range of training courses lasting twelve months (for a total of 800-1,000 hours) and providing specific professional skills are also offered by the regions to young people and adults aged 18+ (including upper secondary school graduates, graduates from four-year vocational education and training courses, and students admitted to the fifth year of the lyceum); upon completion of the courses, trainees receive a certificate of higher level technical specialization.

Higher education

Tertiary education comprises universities, polytechnics, non-university higher education institutions in the field of the arts (academies, conservatories), and other higher technical training institutions offering courses lasting two to four semesters and leading to the award of the diploma of higher technical training. Admission to the degree courses in medicine and surgery, dentistry, veterinary medicine and architecture is regulated by *numerus clausus* at national level; selection procedures are defined by each institution. Following the reform of the higher education system implemented since 1999, university education is mainly organized according to the three-cycle structure of the Bologna process. First-cycle degree programmes (equivalent to a bachelor's degree) usually take three years to complete, corresponding to 180 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits (one credit corresponding to 25 hours of academic work); the institutes for translators and interpreters offer three-year programmes leading to the award of a university diploma. Second-cycle degree programmes (equivalent to a master's degree) require an additional two years of study (or 120 ECTS credits). The duration of third-cycle programmes leading to the award of the research doctorate is at least three to four years. First-cycle degree programmes take five years to complete in the fields of architecture, law, engineering, pharmacy, dentistry and veterinary medicine, and six years in the field of medicine and surgery. Starting from 2011/12, pre-primary and primary education teachers will be trained through a first-cycle degree programme lasting five years (previously, the duration was four years). Universities also offer new master's degree programmes (first-level master's for first-cycle degree holders and second-level master's for second-cycle degree holders), usually requiring one to two years of full-time study, as well as professionally-oriented programmes leading to the award of the diploma of specialist and normally requiring two to six years of study, depending on the field, following the first-cycle degree.

In all types of school the school year begins in September on a date set in each region by the Regional Education Office, and normally ends by mid-June. Preschools normally operate eight hours per day, which can be increased to nine or ten hours, five or six days per week, according to the needs of parents. Primary schools operate 27 hours per week (or about 33 weeks a year), increased to 30 hours in the third grade with the introduction of foreign language teaching. Pupils attend school five or six mornings per week with the addition of one or two afternoon periods, according to parents' choices and needs. The average minimum number of working days per year



is about 200 and the minimum number of annual hours of instruction in primary school is 891 hours. Primary schools can also offer 30 hours a week (including optional and extra-curricular activities) up to 40 weekly hours (all-day schools, including time for lunch). Following the Presidential Decree No. 89 of 2009, in the first year of primary school a weekly timetable of 24 hours with one classroom teacher has been introduced. The organization of the school timetable is left to the autonomous discretion of individual schools. For assessment purposes, the school year is divided into three-month or four-month terms, as established by each school. (EURYDICE, CEDEFOP & ETF, 2009/10; Eurydice, 2011). According to above-mentioned Presidential Decree, in lower secondary schools the minimum compulsory number of annual hours of instruction is 990 hours over about 33 weeks, corresponding to 29 hours per week and an additional 33 hours per year to be devoted to further study of literary subjects. The total number of annual hours includes the part decided by the regions and the teaching of the Catholic religion. Lower secondary schools can also offer an extended timetable of 36 or 40 weekly hours (including lunch in all-day schools). At the upper secondary level the school year usually comprises 33 working weeks; weekly timetables vary depending on the type of school.

The educational process

The Ministry of Education lays down the general framework that, while respecting the school autonomy, shall ensure the uniformity of the education system. The Ministry establishes the general objectives of the educational process; the specific learning objectives relating to pupils' skills; the subjects included in the minimum national curriculum and the annual teaching hours; the total annual compulsory timetable of curricula; standards related to the quality of services; general criteria for pupils' assessment and for the recognition of study credits; and general criteria for the organization of study paths of in the field of adult education. The Ministerial Decree of 28 December 2005, further confirmed by Decree No. 47 of 13 June 2006, stipulates that 20% of the compulsory curriculum time is reserved for the schools in accordance with the school autonomy. (Eurydice, 2009/10). As regards the new study plans for the lyceums, the flexible part covers 20% of the timetable during the first biennium and the final year and 30% in the second biennium, provided that the timetable of each discipline is not reduced by more than one third over five years and that the disciplines to be taught during the final year are not removed. (MIUR, November 2011).

The Decree No. 503 of 1955 introduced new curricula in primary schools which have been applied until 1985, when they have been replaced by the study programmes adopted through the Presidential Decree (DPR) No. 104 of 12 February 1985 and implemented in 1987. The promulgation of Law No. 148 of 1990 which reformed primary education, allowed for the full implementation of the new curricula. The Ministerial Decree of 9 February 1979 issued the new programmes modifying the organization and content of the lower secondary programmes adopted in 1962. The Decree specified the content of each subject of study, together with its educational and methodological aspects. The primary school curriculum is currently defined on the basis the National Guidelines for the personalized study plans in primary education, introduced on a experimental basis by Decree 59/2004 and updated through the Guidelines for the Curriculum introduced in 2007 (both the 2004 and



2007 guidelines refer to pre-primary education and the first cycle of school education, i.e. primary and lower secondary education). In May 2012, the (draft) National Guidelines for the curriculum of the pre-primary school and the first cycle of school education have been made available.

The 2007 Guidelines organize the pre-primary curriculum around ‘fields of experience’ and includes targets for the development of competences, describing what children are expected to achieve within each field of experience. The (draft) National Guidelines for the curriculum of 2012 indicate that the fields of experience are: the self and the other (social environment, living together); body and movement (identity, autonomy and health); art, music and media (languages, creativity and expression); ‘discourses and words’ (communication, language and culture); ‘numbers and space, living phenomena’ (knowledge of the world). The draft 2012 Guidelines also include a description of the competences that children are expected to have acquired by the end of pre-primary education. (Eurydice, 2009/10; MIUR, May 2012).

As for primary school, the 2004 Guidelines include the general objectives of the educational process; specific learning objectives for each teaching subject (i.e. Italian, English, history, geography, mathematics, sciences, technology and informatics, music, arts, and physical education and sports); and the knowledge, abilities and skills that pupils are expected to develop into competences, indicated for each subject and internal cycles of the primary school (grade 1; grades 2 and 3; and grades 4 and 5). The 2004 Guidelines also include the specific learning objectives related to the ‘education for civil coexistence’, a cross-disciplinary area integrating elements of citizenship education, road safety, health and nutrition, and affective education. The specific learning objectives for the Catholic religion have been established through an agreement with the Italian Episcopal Conference and approved by the Presidential Decree (DPR) No. 122 of 30 March 2004. Furthermore, the 2004 Guidelines introduced the portfolio of competences (not mandatory for schools) that includes a basic description of the educational progresses and should offer guidance based on the children’s potentials, interests, aptitudes and aspirations. Finally, the 2004 Guidelines include the educational, cultural and vocational profile of the pupil completing the first cycle of school education (end of lower secondary) which describes what the pupil should know and be able to do and should serve as a reference for the educational and teaching activities organized by the teachers and the school. The Guidelines of 2007 give greater importance to curricula rather than personalized study programmes. ‘Education for active citizenship’ is considered as a goal for all subjects and not as a separate subject. In addition, the 2007 Guidelines define the targets for the development of competences as a reference for teaching as well as the general learning objectives, in order to give more importance to school autonomy and to the professionalism of teachers in planning the curriculum. Law 169/2008 has introduced on an experimental basis the teaching of ‘citizenship and constitution’ aimed at developing active citizenship values. In 2009/10, the teaching of ‘citizenship and constitution’ has started in all schools through didactic projects drawn up by individual schools that can avail themselves also of the opportunities available in their territory. At primary level there are no mandatory timetables fixing the amount of time to be allocated to individual subjects, excepting English (one hour per week in grade 1, two hours in grade 2 and three weekly hours in grades 3-5 for a minimum compulsory amount of 396 hours over five years), and the Catholic religion



(two hours per week, or for alternative activities for those who choose them instead of Catholic religion). (Eurydice, 2009/10).

