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The Italian Education System



I quaderni di eurydice

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The Italian Education System

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FOREWORD

The decision to dedicate this issue of the “I Quaderni di Eurydice” series to describing the Italian education system stems from the need to publish a print edition of the information on Italy that is available in Eurypedia – the online encyclopedia of the Eurydice network on education and training in Europe.

Eurypedia was created in 2011 to offer comprehensive descriptions of the education systems of the 38 countries that took part in the EU’s Lifelong Learning Programme – LLP and are now participating in the EU’s Erasmus+ programme.

The articles in the online encyclopedia are organised into 14 topics for each country. Information is available in English and, for many countries, in their national languages, too. Some topics include transversal issues such as funding, educational support and guidance and quality assurance, while others describe in detail the various levels of education from pre-primary to higher education. The articles are drafted, updated and issued by the Eurydice national units in collaboration with education experts and the national ministries responsible for education and are available on the websites of the Italian Eurydice unit (www.indire.it/eurydice) and the coordinating European Eurydice unit (<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice>).

Based on the wiki system, Eurypedia is a dynamic resource tool that can be regularly updated. Eurypedia tools enable users to find information quickly and navigate between topics and national systems. Information is provided using a common structure for all countries. It is possible to select a topic and then explore it in the education systems of several countries, or to study in depth the education and training system of a single country.

Furthermore, for each country, Eurypedia provides a topic dedicated to ongoing national reforms and policy developments in relation to the Europe 2020 strategy and the new updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (‘ET 2020’). However, given the variability of reform processes, it was decided that issues which are currently under debate and liable to undergo frequent changes would not be included in this publication.

Despite the richness and diversity of the information available in the online encyclopedia on education systems, the Italian Eurydice unit has focused this publication on describing in detail the organisation and management of the Italian education and training system. The description covers all levels of education, from

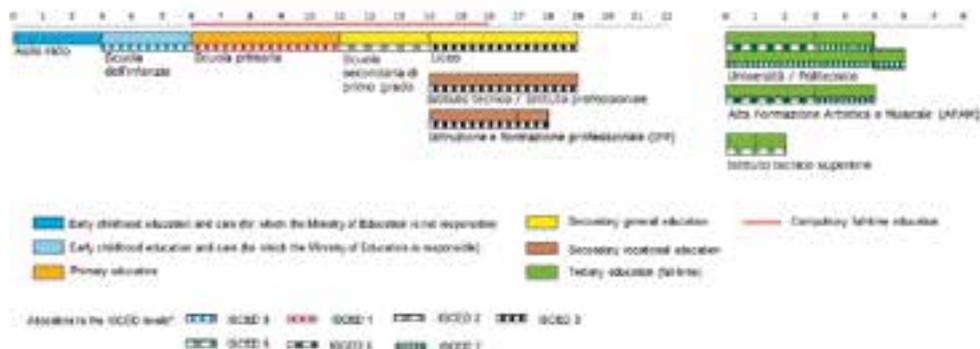
pre-primary to higher education. A separate chapter is dedicated to adult education, one of the fundamental objectives of the 'ET 2020' strategic framework.

Eurypedia, the online encyclopedia, continuously provides updated and reliable information on education systems and is able to add amendments in real time. It is, therefore, an interesting comparison tool for very different education and training systems.

Giovanni Biondi
President of INDIRE

1. ORGANISATION AND GOVERNANCE OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

1.1. Organisation and Structure of the Education System



* For the full details on each ISCED level, please consult: UNESCO, Institute for Statistics, 2012. International Standard Classification of Education. ISCED 2011. Available at: <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/isced-2011-en.pdf>

Source: Eurydice

The education system is organised as follows:

- pre-primary school (*scuola dell'infanzia*) for children between 3 and 6 years of age;
- first cycle of education lasting 8 years, made up of:
 - primary education (*scuola primaria*), lasting 5 years, for children between 6 and 11 years of age;
 - lower secondary school (*scuola secondaria di I grado*), lasting 3 years, for children between 11 and 14 years of age;
- second cycle of education offering two different pathways:
 - State upper secondary school (*scuola secondaria di II grado*), 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). It is organised by the Regions;
- higher education offered by universities, polytechnics included, institutes of the Higher Education in Art and Music system (*Alta Formazione Artistica e Musicale*, AFAM) and Higher Technical Institutes (*Istituti Tecnici Superiori*, ITS).

