

ITALIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM – Overview

The education system in Italy is organised according to the subsidiary principle and autonomy of schools. The State has exclusive competence on general issues on education, on minimum standards to be guaranteed throughout the country and on the fundamental principles that Regions should comply with within their competences. Regions share their competences with the State on education issues while they have exclusive competence on vocational education and training. Schools are autonomous as for didactic, organisation and research and development activities.

The education system is organised as follows:

- **Pre-primary school** for children between 3 and 6 years of age;
- first cycle of education lasting 8 years, made up of:
 - **primary education** (lasting 5 years), for children between 6 and 11 years of age;
 - **lower secondary school** (lasting 3 years) for children between 11 and 14 years of age;
- second cycle of education offering two different pathways:
 - State **upper secondary school** (lasting 5 years) for students from 14 to 19 years of age. It is offered by **licei**, **technical institutes** and **vocational institutes**;
 - three and four-year **vocational training courses (IFP)** addressed to students who have completed the first cycle of education. It is organized by the Regions.
- **post-secondary non tertiary education** offered through: post-qualification and post-diploma vocational courses organized by the Regions; Higher technical education and training courses (IFTS).
- **higher education offered by universities and the High level arts and music education system** (Afam). Higher education is organised in first, second and third levels according to the Bologna structure.

Education is compulsory for 10 years, from 6 to 16 years of age, and covers the eight-year first cycle of education (5 years of primary school and 3 years of lower secondary school) and the first two years of the second cycle (DM 139/2007). After completion of the first cycle of education, the last two years of compulsory education (from 14 to 16 years of age) can be accomplished either in State upper secondary schools (licei, technical institutes and vocational institutes), or through the three-year vocational education and training courses, falling under the competence of the Regions (law 133/2008).

In addition, all have the right/duty (*diritto/dovere*) to education and training for at least 12 years in the education system or, anyhow, until they have obtained a three-year vocational qualification within 18 years of age (law 53/2003).

Finally, 15-year olds can attend the last year of compulsory education also through the apprenticeship, previous specific agreement signed by the Regions, the Ministry of labour, the Ministry of education and trade unions (law 183/2010).

Compulsory education refers to both enrolment and attendance. It can be accomplished either in a State and a *paritaria* school and also, at certain conditions, though parental education and merely private schools; regional three-year vocational training courses are offered by the relevant training agencies. Parents or caregivers are responsible for the accomplishment of compulsory education, while supervision on the fulfilment of compulsory education falls under the responsibilities of local authorities where pupils reside and school heads of the schools pupils are enrolled in.

Once compulsory schooling has been accomplished, pupils who don't prosecute their studies receive a certification attesting compulsory education fulfilment and competencies acquired; these latter constitute formative credits for the attainment of any professional qualification.

Access to both university and Afam tertiary education is reserved for students who passed the State exam at the end of upper secondary school. Yet, specific conditions for the admission are under the responsibility of the Ministry of education, University and Research (MIUR) or of each single university and Afam sector.

The three-year vocational qualification, as well as the four-year vocational diploma, both obtained at completion of regional vocational training courses, allow access to regional second level vocational training, which can be access also with an upper secondary education leaving certificate. This latter certificate also grants admission to Higher technical education and training courses (IFTS).

STRUCTURE OF THE ITALIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