The (draft) National Guidelines for the curriculum of the pre-primary school and the first cycle of school education of 2012 include the general aims of the first cycle of school education (i.e. social, cultural and instrumental literacy), describe the main features of a supportive learning environment, and define for each subject the targets for the development of competences to be achieved by the end of primary education as well as the end of the first cycle of school education (third year of lower secondary). For certain subjects (Italian English, history, geography, mathematics and sciences) specific learning objectives to be achieved by the end of grade 3 and 5 (as well as the third year of lower secondary or grade 8) are also defined. For music, arts, physical education and sports, and technology, the specific learning objectives are defined only for grade 5 and the final year of lower secondary. As regards lower secondary education, specific learning objectives to be achieved by the end of the third year are also provided for the second foreign language (normally a European Union language), physics and chemistry, astronomy and earth sciences, and biology. (MIUR, May 2012).

The last two years of compulsory education correspond to the first two years of upper secondary education (i.e. second cycle of school education), both general and vocational. In order to ensure an education and training provision equal to all types of school (general and vocational), the Ministry of Education has defined the knowledge and competences that all students are expected to have acquired upon completion of compulsory education. Such knowledge and competences integrate the curricula, specific for each type of school, currently applied at upper secondary level and are organized into four 'cultural areas': languages, mathematics, sciences and technology, and history-social area. These areas are the basis for building learning pathways aimed at acquiring key competences that shall prepare students for their adult lives and lifelong learning. According to the Ministerial Decree No. 139 of 22 August 2007, the key competences are: learning to learn; designing and implementing projects; communicating; collaborating and participating; acting autonomously and with responsibility; problem solving; identifying connections and relations; and acquiring and interpreting information. (Eurydice, 2009/10).

Pre-primary education

The pre-primary school (*scuola dell'infanzia*) is not compulsory and is for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years, including children with special education needs and learning difficulties. Attendance is free of charge in public sector preschools (i.e. state preschools and those recognized by the state); parents contribute covering costs for transportation and meal services provided by the municipality. Non-state preschools operated by local organizations and associations receive subsidies from the state and the regions, provided that certain requirements are met (preschools *paritarie*). Classes called 'spring sections' for children aged 2 to 3 years were introduced on an experimental basis in 2007. In 2009/10, a total of 1,009 state preschools offered such a provision to 15,954 children (including 7,351 girls); an additional 600 'spring sections' were opened in municipal and private preschools supported by the state. (MIUR, September 2011).

According to Decree 59/2004, pre-primary education aims at contributing to the affective, psychomotor, cognitive, moral, religious and social development of the children. Pre-primary education aims at promoting the children's autonomy, creativity, and learning potentialities, and ensuring continuity between childcare services and school education, thus contributing to the all-round education of the children. The (draft) National Guidelines for the curriculum of the pre-primary school and the first cycle of school education of 2012 indicate that the pre-primary school helps children to consolidate their identity, develop their autonomy, acquire competences and live their first experiences of citizenship. (MIUR, May 2012).

The curriculum is defined through the National Guidelines for the personalized plans of the educational activities in pre-primary schools, introduced on a temporary basis by Decree 59/2004 and updated through the Guidelines for the Curriculum introduced in 2007. The 2004 Guidelines stipulate that the general objectives of the educational process are to help children to strengthen their personal identity and autonomy, and develop competences. Specific learning objectives are to be taken into account for the design of learning units that, on the basis of the learning goals, shall help children to transform their potentials into competences. The specific learning objectives are organized around following areas: 'the self and the other', 'body, movement, and health', 'production and use of messages', and 'exploring, knowing and planning'. Criteria for the selection of the learning objectives and the design of the personalized plans adapted to children's needs and abilities are also provided. Furthermore, the 2004 Guidelines introduced the portfolio of competences (to be used also beyond pre-primary education) that includes a basic description of the educational progresses and should offer guidance based on the children's potentials, interests, aptitudes and aspirations. In 2006, the Ministry specified that the portfolio is not mandatory for schools and shall be considered a form of documentation of the educational process. From 2007/08 the 2004 Guidelines have been applied together with the Guidelines for the Curriculum, introduced on an experimental basis. The 2007 Guidelines organize the curriculum around 'fields of experience' and the specific learning objectives have been replaced by 'targets for the development of competences', describing what children are expected to achieve within each field of experience. With regard to pre-primary education, the (draft) National Guidelines for the curriculum of 2012 indicate that the fields of experience are: the self and the other (social environment, living together); body and movement (identity, autonomy and health); art, music and media (languages, creativity and expression); 'discourses and words' (communication, language and culture); 'numbers and space, living phenomena' (knowledge of the world). The draft 2012 Guidelines also include a description of the competences that children are expected to have acquired by the end of pre-primary education. (Eurydice, 2009/10; MIUR, May 2012).

State preschools normally comprise three sections, each one grouping children of the same age (3, 4, and 5 years), although sometimes sections with children of different ages are organized and, in sparsely populated areas, a single section grouping children of all ages is organized. Each section must have no more than 25 children, excepting those with disabled children (no more than 20). Typically, the weekly timetable at pre-primary level is 40 hours a week and it is also possible to extend it up to 50 weekly hours. Upon parents' request, preschools can also organize classes with a shorter timetable (25 weekly hours), with activities taking place only in the morning. All timetables shall include the hours devoted to the teaching of Catholic

religion. Preschools autonomously define the type of provision according to their education plans and taking into account the requests from parents and the available human resources. If the preschool offers different timetables, children are grouped according to the timetable chosen by their families. The District/School Council sets the timetable for the beginning and the end of the daily activities as well as the days of lessons in a week (which cannot be less than five). As other educational establishments, preschools have a considerable degree of autonomy as regards the choice of teaching methods and the organization of educational activities. Teaching methods focus on play, exploration and socialization, and direct contact with objects, materials and the social and natural environment. The activities, whether structured or free, must be varied, progressive and carried out under the supervision of the teacher. The progress of children is systematically evaluated, documented and described, instead of being measured and assessed, as the aim is to promote, support and strengthen processes which allow children to develop their abilities at best. (Eurydice, 2009/10).

According to national data, in 2000/01 there were 13,593 state preschools with 936,018 children enrolled and 84,903 teachers. The children-teacher ratio was 11:1. There were also 11,447 non-state preschools with 639,848 children enrolled and 41,937 teachers. In 2005/06, there were 13,622 state preschools with 967,345 children enrolled. A total of 694,794 children were enrolled in non-state preschools. In the same year, there were 79,316 teachers with a contract of indeterminate duration and 10,877 teachers with an appointment of limited duration.

