EURYDICE

EACEA
Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency

Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

European Commission

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

ITALY

School year 2007/08

Since the 2007/08 school year, compulsory education now lasts 10 years and concerns pupils between the ages of 6 and 16. It covers primary education for a duration of 5 years and lower secondary education for a duration of 3 years. At the age of 14, pupils must choose their pathway for the last two years of compulsory education, i.e. either upper secondary education or initial vocational training (FPI) in three-year pathways (until 2008/09, when the reform of the 2nd cycle of education will take place). Therefore, according to the right/duty to education and training for at least 12 years or until the obtaining of a vocational qualification, young people aged 16 may not abandon their studies and must remain in secondary education (until completion of the 5th year) or in the three-year pathways of educational and vocational training (until the acquisition of the 3rd-year vocational qualification). They may also choose the apprenticeship pathway leading to a qualification, after meeting an annual quota of training outside a company. Following the two years of compulsory education, young people aged 16 may also decide to change pathways by validating the credits they have acquired previously in another pathway.

This description will present an analysis of the activities and functions of guidance in relation to compulsory education, the choice which young people aged 14 must make between the two pathways (general secondary or FPI) and the right/duty (secondary, FPI, apprenticeship) of young people aged 16. It will also present the ways in which guidance is provided, not only during the key moments when pupils must make choices, but also when they might decide to change pathways: in other words, this description will examine how guidance takes shape in Italy during the transitional phases, educational pathways and training.

As mentioned above, given the fact that the choices concern the educational and initial vocational training systems, this description will cover guidance established by schools and vocational training centres, as well as by the employment services of local governments.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The period of compulsory education was extended to 10 years as part of a reform introduced by law n° 296/2006 and regulated by decree n°139/2007 of the Ministry of Education.

After compulsory education, young people must pursue their pathway in accordance with the right/duty to education and training in general education, in the three-year pathways or in apprenticeships, as provided for in the previous law n° 53/2003 (Moratti Reform). This law also provides for the preparation of a plan of support for guidance interventions to combat early school leaving, in order to ensure adherence to the right/duty to education and training.

However, in law n° 59/97 on the reform of public administration, it is stated that schools, in their autonomy, must establish initiatives to prevent early school leaving, in particular by using outside environments to create ties between the vocational world and the training system.

With ministerial order n° 487/1997 on guidance for schools and universities, guidance initiatives are part of the curricula and, in a broader sense, of the process of education and training. In the application of the abovementioned law n° 59/97, other measures (legislative decrees n° 469/97 and n° 112/98) have transferred functions and obligations related to the job market to the regions and local government, including the organisation of guidance activities. In this respect, the State-Region Agreement of 2 March 2000 holds that young people in compulsory education governed by the right/duty to education and training must have access to employment services, in order to benefit from guidance services, support and counselling.

As regards vocational training, decree n° 166/2001 established the parameters which vocational training centres seeking to be accredited by the regions must adhere to in order to provide guidance activities. Furthermore, with the recent decree of the Ministries of Education and Labour (November 2007), in order to be able to provide pathways and activities connected to compulsory education such as inherent guidance activities, these bodies must now be accredited at central level.

Schools, local employment services and vocational training centres are therefore the stakeholders in the guidance system for young people in compulsory education.

As regards guidance initiatives at national level, a National Guidance Committee was created in 2004 (made up of representatives of the Ministries of Education and Labour, the regions, provinces, municipalities and employers' associations) in order to bring together the experiences and projects of the different stakeholders (schools, training institutes, local government) to promote pilot projects and initiatives which meet local needs as well as those of young people and their families. The committee also elaborated a National Guidance Plan which was launched in 2004/05. This national plan has the mission to pursue certain fundamental objectives, including the reinforcement of guidance intended to encourage success in education and training; integration into the professional world and, in a broader sense, young people's right of citizenship, in particular to combat early school leaving; the creation of an integrated guidance system aimed at overcoming the fragmentation of initiatives and projects; and the promotion of integrated training for all participants according to shared choices and methodologies.