Education is compulsory for ten years between the ages of 6 and 16. This covers the whole of the first cycle of education, which lasts eight years (five years of primary school and three years of lower secondary school), and the first two years of the second cycle. After completion of the first cycle of education, the final two years of compulsory education (from 14 to 16 years of age) can be undertaken at a State upper secondary school (*liceo*, technical institute or vocational institute), or on a three- or four-year vocational education and training course which is within the jurisdiction of the Regions.

In addition, everyone has a right and a duty (*diritto/dovere*) to receive education and training for at least 12 years within the education system or until they have obtained a three-year vocational qualification by the age of 18. Finally, 15-year-olds can also spend the last year of compulsory education on an apprenticeship, upon a specific arrangement between the Regions, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and trade unions.

Compulsory education refers to both enrolment and attendance. It can be undertaken at either a State school or a non-State, publicly subsidised school (*scuola paritaria*) or even, subject to certain conditions, through home education or private schools. Regional three-year vocational training courses are offered by the relevant training agencies.

Parents or guardians are responsible for ensuring that children complete compulsory education, while the local authorities where pupils reside and the managers of the schools they attend have a responsibility for supervising their completion of compulsory education.

Once they have reached school-leaving age, young people who do not continue with their studies receive a certificate of completion of compulsory education and the skills they have acquired. These skills contribute to training credits towards any professional qualification.

Access to tertiary education (university, AFAM and ITS) is solely for students who have passed the State examination at the end of upper secondary school. Nevertheless, the specific conditions for admission are decided by the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) or individual universities and AFAM institutes.

The three-year vocational qualification and the four-year vocational diploma, both issued on successful completion of regional vocational training courses, allow entry to regional second-level vocational training. Holders of the upper secondary education leaving certificate are also eligible for second-level vocational courses.

Private Education

Article 33 of the Italian Constitution lays down two basic principles: the State is obliged to provide a State-school system accessible to all young people; organisations and private individuals are entitled to set up schools and colleges of education at no cost to the State. Furthermore, publicly subsidised schools (*scuole paritarie*) can issue certificates with the same legal value as qualifications from State schools of the same type and level. Such schools are free to choose their own cultural orientation and educational-teaching approach. Non-profit-making schools benefit from special tax relief.

1.2. Administration and Governance at Central and/or Regional Level

Administration at Central Level

The Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) is responsible for general administration at national level. School education is organised at a decentralised level by the MIUR through the Regional School Offices (*Uffici Scolastici Regionali, USR*), which operate at provincial level in Local Offices. There are no decentralised offices of the MIUR at municipal level, nor are there any decentralised offices of the MIUR for higher education. Furthermore, the MIUR has several bodies and agencies operating at national level with representative, consultative, monitoring and evaluative functions for schools and for universities and institutes of Higher Education in Art and Music (AFAM).

The Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR)

The Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) is headquartered in Rome. The Minister is in charge of determining policy with the help of a deputy minister, undersecretaries and with the direct collaboration offices including the Minister's Cabinet, which co-ordinates the activities of the special advisers' offices, the legislative office, the administrative office of the Ministry, the technical office and the press office. The MIUR is organised into three Departments.

The 'Department for the Education and Training System' is responsible for the general organisation of the school system, for defining educational and training objectives and the legal and economic status of school staff.

The 'Department for the Planning and Management of Human, Financial and Capital Resources' is responsible for financial policy, procurement, administrative human resources in schools, and managing information systems.

The 'Department for Higher Education and Research' is responsible for higher education, specifically the guidance, general regulation and funding of universities; monitoring and evaluating universities and institutes of Higher Education in Art and Music (AFAM); student status; implementation of EU and international legislation; support, planning and coordination of research activities at national, international and EU level.