The MIUR reports that in 2009/10 the total number of preschools was 24,221 including 13,553 state preschools, 1,841 public preschools *paritarie* (i.e. recognized by the state) and 8,094 private preschools *paritarie*. With regard to the preschools *paritarie*, 81.5% was mainly operated by (Catholic) religious organizations and the remaining 18.5% by local bodies (mainly municipalities). The total enrolment was 1,680,987 children (including 20,151 children with special educational needs), of whom 993,226 children were in state preschools, 153,031 children in public preschools *paritarie*, and 501,668 children in private preschools *paritarie*. Girls accounted for 48.1% of the total enrolment. In state preschools there were 81,197 teachers with a contract of indeterminate duration and 10,001 teachers with an appointment of limited duration. Almost all teachers (99.2%) were women. The attendance rate was estimated at 93% for the 3-year-olds, 96.6% for the 4-year-olds, and 89% for the 5-year-olds (children who turn 6 before 30 April of the school year under consideration can enrol in the first grade of primary education; in 2009/10, 8.6% of the children enrolled in grade 1 were below 6 years of age). In state preschools, 112,282 children were enrolled in institutions offering 25 hours per week of preschool provision, 743,102 children were in institutions offering 40 hours, and 137,842 children were in institutions offering more than 40 hours. (MIUR, September 2011; see also ISTAT, December 2011).

Primary education

Primary education lasts five years and attendance is compulsory for all children aged 6-10. According to Law 53/2003 and the Decree 59/2004, the first cycle of school education lasts eight years, comprising five years of primary and three years of lower secondary education. Primary education is subdivided into the first year, which serves



to ensure a smooth transition from pre-primary education, and two two-year cycles (grades 2 and 3, and grades 4 and 5).

The Decree 59/2004 indicates that the general objectives of the primary school are to: foster the personality development, the acquisition of basic knowledge and the development of skills; set the bases for ICT literacy and logical-critical thinking; develop expressive means, Italian language and English language literacy; set the bases for the use of scientific methods in the study of the natural world, its phenomena and laws; and teach the fundamental principles of civil coexistence. (Eurydice, 2009/10). According to the Guidelines for the Curriculum of 2007, introduced on an experimental basis in 2007/08, the first cycle of school education (primary and lower secondary) covers a key period for learning and building the identity of pupils, setting bases and developing the competences that are needed for continuing to learn at school and all over the life. The main aim of both the primary and lower secondary school is the full development of the person. Within this perspective, the school helps pupils elaborating the meaning of their own experiences and promotes active citizenship practices and the acquisition of basic cultural and social literacy. (Ministry of Public Education, September 2007).

The (draft) National Guidelines for the curriculum of the pre-primary school and the first cycle of school education of 2012 reiterate that the main aim of both the primary and lower secondary education is the full development of the person. Within this perspective, the school helps pupils elaborating the meaning of their own experiences, promotes active citizenship practices and the acquisition of knowledge and key skills to develop basic cultural competences. The specific aim of the first cycle of school education is to promote basic literacy through the acquisition of the languages and coding systems that constitute the culture of country, within a broadened perspective that takes into account also other cultures. The cultural and social literacy also includes the traditional literacy (writing, reading and arithmetic) enriched by the knowledge and approaches of the different disciplines. The primary school aims at promoting the essential learnings and providing the opportunities for developing the cognitive, emotional, affective, social, physical, ethical and religious dimensions and acquiring the fundamental knowledge, setting the bases for the development of critical and reflective thinking. The lower secondary school provides access to the disciplines, intended as a way of knowing, interpreting and representing the world. The lower secondary school promotes a more in-depth mastery of the disciplines and an ordered organization of knowledge, also within the perspective of a more integrated knowledge. The competences developed within each discipline contribute to the promotion of broader and transversal competences, which are essential for the full personal realization and active participation in social life and are based on the values of civil coexistence and common good. The competences for active citizenship are continuously promoted throughout all learning activities, exploiting the contributions that each discipline can offer. (MIUR, May 2012).

Schools can adopt flexible solutions regarding the weekly and daily timetable, according to the families' requirements, available teaching staff, structures and functioning services. The District/School Council can also decide to distribute the annual curriculum time in a different way during the school year. In 2009/10, starting from the first grade families choose among the following models of weekly timetables: 24 hours; 27 hours; up to 30 hours a week, including teaching activities



additional to the 27-hour timetable; and 40 hours a week, including the time to be used for meals ('full-time timetable'). Subsequent grades will apply the previous annual timetable, as it was chosen by parents at enrolment in the first grade, i.e.: a compulsory timetable of 891 annual hours (corresponding to an average of 27 hours per week); a compulsory timetable of 891 annual hours and an additional 99 hours (maximum) devoted to facultative and optional activities, corresponding to an average of 30 weekly hours (not including time for meals); a timetable of up to 1,320 hours per year, corresponding to 40 hours per week (including the time for meals). According to the Presidential Decree 89/2009, starting from 2009/10 and up to 2011/12, the National Guidelines of 2004 updated through the Guidelines for the Curriculum of 2007 will be implemented. As mentioned, Law 169/2008 has introduced on an experimental basis the teaching of 'citizenship and constitution'. At primary level there are no mandatory timetables fixing the amount of time to be allocated to individual subjects, excepting English (one hour per week in grade 1, two hours in grade 2 and three weekly hours in grades 3-5 for a minimum compulsory amount of 396 hours over five years), and the Catholic religion (two hours per week, or for alternative activities for those who choose them instead of Catholic religion). (Eurydice, 2009/10).

Some examples of weekly lesson timetables implemented before the reform of 2003-2004 are shown below:

Italy. Primary education (first cycle of school education): examples of weekly lesson timetables

Subject	Number of weekly hours in each grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
Italian language	6	6	6	6	6
Mathematics	6	6	6	6	6
Sciences	2	2	2	2	2
History, geography, social studies	5	5	5	5	5
Religion	2	2	2	2	2
Aesthetic education	2	2	2	2	2
Music education	2	2	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2
Foreign language	1	1	3	3	3
Total weekly hours	28	28	30	30	30

Subject	Number of weekly hours in each grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
Italian language	8	7	7	7	7
Mathematics	6	6	5	5	5
Sciences	3	3	3	3	3
History, geography, social studies	3	3	4	4	4
Religion	2	2	2	2	2
Aesthetic education	3	3	2	2	2
Music education	2	2	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2
Foreign language	1	2	3	3	3
Total weekly hours	30	30	30	30	30

Sources: Websites of primary schools, March 2003.

Notes: In accordance with the Presidential Decree no. 275 of 8 March 1999 on the autonomy of educational institutions, lesson timetables are defined by each individual school. Schools which do not offer foreign language teaching in grades 1 and 2 are required to offer to pupils a minimum amount of 27 instructional hours per week (not including lunch time and transportation), increasing to 30 hours per week in grades 3-5 with the introduction of foreign language teaching. In general, breaks are included in the total amount of instructional time per week—thus instructional hours may often be 45 minutes long on the average. Whole-day schools operate 40 hours per week. In principle, (Catholic) religious education is not compulsory and alternative activities should be envisaged for those pupils not following the course.

The Ministerial Decree of 10 September 1991—no longer applicable after the approval of the school autonomy—had determined the minimum amount of weekly hours to be allocated to each teaching subject as follows: Italian, 4 hours; mathematics, 3 hours; sciences, 2 hours; history, geography and social studies, 3 hours; aesthetic education, music education, physical education, and religion, 2 hours each.

In primary schools children are organized in groups called classes and are enrolled in each class according to their age. It is also possible to form groups of pupils from different classes, according to specific school activities or to the objectives to be achieved. Primary school teachers are generalist. The number of teachers per class varies according to the different available models of school time.



Starting from school year 2009/10, the first classes adopting a weekly school time either of 24, 27 or 30 hours, usually have only one teacher who can be supported by English language and Catholic religion teachers. Normally, two teachers work (not at the same time) in classes adopting a weekly schedule of 40 hours. Classes from grade 2 onwards which still adopt the previous weekly timetable of either 27, 30 or 40 hours, can have more than one teacher (up to three) per class (not at the same time). (Eurydice, 2009/10).