RESPONSIBILITIES

In order to have a better understanding of the Italian education system, it is useful to bear in mind that the school system comes under the Ministry of Education, which defines the basic levels of services and standards, whilst respecting the autonomy of schools. The training system is within the competence of the regions, although the Ministry of Labour exercises its authority as regards the basic levels of services.

In accordance with regulation 257 of 2000, each school is responsible for launching the necessary initiatives to ensure educational and vocational guidance for pupils. These initiatives must be coordinated with those of the local authorities. They are provided at the end of the first cycle of education (age 14) by schools themselves, based on the choices of young people who, in order to complete their last two years of compulsory education, move on to the upper secondary cycle or to the FPI three-year pathways. The restreaming

activities, carried out by schools and vocational training centres, are therefore necessary during the pathways in both systems, as well as at the end of the two years, in order to continue in the same pathway or to change training pathways (see the section entitled 'Vocational guidance education in the curriculum').

In the framework of the employment services, under the responsibility of the provinces, a specific service for young people aged 14 to 17 was created in order to establish important activities connected to the recovery and restreaming of young people who have abandoned their studies (see the section entitled 'Guidance services outside school').

Other guidance centres devoted to young people have been created by the municipalities, such as *Informagiovani* which provides young people with guidance services on a bigger scale. For more information on the characteristics of these structures, see the section entitled 'Guidance services outside school'.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

As regards educational guidance in view of completing compulsory education, the first key moment occurs at the end of the **first cycle of education** when pupils aged 14 must decide whether they will complete their last two years of compulsory education in the general or vocational education and training system. Guidance activities are provided in different ways according to the school. The number of hours devoted to these activities is also very different from one school to the next, and depends on the projects accomplished by schools at a given time in the school year, usually at the end of the third year of the first cycle of education. The guidance projects elaborated and established by schools or carried out in collaboration with the regional education offices (decentralised sections of the Ministry of Education) or with the regions, are therefore cross-curricular. For more information on how they are carried out, see the section entitled 'Guidance services at school'.

In addition to guidance provided when pupils must make important choices, restreaming activities are carried out by schools and training centres once pupils have begun their pathways, as well as at the end of the last two years of compulsory education, in order to continue in the same pathway or to change training pathways. In this respect, in 2004, with the State-Region Agreement, national mechanisms were developed in order to allow the validation of training credits; this allows pupils in a training pathway to begin a general education pathway and vice versa, and guarantees the possibility for pupils to modify their choice of training up to age 18.

In the **initial vocational training pathway**, guidance is part of the curriculum for each year and represents a variable but significant number of hours. Guidance activities are part of the support measures aimed at encouraging the integration of young people into the pathways and to provide them with support in their search for employment. Specific actions are undertaken in order to facilitate the learning process and the reasoned choice of pathway for young people in difficult situations (immigrants, disabled people and early school leavers). The guidance initiatives are composed of a series of measures whose nature and objectives are discussed in the section entitled 'Guidance services at school', in the description of vocational training centres.

Traineeships within the framework of the curriculum

As regards the educational pathway of the upper secondary cycle, practical and laboratory activities are established in the framework of an increased flexibility of the curricula in vocational institutes and arts institutes, allowing the productive processes of the vocational sector of reference to be followed. Traineeships are specific to these institutes, and may begin during the first year, in keeping with the many existing options.

As regards the other educational pathways (secondary schools and technical institutes) which offer less laboratory and practical activities, legislative decree n° 77/2005 introduced 'alternance training' as a study method for courses in the second cycle, in secondary schools as well as in the vocational education system. The alternance pathways are aimed at encouraging 'guidance provided to young people by promoting their personal vocations, interests and individual learning styles'. Pupils must be aged 15 in order to request an alternance pathway. The alternance pathways are prepared, launched and evaluated under the responsibility of schools or training institutes, based on agreements with companies, professional associations or public or private bodies which accept pupils for their learning periods in the workplace, but it is not based on a labour contract. Alternance involves an internal supervisor from the school (who assists and guides pupils in order to ensure that everything runs smoothly), and an external supervisor from the workplace, who supervises pupils in the work environment, assists them in their learning pathway in the workplace and verifies the efficiency of the pathway with the internal supervisor.