The Regional School Offices (USRs)

The Regional School Office (*Ufficio Scolastico Regionale, USR*) is a branch of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR). Usually, it is divided into Local Offices, depending on its duties and local requirements. The USR oversees observance of general provisions for education and minimum performance requirements, the effectiveness of training actions and observance of standards.

The Local Offices, which operate at provincial level, are an internal division of the Regional School Office and have no autonomy. Local Offices support and advise schools on administrative and accounting procedures and the planning and innovation of the educational offer. They monitor implementation of provisions on school buildings and safety and deal with the integration of immigrant and special needs pupils, the promotion of student participation in schools and, in collaboration with municipalities, they monitor compliance with compulsory schooling. They also carry out any activities that are delegated to them by the head of the Regional School Office.

Other Bodies and Agencies

The Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) has several bodies and agencies operating at national level:

The National Education Council (*Consiglio Nazionale della Pubblica Istruzione*), an advisory body which assists the Minister with the planning and supervision of education policy, the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (*Istituto nazionale per la valutazione del sistema di istruzione, INVALSI*) and the National Institute of Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research (*Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa - INDIRE*).

For three-year vocational training courses, the Institute for the Development of Professional Training for Workers (*Istituto per lo sviluppo della formazione professionale dei lavoratori, ISFOL*) is the reference body for research and monitoring, policy and guidance to the Regions. At higher education level, the National University Council (*Consiglio Universitario Nazionale, CUM*) and the National Council for Higher Education in the Arts and Music (*Consiglio nazionale per l'Alta formazione artistica e musicale, CNAM*), for universities and AFAM systems respectively, are each charged with formulating opinions and proposals on issues of general interest and, in particular, planning, approving university teaching regulations and the appointment of professors and researchers.

The National Council of University Students (*Consiglio Nazionale degli Studenti Universitari - CNSU*) is the student representative body at national level, with a consultation and recommendation role for issues of general interest to the university sector. Quality assurance is guaranteed through the National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research System (*Agenzia nazionale per la valutazione del sistema universitario e della ricerca – Anvur*), a public body under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, University and Research.

Finally, the Conference of Rectors of Italian Universities (*Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università italiane - CRUI*) gives its opinion on the three-year plan drafted by the Ministry on the objectives for the university system and the allocation of financial resources. It also makes recommendations in areas aimed at optimising the management of teaching and scientific regulations.

Administration at Regional Level

The Regions have a joint legislative role along with the State on issues related to education. Conversely, they are solely responsible for the planning, management and provision of vocational education and training through recognised institutions. Through the State/Regions Conference, the Regions work closely with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, which define the minimum national standards for the education system and the vocational education and training system.

Education and training issues within the jurisdiction of the Regions are handled by specific education offices (*Assessorati*).

1.3. Administration and Governance at Local Level

Local administration includes Provinces⁽¹⁾ and municipalities (*Comuni*), which have responsibilities in different areas and at different levels of the education system.

Provinces are assigned specific functions for upper secondary education only. Municipalities, often representing small residential communities and restricted areas, are distributed throughout Italy and have their own or regionally or provincially delegated responsibilities for functions and services relating to pre-primary, primary and lower secondary schools. Provinces and municipalities carry out their specific education-related functions through dedicated educational offices (*Assessorati*).

1.4. Administration and Governance at Institutional Level

Pre-primary, Primary, Secondary and Post-secondary Levels

Schools at pre-primary, primary and secondary level have teaching, organisational and research autonomy. Schools were granted autonomy and legal status in 2000.

Since the 1995/1996 school year, it has been possible to set up what are known as comprehensive institutes. These are groupings of primary schools, lower secondary schools and pre-primary schools managed by a single school manager.

The Ministry of Education (MIUR) lays down a general framework for school autonomy to ensure uniformity within the Italian education system. In fact, the Ministry of Education sets the general objectives of the educational process, the 'specific learning objectives' for pupils' skills, the subjects on the minimum national curriculum and the annual number of teaching hours dedicated to them, the total annual compulsory timetable for curricula, standards for the quality of education services, general criteria for pupil assessment, general criteria for the organisation of adult education study paths. Each school draws up its own Educational Offer

⁽¹⁾ The organisation of the State at provincial level has been recently revised. Thus, responsibilities of provinces in education may change in the future.