Regulations on the school autonomy establish that the choice, adoption and use of teaching methods and instruments, including textbooks, are to be consistent with the Plan for the Educational Offer (POF) prepared by each school. The POF should be consistent with the general and educational objectives established at national level. Textbooks are chosen by the Teachers' Assembly and are free of charge for pupils (costs are covered by municipalities, in accordance with the regional legislations on the right to study). The Guidelines for the Curriculum of 2007 recommend the following methodological approaches: to exploit pupils' experiences and knowledge; to foster exploration and discovery; to encourage cooperative learning and awareness of one's own learning method. (*Ibid.*).

For assessment purposes, the school year is divided into three-month or four-month terms, as established by each school, and pupils are assessed at the end of each term. The final assessment takes place at the end of each school year and at the end of each 'didactic period' (first year, end of the first two-year cycle and end of the second two-year cycle). Normally all pupils are promoted the following grade, and grade repetition is allowed only if exceptional circumstances occur; the decision must unanimously be taken by the teachers and be fully justified. The classroom teacher evaluates the pupils' learning process, their behaviour and the overall learning outcomes. The assessment should be consistent with the learning objectives established in the POF of each school. In the POF, the Teachers' Assembly also defines the methods and criteria for ensuring that pupils' assessment is homogeneous, transparent and equal. Teachers are also committed with the certification of the competences attained by the pupils at the end of primary school. The evaluation of pupils' learning outcomes in each subject is expressed in numerical marks using a scale from 0 to 10. Pupils' behaviour is evaluated through a report assessment, which can be either analytical or synthetic, according to the Teachers' Assembly decision. The pupil's personal assessment paper must include the marks obtained in each subject (excepting Catholic religion), and expressed both in numbers and letters, as well as the report assessment on the pupil's behaviour. Schools have to meet these fundamental requirements, but are free to develop their own model of assessment paper. As mentioned, the oral and written examinations at the end of primary school have been phased out. At the end of primary education pupils receive a personal assessment paper, which specifies whether the pupil is admitted to the first grade of lower secondary school, together with a certification of the competences acquired by the pupil upon completion of primary school. Starting from 2008/09, the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System administers tests to evaluate pupils' learning outcomes in reading and mathematics at the end of grade 2 and grade 5. (*Ibid.*).

In 2000/01, there were 16,302 state primary schools with some 2.55 million pupils enrolled and 262,138 teachers. The pupil-teacher ratio was 9.8:1. There were

also 2,408 non-state schools with 245,586 pupils enrolled and 18,124 teachers. The attendance ratio (state and non-state) was estimated at 99.8%. In 2005/06 there were 15,973 state primary schools with some 2.53 million of pupils enrolled. The total enrolment (state and non-state schools) was about 2.79 million pupils. In the same year, there were 238,728 teachers with a contract of indeterminate duration and 32,423 teachers with an appointment of limited duration.

The MIUR reports that in 2009/10 the total number of primary schools was 17,845 including 16,314 state schools, 23 public schools *paritarie* (i.e. recognized by the state) and 1,488 private schools *paritarie*. The total enrolment was 2,822,146 pupils (including 73,964 pupils with special educational needs), of whom 2,627,671 pupils were in state schools, 2,729 in public schools *paritarie*, and 190,493 pupils in private schools *paritarie*. Girls accounted for 48.4% of the total enrolment. In state schools there were 231,392 teachers with a contract of indeterminate duration and 27,241 teachers with an appointment of limited duration. With regard to school time, in the first grade 0.7% of schools offered 24 hours a week, 9.9% offered 27 hours, 54.6% offered 30 hours, and 34.8% offered 40 hours. In grades 2-5, 4.8% of schools offered 27 weekly hours, 56.8% offered 30 hours, 10.5% up to 39 hours, and 27.9% offered 40 hours. In 2009/10, the total number of support teachers for students with special educational needs at all educational levels (pre-primary, primary and secondary) was 89,164, of whom 53,848 teachers with a contract of indeterminate duration and 35,316 teachers with an appointment of limited duration (MIUR, September 2011; see also ISTAT, December 2011).

Secondary education

As mentioned, the lower secondary school (*scuola media*) is part of the first cycle of schooling and is for pupils aged 11-13. Lower secondary education lasts three years and is compulsory and free of charge. It consists of a two-year stage and a final year of guidance and transition to the second cycle of schooling. At the end of this cycle pupils sit the national state examination and if successful receive the first cycle completion diploma.

As the duration of compulsory education was extended to ten years in 2006, the first two years of upper secondary education are compulsory for all students. Following the reform being gradually implemented since 2010/11 and expected to be completed by 2014/15, upper secondary education now comprises: six types of lyceum (specializing in the arts, classical studies, scientific studies, foreign languages, music and dance, and humanities) offering five-year programmes divided into two two-year cycles and a final year; technical schools offering five-year programmes mainly in fields of economy and technology (comprising 11 branches of study); vocational schools under the Ministry of Education offering five-year programmes mainly in the fields of services, industry and handicraft (comprising six branches); and vocational education and training courses of three years' duration (for an average of 1,100 hours per year) managed by the regions and offered in accredited training centres or in schools integrating education and vocational training (trainees can also gain a vocational diploma taking an additional year of training).

Prior to the reform, upper secondary education included: different types of lyceum providing five-year programmes (four-year programme in the case of the art

lyceum), normally divided into a first two-year cycle followed by a three-year cycle; art schools providing a three-year programme leading to a diploma of qualification and an additional two-year programme granting access to higher education; technical schools offering a five-year programme divided into a basic two-year cycle and a three-year specialization cycle; and vocational schools providing a three-year programme leading to a diploma of qualification and a two-year post-qualification programme. Originally, the aim of the scientific lyceum (*liceo scientifico*) was to prepare students for higher education in the faculties of science, medicine and surgery. Since 1968, the year which brought about free access to university studies, this type of lyceum like the classical one grants access to all higher education institutions. The traditional primary education teacher training school (*istituto magistrale*) trained primary school teachers and gave access to higher education (faculty of education). It offered a four-year programme with an additional year granting access to any university degree course. The traditional pre-primary teacher training school (*scuola magistrale*) prepared pre-school teachers and offered a three-year programme. The two types of schools are being phased out, as in accordance with the Decree on teacher training adopted on 17 October 2005 and entered into force in 2006/07 all teachers must be holders of a higher education degree.

At the end of upper secondary education (general and vocational), students sit the national state examinations and if successful receive the upper secondary school-leaving diploma which grants access to higher education. Postsecondary, non-tertiary vocational training programmes offered to upper secondary school graduates (and also to adults) at higher technical institutes normally extend over four semesters (for a total of 1,800-2,000 hours) and lead to the award of the diploma of high level technician; some courses last six semesters. A range of training courses lasting twelve months (for a total of 800-1,000 hours) and providing specific professional skills are also offered by the regions to young people and adults aged 18+ (including upper secondary school graduates, graduates from four-year vocational education and training courses, and students admitted to the fifth year of the lyceum); upon completion of the courses, trainees receive a certificate of higher level technical specialization.