The **FPI regional pathways** are also compatible with alternance training. However, traineeships, which have always been a characteristic guidance measure for vocational pathways, are carried out in companies from the first year. With local differences considered, traineeships involve a minimum of 100 hours and a maximum of 300 hours per year. The duration of traineeships is defined individually by the regions, according to the vocational qualification to be acquired. For the FPI three-year pathways, traineeships in the first year are intended above all to provide a form of guidance (through the organisation of visits to companies), whereas traineeships in the following years are of a practical nature and take place in companies. In these cases as well, traineeships require a training project agreement involving the pupil, the training centre (via the internal supervisor) and the company (via the external supervisor).

OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES

Contacts with the professional world

Since 2004, following the creation of the National Guidance Committee, the Ministry of Education has encouraged schools to participate in the national *Orientagiovani* day organised by *Confindustria*, a body representing Italian industries. This event – now at its 14th edition – represents a combination of a whole series of events organised at regional level by the local *Confindustria* associations. In each Italian province, the industrial associations, in collaboration with schools, training centres and universities, provide pupils and teachers with an opportunity to meet entrepreneurs and reflect on skills and professional choices together.

Guidance services at school

The methods used by schools in the **first cycle** to establish guidance according to compulsory education do not follow a specific model, as they vary from one school to the next and are often connected to specific cross-curricular projects, which take place at a given point during the year (generally at the end of the last year of the first cycle). However, guidance activities are generally based on the desires, skills and needs of pupils who have consulted the brochure or have received support in researching other sources of information on the internet. The information concerns the local distribution of schools as well as the characteristics of upper secondary schools. The subjects included in the curricula, the calendars and the professional or study opportunities of the different pathways are verified. Guidance activities also provide a knowledge of the system of initial vocational training, i.e. the vocational pathways offered by regional vocational training centres. The information on vocational pathways also concerns the subjects, calendars and the different methodologies used. However, recent studies (ISFOL) have highlighted the fact that young people aged 14 and their families have poor knowledge of the FPI system in general and the vocational training centres in their region, as well as the training programmes they offer.

Vocational training centres offer a wide variety of guidance activities according to different methods, throughout the training pathways. Guidance is part of the curriculum and corresponds to a specific number of hours, and is provided by specialised guidance professionals (guidance counsellors, counsellors, psychologists, teachers).

Guidance provided during the pathways is enhanced by a series of measures: reception in the class; counselling of pupils in difficult situations; restreaming to provide support to pupils in the re-evaluation of their choices; support at work at the end of a training pathway; counselling to provide support to pupils throughout their training pathways; and support in the transition to another training or educational pathway. This guidance measure is implemented in the Laboratories for the Recovery and the Development of Learning (LARSA), which prepare pupils individually for the transition from one pathway to another, in general or vocational education. One of the tools used is the portfolio, a sort of file compiled by the pupil and his or her teachers, which defines and gathers the materials, products, documents and certificates highlighting the skills, knowledge and aptitudes developed by the pupil during his or her pathway.

Guidance services outside school

Employment services exist everywhere in the country, and provide their services to adults and young people between the ages of 14 and 17. Their functions are:

- to obtain data on young people enrolled in schools, vocational training or with apprenticeship contracts, in order to work out how many young people between the ages of 14 and 17 are outside all pathways of education at national level. Currently, these data are gathered in a provincial or regional register, with an aim to create a national register of pupils of compulsory school age;
- to implement services in the centre provided to young people who are outside all pathways; information on the possibilities provided by the different educational and

training structures; guidance to determine training or work projects; and counselling and support provided to young people in carrying out these projects.

The employment services take charge of delicate and problematic situations connected to specific groups of young people (mainly disabled people and immigrants).

As mentioned above, other guidance centres called *Informagiovani* also exist and are governed by the municipalities. The difference between *Informagiovani* and the employment services is that the main function of *Informagiovani* is to provide general information to young people on education, training and work, as well as on health, leisure activities, hobbies and cultural events in the region.

QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF

In the schools

Since 1990, the responsibilities and professional profile of each primary and secondary school teacher has included guidance provision for pupils. During their university studies and teaching specialisations, **school teachers** receive training devoted to the study and preparation of the subject of guidance.

However, the National Guidance Plan elaborated by the National Committee in 2004, provides for the implementation of integrated training activities for all participants as one of its main objectives.

School teachers, who coordinate guidance projects and are specialised in guidance activities, are given specific responsibilities by educational institutions as part of their 'instrumental' functions. These include tasks in relation to 'interventions and services for pupils' which involve the 'coordination and management of follow-up, guidance and counselling activities'.

However, as regards the **vocational training** pathway, stakeholders in the area of guidance are often former instructors who have acquired a specialisation in guidance activities for adolescents, through courses provided by the training structures themselves or through a master's degree at university. They have usually had socio-educational training.

Let us also mention the recent realisation of the 'ongoing training system online', a national ongoing training project for the public free of charge, based on new technologies *(e-learning)*, and promoted by the Ministry of Labour directorate general for policies to promote guidance and training, carried out with the technical help of *Italia Lavoro* and ISFOL. This project is aimed at participants in the integrated system of training/education: training professionals, including guidance counsellors and supervisors; upper secondary school teachers who provide vocational guidance and education; and staff in the employment services. After registering for this service, one may access the course catalogue and training online, for which personalised supervision is also offered. Among the subject areas considered are, for example, specific courses on guidance/assessment and the analysis of individual skills; assistance and training for people in difficult situations (the disadvantaged and immigrants); integration and alternance training; and employment services, traineeships,

apprenticeships and counselling. Registration is required in order to access this service at http://www.xformare.it.

A list of interesting websites for the training of stakeholders in the area of guidance is presented below:

- http://www.consorzioineco.it: the website of the Information and Communication Consortium. It contains a guide to establishing information and counselling services for young people.
- http://www.centrotransizioni.it: a research and operational elaboration laboratory designed by the University of Bologna for guidance professionals.
- http://www.orientamento.it: a 'home-made' website for Italian guidance participants.
- http://www.jobtel.it: a guidance website intended for users and professionals in the sector.

The periodicals which, for years, have dealt with the fundamental themes of training, work and guidance for the ongoing training of professionals are presented below:

- *Magellano* – bimonthly review, 2000, Florence, Iter.
- *Orientamento scolastico e professionale* (Educational and vocational guidance) – Italian association of educational and vocational guidance, quarterly review, 1960, Rome, AIOSP.
- *Professionalità* (Professionalism) – Culture, experiences and innovation in in-service training, bimonthly review, Brescia, La Scuola Editions.
- *Rassegna CNOS* (CNOS Review) – Issues, experiences and perspectives in vocational training, four-monthly review, 1984, Rome, CNOS.

In other guidance services

Guidance counsellors in the employment services are often people with different qualifications in terms of guidance. Some of them are psychologists, sociologists, statisticians and researchers. Others do not have master's degrees, but have acquired solid experience over the years with unemployed people.

COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Schools and guidance centres establish relations with local guidance services as well as with other bodies (such as local companies). In general, the objective is to organise guidance sessions and, in particular, alternance pathways and traineeships (see the section entitled 'Vocational guidance education in the curriculum').

Local guidance projects promoted by the municipalities, provinces and regions also involve interaction between the different stakeholders in the area of training (schools, training centres, volunteer associations) and those present locally (employment services and companies). In other cases, the projects encourage the dissemination of regulations and

possibilities in terms of education and training at local level, between the families of young people in compulsory education.

At national level, *Orientagiovani* day (see the section entitled 'Other types of activity') encourages interactions between schools and companies in order to promote entrepreneurial culture.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

Young people and their families have access to information on guidance at local and national levels. On the websites of the municipalities, provinces and regions, and in particular in the sections devoted to the provision of educational and vocational training, it is possible to access databases on local training pathways and schools for young people in compulsory education.

The project which is under consideration by the Ministry of Education recommends the creation of a national database containing not only the names of local schools and the educational provision planned for the beginning of a given school year, but also the names of vocational training centres and their training offers.