Plan (*Piano dell'offerta formativa, POF*) which is the basic document setting out the cultural and planning identity of the school. It must be consistent with the general and educational objectives of the various kinds of study and specialisms set at national level and, at the same time, it must reflect cultural, social and economic requirements at local level. The POF is drawn up by the Teachers' Council (*Collegio dei docenti*) on the basis of general objectives defined by the District/School Council and taking into account the proposals and advice of parents organisations and associations and, at upper secondary level only, students associations. The POF must be approved by the District/School Council and given to students and their parents on enrolment.

Schools are administered and managed by the different bodies described below.

The School Manager (*Dirigente scolastico*)

The school manager is the legal representative of the institution and is responsible for its overall management, the management of financial and material resources and the quality of the service provided.

Outside of the functions of the school's committees and boards, the school manager acts autonomously in his duties of direction, co-ordination, and deployment of human resources, in order to organise school activities efficiently and effectively. He or she also promotes the actions needed to safeguard the quality of the educational process and ensure the collaboration of cultural, professional, social and economic resources in the community.

In carrying out his/her management and administrative duties, the school manager can delegate specific tasks to teachers. He or she is also assisted by the Director of General and Administrative Services.

The Director of General and Administrative Services (DSGA)

The administrative manager of schools which have been granted autonomy is called the Director of General and Administrative Services (*Direttore dei servizi generali e amministrativi* - DSGA). The Director of General and Administrative Services (DSGA) has operational autonomy within the general instructions of the school manager and the assigned objectives, to supervise the administrative and general services of the school and co-ordinates the relevant staff.

He or she arranges the issue of those certificates that do not require discretionary assessment, formulates projects and proposals for improving the services under his or her responsibility and gathers information and arranges the conclusion of contracts, agreements and conventions. He or she is automatically a member of the Executive Board and the District/School Council.

Committees and Boards

The District Council and the School Council

The District Council (in Districts at primary school level) and the School Council (in comprehensive institutes and in secondary schools) are made up of elected representatives of teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and, in upper secondary schools, students. The school manager is an ex officio member. The Chairman is elected from among parent representatives.

The Councils make decisions on the organisation of school activities, with due observance of the functions of the Teachers' Council. They provide the latter with the general frame for drawing up the school's educational offer plan (POF) and approve the POF itself.

The Teachers' Council

The Teachers' Council (*Collegio dei docenti*) is made up of the permanent and temporary teachers from each District or institute. It is chaired by the school manager. It formulates the educational offer plan (POF) in accordance with the general management and administration guidelines issued by the District/School Council, taking into account the proposals and opinions of parents' associations and organisations and students associations (at upper secondary level only).

The Teachers' Council also makes decisions on teaching methods and periodically evaluates the general development of teaching to verify its effectiveness in line with the planned objectives and proposes, wherever necessary, appropriate measures to improve educational activities.

The Council selects textbooks, after consulting the Inter-class Council (*Consiglio di interclasse*) and the Class Council, as well as teaching materials within the financial limits laid down by the District/School Council. Finally, it submits proposals to the School Manager on the organisation of class groups, the teaching timetable and the allocation of teachers to individual classes.

Other Councils

The Inter-section Council in pre-primary schools and the Inter-class Council in primary schools consist of teachers from all classes or sections from every school in the school district and one parent elected for each class or section. The Class Council at lower secondary level is made up of all the teachers of that class, four parent representatives, elected by and from among the parents of all the pupils in the class, and the school manager who chairs the Council meetings or delegates this task to one of the class teachers. Two student representatives and two parent representatives also serve on the Council in upper secondary schools.

When meeting in the presence of parents and, if allowed, students, these Councils are

charged with facilitating relations among all stakeholders in the school community. They also submit proposals on education and teaching activities to the Teachers' Council. In teachers-only meetings of the Councils, they also plan activities and carry out the periodic and final pupil assessments.