According to Decree No. 59/2004, the first-level secondary school (*scuola secondaria di primo grado*) or lower secondary school aims at fostering independent study and strengthening the pupils' attitudes towards social interaction. Lower secondary education must: provide further knowledge and skills also related to the cultural tradition as well as to the social, cultural and scientific evolution of the contemporary society; strengthen ICT skills; develop abilities according to the pupils' attitudes and inclinations; provide the adequate bases for further education and training; introduce the study of a second foreign language of the European Union; and help the students to make the appropriate choice concerning their future studies. As mentioned, according to the Guidelines for the Curriculum of 2007, the main aim of both the primary and lower secondary school is the full development of the person. Within this perspective, the school helps pupils elaborating the meaning of their own experiences and promotes active citizenship practices and the acquisition of basic cultural and social literacy. The (draft) National Guidelines for the curriculum of the pre-primary school and the first cycle of school education of 2012 reiterate that the main aim of both the primary and lower secondary education is the full development of the person. The specific aim of the first cycle of school education is to promote



basic literacy through the acquisition of the languages and coding systems that constitute the culture of country, within a broadened perspective that takes into account also other cultures. The cultural and social literacy also includes the traditional literacy (writing, reading and arithmetic) enriched by the knowledge and approaches of the different disciplines. The lower secondary school promotes a more in-depth mastery of the disciplines and an ordered organization of knowledge, also within the perspective of a more integrated knowledge. The competences developed within each discipline contribute to the promotion of broader and transversal competences, which are essential for the full personal realization and active participation in social life and are based on the values of civil coexistence and common good. The competences for active citizenship are continuously promoted throughout all learning activities, exploiting the contributions that each discipline can offer. (Ministry of Public Education, September 2007; MIUR, May 2012).

The Ministerial Decree of 9 February 1979 issued the new programmes modifying the organization and content of the lower secondary school programmes adopted in 1962. The Decree specified the content of each subject of study, together with its educational and methodological aspects. The curriculum included the following subjects: mathematics, physics, chemistry, and natural sciences; Italian language; history; civics; technical education; geography; artistic education; foreign language; musical education; physical education; and religious education (optional).

As in the case of primary education, the new national curriculum guidelines identify specific learning objectives for each subject and the type of knowledge and skills that should be transformed into personal competencies with the help of the school. There are also the specific learning objectives for 'civil coexistence education' (citizenship education, traffic education, environmental education, health education, nutrition and emotional education) which is not a separate subject and consists of teaching units and activities carried out with the collaboration of the teachers. The educational process revolves around learning units planned by teachers in order to attain educational objectives adequate and relevant for each pupil (individualized study plans). These learning units aim at transforming the abilities of each pupil into real and documented experiences recorded in the skills portfolio. In line with the new national curriculum guidelines, the total number of annual compulsory hours should be distributed among the different subjects.

The table below shows the weekly lesson timetable for lower secondary education as stipulated in the Presidential Decree 89/2009:

Italy. Lower secondary education (first cycle of school education): weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly hours in each grade		
	6	7	8
Italian, history and geography	9	9	9
Further study of literary subjects	1	1	1
Mathematics and sciences	6	6	6
Technology	2	2	2
English	3	3	3
Second foreign language (European Union)	2	2	2
Arts and image	2	2	2
Physical education and sports	2	2	2
Music	2	2	2
Religion	1	1	1
Total weekly hours	30	30	30

Source: Presidential Decree No. 89 of 20 March 2009. The teaching of 'citizenship and Constitution' is included under history and geography. 'Sciences' include physics and chemistry, astronomy and earth sciences, and biology. (MIUR, Mary 2012).

As in the case of primary education, for assessment purposes the school year is divided into three-month or four-month terms and pupils are assessed at the end of each term and at the end of the year. The evaluation focuses on pupils' learning process, their behaviour and the overall learning outcomes. The assessment should be consistent with the learning objectives established in the Plan for the Educational Offer (POF) of each school. In the POF, the Teachers' Assembly also defines the methods and criteria for ensuring that pupils' assessment is homogeneous, transparent and equal. Teachers are also committed with the certification of the competences acquired by the pupils at the end of lower secondary education. The end-of-term and annual assessment of pupils' learning outcomes and behaviour, as well as the certification of the competences at the end of lower secondary school, is expressed using a 10-point mark scale. Admission to the next grade requires, besides the minimum school attendance, to have obtained a mark equal to or higher than 6/10 in each subject, or group of subjects assessed with one single mark, as well as in the behaviour.

At the end of the three-year programme, pupils sit the national state examination which gives access to upper secondary education. Until the introduction of the reform the examination consisted of three written tests (Italian, mathematics, and a foreign language) and a multidisciplinary oral test. Evaluations for each written test and the oral examination were expressed according to the following marks: Excellent, Very Good, Good, and Fair, all of which were valid for obtaining the school-leaving certificate. Currently, admission to the exam is deliberated by the majority of the class council by assigning a numerical mark. The examination board set up in every school comprises the teachers of the various classes and is chaired by an external member. The exam consists of three or four written tests (Italian, mathematics, rudiments of science and ICT, and foreign languages assessed either together or separately in different days), developed by the examination board, an oral test on the subjects of the final year and a national written test developed by the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (starting from 2009/10

the Institute administers a test to evaluate learning outcomes in reading and mathematics also in the first year). The final exam is assessed altogether through only one numerical mark, corresponding to the average calculated on marks assigned at all written tests, including the national test, at the oral test on all subjects, and at the admission to the exam. The exam is successfully passed if the overall assessment is equal to or higher than 6/10. A full mark can be assigned, upon unanimous decision, to pupils who have obtained a final mark of 10/10. The final mark is analytically described through the certification of competences acquired and of the overall level of development of the student. (Eurydice, 2009/10).

The content of upper secondary education has changed over time on the basis of legislative measures allowing for innovations at the school level. Upper secondary education has been profoundly modified by: the increase in the number and type of courses available; the introduction of new subjects (for example, computer science); and the new programmes, particularly concerning the first two years. In the year 2000, after a thirty-year debate on the reform of upper secondary school, the Law No. 30 provided for the transformation of all upper secondary schools into lyceums but this law was not implemented and was abrogated by Law 53/2003. The Presidential Decree (DPR) No. 89 of 15 March 2010 provides for the revised regulations for the reform of the upper secondary school (lyceum, technical school and vocational training school) being implemented from 2010/11. The annual lesson timetables for different types of lyceum in accordance with the reform of upper secondary education currently being implemented are presented below:

Italy. Upper secondary education or second cycle of school education (lyceum, classical studies): annual lesson timetable

Discipline	Number of annual hours in each form				
	First biennium		Second biennium		5
	1	2	3	4	
Italian language and literature	132	132	132	132	132
Latin language and literature	165	165	132	132	132
Greek language and literature	132	132	99	99	99
Foreign language and literature	99	99	99	99	99
History	–	–	99	99	99
History and geography	99	99	–	–	–
Philosophy	–	–	99	99	99
Mathematics (*)	99	99	66	66	66
Physics	–	–	66	66	66
Natural sciences (**)	66	66	66	66	66
History of the art	–	–	66	66	66
Physical education and sports	66	66	66	66	66
Religion (or alternative activities)	33	33	33	33	33
Total annual hours	891	891	1,023	1,023	1,023

Source: Ministry of Education, University and Research, November 2011. (*) Mathematics also includes informatics. (**) Including biology, chemistry and earth sciences.