As regards printed documentation on guidance, certain provinces, regions and employment services provide brochures for young people and their families, aimed at explaining the standards for compulsory education and the concept of the right/duty to education and training, and at providing more pertinent information concerning their choices.

The *Europa Lavoro* website (http://www.lavoro.gov.it/Lavoro/EuropaLavoro), created by the Ministry of Labour, is devoted entirely to the activities of the European Social Fund (ESF): it allows quick access for professionals in the sector and citizens to up-to-date opportunities proposed by the ESF in the area of vocational training and guidance, and also provides tools for integration into the professional world. One of the initiatives promoted is *Circuml@vorando* (www.circumlavorando.it), a nomadic information service about the world of vocational training, guidance, work and social integration.

Among the *Europa Lavoro* publications, let us mention *Orientamento al lavoro – Vademecum per i genitori* (Guidance at work – vademecum for parents) in the section devoted to editorial products. It is aimed at parents of young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who have finished university or non-university higher education or vocational training, and who require information on choosing a career.

Another service which should be mentioned is the *Orientaonline* project of the Ministry of Labour, Directorate General for Guidance and Training, carried out thanks to financing from the ESF and the technical help of ISFOL. *Orientaonline* (http://www.isfol.it) is an integrated database devoted to guidance and vocational training: it contains detailed data and information on careers, presented in a map of professional sectors which attempts to cover the entire production system in Italy.

Internet references

http://www.comune.name of the municipality.it. For example: www.comune.fiumicino.it

http://www.provincia.name of the province.it. For example: www.provincia.firenze.it

http://www.regione.name of the region.it. For example: www.regione.toscana.it

On the websites of the municipalities, provinces and regions (as indicated above), one may find the local initiatives and databases related to schools and vocational training in the sections devoted to educational and vocational training.

http://www.istruzione.it: the website of the Ministry of Education contains education legislation and material on guidance, as well as updates of educational initiatives and projects, in particular in the section www.pubblica.istruzione.it/dgstudente/orienta.shtml

http://www.indire.it: the website of the National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy presents guidance projects and projects aimed at combating early school leaving, as well as documentation on teacher training in Italy and abroad.

http://www.lavoro.gov.it: this website contains regulations concerning work and the access to work. In the section entitled *Europa Lavoro* (http://www.lavoro.gov.it/Lavoro/EuropaLavoro), one may also find information on the training projects financed by the European Union, as well as editorial and multimedia documents on guidance.

http://www.isfol.it: the website of the Institute for the Development of Vocational Training of Workers contains a database with information on employment, numerous files on careers and a guide devoted to training pathways in the *Orientaonline* section. A very useful list of publications for professionals may be found in the guidance section.

http://www.cosavuoifaredagrande.it: this website provides useful information and methodological instruments to help pupils discover their personal aptitudes and interests in view of their future school, university and career choices.

http://www.jobtel.it: this guidance website is intended for users and professionals in the sector.

Sources

1. Thematic overview (CEDEFOP)
2. Country report (CEDEFOP)
3. Guidance Policies in the Knowledge Society. Trends, challenges and responses across Europe. Cedefop comprehensive report. Ronald G. Sultana. Cedefop Panorama series; 100. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004.
4. Eurybase; Eurydice.
5. Strutture dei sistemi di istruzione, formazione professionale e Educazione degli adulti in Europa (Education, vocational training and adult education systems in Europe): Italy, 2007/08 (Eurydice).

6. Partecipazione e dispersione. Settimo rapporto di monitoraggio dell'obbligo formativo (Participation and early school leaving. Seventh monitoring report on compulsory education), November 2007 (ISFOL).
7. La sperimentazione dei percorsi di istruzione e formazione professionale. II Rapporto di Monitoraggio (Educational and vocational training experimentation. Monitoring report), June 2006, (ISFOL).
8. La Regolamentazione dell'obbligo di istruzione/diritto-dovere (The regulation of compulsory education/the right-duty to education and training), February 2008 (ISFOL).
9. Skills and Competences Development and Innovative Pedagogy, Isfol – Cedefop, 2007.