Italy. Upper secondary education or second cycle of school education (lyceum, scientific studies): annual lesson timetable

Subject	Number of annual hours in each form				
	First biennium		Second biennium		5
	1	2	3	4	
Italian language and literature	132	132	132	132	132
Latin language and literature	99	99	99	99	99
Foreign language and literature	99	99	99	99	99
History	–	–	66	66	66
History and geography	99	99	–	–	–
Philosophy	–	–	99	99	99
Mathematics (*)	165	165	132	132	132
Physics	66	66	99	99	99
Natural sciences (**)	66	66	99	99	99
History of the art and drawing	66	66	66	66	66
Physical education and sports	66	66	66	66	66
Religion (or alternative activities)	33	33	33	33	33
Total annual hours	891	891	990	990	990

Source: Ministry of Education, University and Research, November 2011. (*) Mathematics also includes informatics. (**) Including biology, chemistry and earth sciences. The timetable for the option applied sciences is slightly different while maintaining the same amount of annual hours per year.

Italy. Upper secondary education or second cycle of school education (lyceum, foreign languages): annual lesson timetable

Subject	Number of annual hours in each form				
	First biennium		Second biennium		5
	1	2	3	4	
Italian language and literature	132	132	132	132	132
Latin language	66	66	–	–	–
1st foreign language and literature	132	132	99	99	99
2nd foreign language and literature	99	99	132	132	132
3rd foreign language and literature	99	99	132	132	132
History and geography	99	99	–	–	–
History	–	–	66	66	66
Philosophy	–	–	66	66	66
Mathematics (*)	99	99	66	66	66
Physics	–	–	66	66	66
Natural sciences (**)	66	66	66	66	66
History of the art	–	–	66	66	66
Physical education and sports	66	66	66	66	66
Religion (or alternative activities)	33	33	33	33	33
Total annual hours	891	891	990	990	990

Source: Ministry of Education, University and Research, November 2011. (*) Mathematics also includes informatics. (**) Including biology, chemistry and earth sciences.

Italy. Upper secondary education or second cycle of school education (lyceum, human sciences): annual lesson timetable

Subject	Number of annual hours in each form				
	First biennium		Second biennium		5
	1	2	3	4	
Italian language and literature	132	132	132	132	132
Latin language and literature	99	99	66	66	66
Foreign language and literature	99	99	99	99	99
History	–	–	66	66	66
History and geography	99	99	–	–	–
Philosophy	–	–	99	99	99
Human sciences (*)	132	132	165	165	165
Law and economy	66	66	–	–	–
Mathematics (**)	99	99	66	66	66
Physics	–	–	66	66	66
Natural sciences (***)	66	66	66	66	66
History of the art	–	–	66	66	66
Physical education and sports	66	66	66	66	66
Religion (or alternative activities)	33	33	33	33	33
Total annual hours	891	891	990	990	990

Source: Ministry of Education, University and Research, November 2011. (*) Including anthropology, pedagogy, psychology and sociology. (**) Mathematics also includes informatics. (***) Including biology, chemistry and earth sciences.

Italy. Upper secondary education or second cycle of school education (art lyceum, option design): annual lesson timetable

Subject	Number of annual hours in each form				
	First biennium		Second biennium		5
	1	2	3	4	
Italian language and literature	132	132	132	132	132
Foreign language and literature	99	99	99	99	99
History	–	–	66	66	66
History and geography	99	99	–	–	–
Philosophy	–	–	66	66	66
Mathematics (*)	99	99	66	66	66
Physics	–	–	66	66	66
Natural sciences (**)	66	66	–	–	–
Chemistry (of materials)	–	–	66	66	–
History of the art	99	99	99	99	99
Graphics and painting	132	132	–	–	–
Geometry	99	99	–	–	–
Plastic arts and sculpture	99	99	–	–	–
Art laboratory	99	99	–	–	–
Physical education and sports	66	66	66	66	66
Religion (or alternative activities)	33	33	33	33	33
Design laboratory	–	–	198	198	264
Design (projects)	–	–	198	198	198
Total annual hours	1,122	1,122	1,155	1,155	1,155

Source: Ministry of Education, University and Research, November 2011. (*) Mathematics also includes informatics in the first biennium. (**) Including biology, chemistry and earth sciences. The art lyceum offers an additional five options, i.e. figurative arts, architecture and environment, audiovisual and multimedia, graphic arts, and scenography.

Italy. Upper secondary education or second cycle of school education (music and dance lyceum): annual lesson timetable

Subject	Number of annual hours in each form				
	First biennium		Second biennium		5
	1	2	3	4	
Italian language and literature	132	132	132	132	132
Foreign language and literature	99	99	99	99	99
History	–	–	66	66	66
History and geography	99	99	–	–	–
Philosophy	–	–	66	66	66
Mathematics (*)	99	99	66	66	66
Physics	–	–	66	66	66
Natural sciences (**)	66	66	–	–	–
History of the art	66	66	66	66	66
Religion (or alternative activities)	33	33	33	33	33
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>594</i>	<i>594</i>	<i>594</i>	<i>594</i>	<i>594</i>
<i>Music section:</i>					
Physical education and sports	66	66	66	66	66
Execution and interpretation	99	99	66	66	66
Theory, analysis and composition	99	99	99	99	99
History of music	66	66	66	66	66
Music laboratory	66	66	99	99	99
Musical technologies	66	66	66	66	66
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>462</i>	<i>462</i>	<i>462</i>	<i>462</i>	<i>462</i>
<i>Dance section:</i>					
History of dance	–	–	66	66	66
History of music	–	–	33	33	33
Dance techniques	264	264	264	264	264
Dance laboratory	132	132	–	–	–
Laboratory of choreography	–	–	99	99	99
Musical theory and practice for dance	66	66	–	–	–
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>462</i>	<i>462</i>	<i>462</i>	<i>462</i>	<i>462</i>
Total annual hours	1,056	1,056	1,056	1,056	1,056

Source: Ministry of Education, University and Research, November 2011. (*) Mathematics also includes informatics in the first biennium. (**) Including biology, chemistry and earth sciences.

For the purpose of assessing students at the general upper secondary level, the school year may be divided into three-month or four-month terms and students are assessed at the end of each term and at the end of the year. At the end of both each term and school year, class teachers grouped together in the class council assign the final marks to each student. Both learning outcomes and behaviour are assessed through the assignment of a mark using a 10-point scale (6/10 being sufficient). In addition, the class council in the final assessment of the last three years of upper secondary school assigns specific points ('credits') to students. Such points correspond to the mean of final marks obtained in each subject and behaviour, taking



also into account other aspects such as school attendance, activities carried out outside the school, etc. The sum of points obtained at the end of each year is called 'school credit' and it cannot exceed 25 points. The final mark assigned to students in the final state exam at the end of upper secondary education also includes the school credit. Admission to the state exam requires that students have obtained a mark equal to or higher than 6/10 in each subject, or group of subjects assessed with one single mark, and in behaviour. The examination board of the state exam is made up of no more than six members (half external and half internal members) plus an external president. The examination subjects assigned to the external members are annually selected according to a decree of the Ministry of Education. The examination includes three written tests (of which one for the Italian language and another in a subject of the study course) and an oral test (with a multidisciplinary approach and mainly focusing on the study programmes of the last year). Written tests are assessed by assigning a maximum of 45 points, to be equally distributed among the three tests. If a test is considered satisfactory, it cannot be assessed with a mark lower than 10 points. The oral test is assessed by assigning a maximum of 30 points. The school credit (maximum of 25 points) is added to the points obtained to the written and oral tests. The minimum mark to pass the exam is 60/100. A diploma and a certificate are issued to the students who pass the final state exam. (Eurydice, 2009/10).

Technical education aims at preparing to carry out technical and administrative functions as well as some professions in several sectors. Vocational education aims at providing theoretical and practical preparation to carry out qualified functions in a range of sectors. The three-year basic vocational training offered by the regions is intended to provide a qualification to those students who have completed the first cycle of school education and want to fulfil the compulsory education through vocational training and acquire a vocational qualification. In 2009, a total of 19 vocational qualifications were available. For each qualification, minimum standards, organized into activities, competences and skills, are defined. The training objectives and qualifications were under revision in 2009. (*Ibid.*).

As an example, the annual lesson timetable for the technical school (option tourism) in accordance with the reform of upper secondary education currently being implemented is presented below:

Italy. Upper secondary education or second cycle of school education (technical school, option tourism): annual lesson timetable

Subject	Number of annual hours in each form				
	First biennium		Second biennium		
	1	2	3	4	5
Italian language and literature	132	132	132	132	132
English	99	99	99	99	99
History	66	66	66	66	66
Mathematics	132	132	99	99	99
Law and economy	66	66	–	–	–
Integrated sciences (biology and earth sciences)	66	66	–	–	–
Physical education and sports	66	66	66	66	66
Religion (or alternative activities)	33	33	33	33	33
Integrated sciences (physics)	66	–	–	–	–
Integrated sciences (chemistry)	–	66	–	–	–
Geography	99	99	–	–	–
Informatics	66	66	–	–	–
Economics of enterprise	66	66	–	–	–
Second foreign language	99	99	99	99	99
Third foreign language	–	–	99	99	99
Tourism and enterprise	–	–	132	132	132
Touristic geography	–	–	66	66	66
Legislation on tourism	–	–	99	99	99
Art and territory	–	–	66	66	66
Total annual hours	1,056	1,056	1,056	1,056	1,056

Source: Ministry of Education, University and Research, November 2011.

In 2005/06 there were 7,034 state lower secondary schools with about 1.66 million students enrolled. The total enrolment (state and non-state schools) was about 1.76 million students. There were 164,962 teachers with a contract of indeterminate duration and 33,854 teachers with an appointment of limited duration. In the same school year, there were 5,001 state upper secondary schools with about 2.50 million students enrolled. The total enrolment (state and non-state schools) was about 2.69 million students. There were 227,528 teachers with a contract of indeterminate duration and 46,994 teachers with an appointment of limited duration.

The MIUR reports that in 2009/10 the total number of lower secondary schools was 7,924 including 7,248 state schools and 670 private schools *paritarie* (i.e. recognized by the state). The total enrolment was 1,777,834 pupils (including 59,345 pupils with special educational needs), of whom 1,704,274 pupils were in state schools and 73,310 pupils in private schools *paritarie*. Girls accounted for 47.9% of the total enrolment. Attendance was almost universal. On the average, 75.3% of pupils attended lower secondary schools 30 hours a week, 20.1% were attending 36 hours a week, and 4.6% attended 40 hours a week. In state schools there were 148,149 teachers with a contract of indeterminate duration and 32,677 teachers with an appointment of limited duration. The percentage of female teachers was 71.4%. In 2009/10, the total number of upper secondary schools was 6,799 including 5,230 state schools, 40 public schools *paritarie* and 1,514 private schools *paritarie*. Out of the



total number of upper secondary schools, 2,373 were technical schools, 1,551 vocational schools, 1,234 scientific lyceums, and 679 were classic studies lyceums. The total enrolment at the upper secondary level was 2,680,667 students (including 47,002 students with special educational needs), of whom 2,527,188 in state schools, 8,244 in public schools *paritarie* and 144,730 in private schools *paritarie*. Girls accounted for 49% of the total enrolment. The enrolment ratio for the age group 14-18 years was estimated at 92.3% (91.4% for boys and 93.2% for girls). In state schools there were 217,631 teachers with a contract of indeterminate duration and 47,054 teachers with an appointment of limited duration. The percentage of female teachers was 59.7%. In 2009/10, a total of 164,108 students were enrolled in three-year vocational training courses offered by the regions, of whom some 103,000 students in vocational training centres and about 61,000 students in courses offered by schools. Over 8,400 (three-year) courses were offered in 21 types of vocational qualifications; about 60% of trainees were enrolled in five types of courses (welfare operator, restoration, electrician, secretarial work, and mechanics). (MIUR, September 2011; see also ISTAT, December 2011).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

The National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (INVALSI) was established in accordance with Decree Law No. 258 of 20 July 1999. This Institute is the result of the transformation of the European Centre for Education (CEDE), but while the latter had several responsibilities, the main tasks of the National Institute are: evaluating the efficiency and efficacy of the education system as a whole and analytically, where appropriate also for each educational institution; setting the evaluation at national level in an international context; studying the reasons of school failure and dropouts, with reference to the social background and to different types of educational provision; carrying out activities to assess the level of satisfaction of users; giving support and technical assistance to the school administration in order to carry out autonomous assessment initiatives; assessing the impact of the implementation of legislative measures concerning schools; assessing the results of projects and initiatives promoted at national level for the innovation of the system; and assuring that the country takes part in international research projects concerning both evaluation and didactic and organizational innovation. Documentation functions have been assigned to the National Documentation Institute for Educational Innovation and Research (INDIRE, formerly the Educational Documentation Library), and research functions to the Regional Institutes for Educational Research (IRRE, formerly the Regional Institutes for Research, Experimentation and Training). In 2007 the INDIRE has been replaced by the National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy, and the IRRE by Regional Offices (*Nuclei Regionali*) of the National Agency.

Decree No. 286 of 19 November 2004 established the National Evaluation Service of the education and training system and re-organized the INVALSI in pursuance of Reform Law 53/2003. According to Decree No. 59 of 2004, the National Evaluation Service was to be in charge of the assessment of learning achievement at the end of the first and third year of primary school and at the beginning of the lower secondary school, in conjunction with the pupils' achievement at the end of primary school. Within the framework for the establishment of a national evaluation system, according to the Legislative Decree 213/2009 the tasks of the INVALSI have been



defined as follows: design of tools and objective methods for the evaluation of learning outcomes and the elaboration and delivering of the results of such evaluations; promotion of national tests on learning outcomes for the use of schools and vocational education and training institutions; support and assistance to schools and training institutions, also through the design of objective tests that can be used for schools self-evaluation practices; research on models and methods for the evaluation of schools and training institutions and the study of factors influencing the learning process; preparation of tests for state exams at national level; carrying out studies and collaborate in activities for the evaluation of the education system; carrying out research activities and ensuring the participation of the country in international projects; providing support activities and technical assistance to the regions and local authorities for the realization of self-evaluation activities; carrying out training activities for the teaching and managing staff on issues related to evaluation in collaboration with the National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy. (Eurydice, 2009/10).

The Ministry of Education, University and Research has established the action plan for the evaluation activities that should be carried out by the INVALSI starting from school year 2008/09 within a three-year period and for school year 2009/10. In particular, the learning outcomes of pupils and students will be gradually assessed starting from 2008/09 as follows: in grade 2 and grade 5 of primary school starting from 2008/09; in the first and third year of lower secondary education starting from 2009/10; and in the second and fifth year of upper secondary school starting from 2010/11. The subject areas to be assessed are initially Italian (reading) and mathematics, then sciences. English is also likely to be surveyed. (*Ibid.*).

In 2010/11, the INVALSI administered tests in grades 2 and 5 of primary school, in the first year of lower secondary school and, for the first time, in the second year of upper secondary school. Overall, more than 3,850 schools and about 166,200 students were involved in the evaluation, according to the following breakdown: 35,479 pupils in grade 2 and 35,113 in grade 5; 44,769 pupils at the lower secondary level; and 50,838 students at the upper secondary level. The tests focused on reading (in Italian) and mathematics. With regard to Italian, the percentages of right answers were as follows: 69.2 in grade 2; 73.1 in grade 5; 62.4 in the first year of lower secondary; and 69.8 in the second year of upper secondary. Concerning mathematics, the percentages of right answers were: 60.3 in grade 2; 68.4 in grade 5; 46.6 in the first year of lower secondary; and 47.9 in the second year of upper secondary. (INVALSI, 2011).

In the OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2006, the average score obtained by Italian students (475) was significantly lower than the average score of OECD countries (500). No significant differences were found in the performance of boys and girls. A significant difference was observed between scores obtained by students from lyceums (518) and those from technical and vocational schools (414), as well as between North-Eastern (520) and Southern Italy (448). Lyceum students obtained significantly better results than students from technical and vocational schools. In PISA 2009, the average score obtained by Italian students in the reading assessment (486) was lower than the average score of OECD countries (493). Students in North-Western (511) and North-Eastern (504) Italy performed significantly better than students in Southern Italy (468) and Southern Italy–Islands

(456). As in PISA 2006, lyceum students obtained significantly better results (541) than students from technical (417) and vocational schools (399). 5.8% of Italian students performed in the top two performance levels in the PISA reading tests, compared to 8% on average in the OECD countries. Girls performed better than boys (an average of 510 and 464 points respectively). In mathematics Italian students scored 483, lower than the average in the OECD countries but better than the score in PISA 2006 (462) and PISA 2003 (466). Boys performed better than girls (an average of 490 and 475 points respectively). In science Italian students scored 489, lower than the OECD average but better than the score in PISA 2006 (475). No significant differences were found in the performance of boys and girls.

Teaching staff

The traditional primary education teacher training school at the upper secondary level (*istituto magistrale*) trained primary school teachers and gave access to higher education (faculty of education). It offered a four-year programme with an additional year granting access to any university degree course. The following subjects were taught: Italian language and literature; Latin language and literature; foreign language (only in the first and the second year); philosophy; pedagogy and teaching practice; psychology; history; civics and geography; natural sciences; chemistry; mathematics and physics; drawing and history of art; choral singing; physical education; and musical instrument (optional). The traditional pre-primary teacher training school (*scuola magistrale*) prepared preschool teachers and offered a three-year programme. The following subjects were taught: Italian language and literature; educational science; history and geography; mathematics; accounting and natural sciences; hygiene and child rearing; religious education; music and choral singing; home economics and housework; plastic arts and drawing; and teaching practice. The two types of schools are being phased out, as now all teachers must be holders of a higher education degree.

Law 53/2003 introduced changes in the pre-service teacher training (preschool, primary and secondary school) and Decree No. 227 of 17 October 2005 established new requirements for the training and recruitment of teachers, while regulating the transition to the new system, which was to be implemented in 2006. According to the Decree 227/2005, teachers must be holders of a second-cycle degree, which requires two additional years of study after the three-year, first-cycle degree programme. Law No. 244 of 24 December 2007 (i.e. the Financial Law of 2008) repealed the Decree Law 227/2005 and the related provisions of the reform Law No. 53/2003 on initial teacher training and recruitment procedures, envisaging a further reform on the same issue. The recent Ministerial Decree No. 249 of 15 September 2010, entered into force in February 2011, introduces the reform of initial training and recruitment of pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers. According to the Decree, all teachers must have completed a five-year university degree (*laurea magistrale*) programme. Pre-primary and primary teachers are to be graduates of a first-cycle degree programme lasting five years, including a total of 600 hours of practical training (starting from the second year). Teachers at the secondary level (lower and upper) are to be graduates of a second-cycle degree programme lasting two years (following a three-year university degree) with an additional one year of practical training. The reform of teacher education is expected to be implemented starting from 2011/12.



Currently, pre-primary and primary school teachers have to attend a four-year degree programme in educational sciences, while secondary school teachers, after having obtained a degree (*laurea*), have to enrol in a two-year programme at a specialization school leading to a diploma of specialization. Admission to degree programmes is subject to the results of an entry examination due to the limited number of places planned at national level according to the requirements for teaching staff. The degrees are required for admission to competitive examinations for the teaching places. The four-year degree programme consists of a common two-year period and two branches of studies, one for pre-primary and the other for primary school; practical training starts from the first year. At the end of the second year, students must choose their branch of study.

In order to be appointed as a teacher with tenure, it is necessary to pass the competitive examinations. Primary school teachers are qualified to teach all subjects included in the curricula, with the exception of foreign languages, whereas secondary school teachers may only teach those subjects that they have studied at university and taken at the competitive examinations. After having been appointed to a permanent teaching position, teachers must go through a one-year induction period normally under the guidance and support of a tutor selected by the Teachers' Assembly and appointed by the school manager. Teachers at any educational level in state schools are civil servants, with rights and duties guaranteed by law. Freedom of teaching is a fundamental right. Freedom of teaching means educational autonomy and free cultural expression limited only by constitutional principles, the school system established by the state, and the moral and civil values. The national collective agreement for school staff, signed in November 2007 and valid for the period 2006-2009, has included in the professional profile of teachers and besides the already existing didactic, pedagogical, organizational and research competences, other competences related to the documentation and assessment. Furthermore, the agreement provides for the allocation of possible additional funds to support both educational-didactic activities and evaluation activities. (Eurydice, 2009/10).

As regards teachers' workload, pre-primary teachers work 25 hours per week, primary school teachers 22 weekly hours plus two hours for planning the activities, and secondary teachers work 18 hours per week. Additional non-teaching activities are no longer listed in detail, although they include professional performances established in the plan of activities adopted by the teachers' assembly (for example, projects, research, documentation updating activities, etc.). These activities cannot exceed 80 annual hours, and do not include the planning lessons or exercises, correction of papers, meetings with parents, examinations, and administrative tasks related to pupils' assessment. The MIUR estimates that in 2008 primary school teachers were teaching an average of 735 hours per year, decreasing to 601 annual hours at the secondary level (lower and upper). (MIUR, September 2011).

In-service training is considered as a right and is offered at the central and local levels by schools, universities, Regional Offices of the National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy, public research institutes, as well as by professional bodies and associations accredited by the Ministry. In-service training usually takes place outside working time; however, teachers participating in training courses organized by the school administration at the central, local or school level, are considered to be in service. The current collective national labour contract of the



school division establishes that in-service training is fundamental for the professional development of teachers. Teachers have the right to have five days with exemption from service during the school year to participate in training initiatives. The teachers' assembly of each school decides its annual plan for update and in-service training activities, which should be consistent with the objectives of the Plan for the Educational Offer (POF), and take into account personal needs or options. The Plan for update and in service training activities can include various types of initiatives. (Eurydice, 2009/10).

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Ministry of Labour and Social Policies: <http://www.lavoro.gov.it/> [In Italian. Last checked: July 2012.]

National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy (formerly the National Documentation Institute for Educational Innovation and Research—INDIRE): <http://www.indire.it/> or <http://www.agenziaautonomiascolastica.it/> [In Italian. Last checked: July 2012.]

National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research System: <http://www.anvur.org/> [In Italian; a few information in English. Last checked: July 2012.]



National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System (being phased out):
<http://www.cnvsu.it/> [In Italian. Last checked: July 2012.]

National Institute for the Development of Vocational Training of Workers:
<http://www.isfol.it/> [In Italian. Last checked: July 2012.]

National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training System:
<http://www.invalsi.it/> [In Italian. Last checked: July 2012.]

Universities Rectors' Conference: <http://www.cruis.it/> [In Italian; some information in English. Last checked: July 2012.]

For more detailed and updated information consult EURYDICE, the information network on national education systems and policies in Europe:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>