Teacher Evaluation Committee

Every school district or school has a Teacher Evaluation Committee. It is made up of two or four teachers elected by the Teachers' Council as effective members and one or two teachers as substitute members, depending on the number of teachers in the school (up to 50 or more than 50). It is chaired by the school manager.

The Committee's function is to express its opinion on the service of teachers during their probationary year, on requests for reinstatement of teachers who have undergone disciplinary action, and, by request of individual teachers, on their service for a period no longer than the previous three years.

The Role of Students

Students at upper secondary schools elect representatives for the Class and School Councils and are entitled to hold meetings within the school so they can exercise their right to democratic participation in the school's activities.

Students' meetings, which can be held at both class and school level, provide an opportunity to analyse educational and social problems with a view to enhancing the cultural and social development of the students themselves. Student representatives in the Class Council can form a student committee authorised to express opinions and make proposals to the School Council.

The *Charter of Students in Secondary Schools* establishes the rights and duties of pupils. Among students' rights are the right to a qualified cultural and vocational education, the freedom to learn, transparent and rapid evaluation and respect for the cultural and religious life of the community they belong to. On the other hand, students have a duty to attend school regularly, to fulfil study requirements in a consistent manner, behave correctly towards the school manager, teachers, school staff and their fellow students and comply with the organisation and safety rules of each school.

As autonomous entities, all schools have regulations establishing which behaviours constitute a breach of conduct, taking into account the basic principle that disciplinary measures must have educational aims. Thus, disciplinary measures must always be temporary and aim to redress an injury. Students can be offered the chance to convert disciplinary measures into services performed for the school community.

At provincial level, the Students Council is made up of two students from every upper secondary institute and has the functions of ensuring debate among students from all schools in the province and of making suggestions and expressing opinions to educational authorities, local authorities and territorial committees and boards.

The Role of Parents

At all school levels, parents elect their Class Council and School Council representatives and are entitled to hold meetings within the school so they can exercise their right to democratic participation in the school's activities. Meetings can be held at both class and school level and can be attended by the School Manager and teachers, who have no voting rights. Parents can choose to form associations outside school institutions depending on their educational aims, ideology, or religion and they can stand for election with their own symbols to become representatives in the committee and boards.

Tertiary Education

Universities and institutions for Higher Education in Art and Music (AFAM) have regulatory and organisational autonomy. Autonomy means that these institutions can issue their own charters and teaching regulations.

Directors of AFAM institutes are responsible for teaching, scientific and artistic organisation and are also legally liable for their area of responsibility. Directors are elected by the teaching staff of the institute. The chairman is the legal representative of the institutions (with the exception of the responsibilities of the Director).

The direction and management of universities is conducted at two levels: university level and department level. Intermediate structures, generally Faculties, may also co-ordinate the educational offer.

University (Ateneo) level

The Rector is the legal representative of the university and his/her duties include policy, initiative and the coordination of scientific and teaching activities. He or she is responsible for the fulfilment of the university's quality objectives and for guaranteeing the principles of efficacy, efficiency, transparency and the promotion of merit. He or she issues the three-year university planning document and the annual and three-year budgets and financial statements.

The Academic Senate submits proposals and gives mandatory instructions on teaching and research issues and on services for students. It approves the university regulations and code of ethics and can set up, modify or close courses, departments or other facilities and can also put forward a motion of no confidence in the Rector.

The Board of Directors is responsible for the administrative, financial and economic management of the university, as well as the management of the technical and administrative staff. It approves the university's budget and final accounts. The Director General is the highest member of the administration. He or she is in charge of the overall management and organisation of services, resources and personnel.

The Assessment team is made up of high-level professionals mainly chosen from

outside the university. It ensures the quality and efficacy of teaching and research carried out by the Departments.

Department Level

The purpose of Departments is to conduct scientific research, teaching and educational activities, as well as additional and related external activities. The Departments promote and co-ordinate research with due respect for the independence of individual researchers. Furthermore, committees made up of student and teaching staff members are responsible for assessing the activities of individual Departments.

Intermediate structures responsible for the organisation of the educational offer and student services can be included with Departments. These structures include Departments with subject affinities. They are responsible for proposing the launch or closure of study courses and the management of shared services. Usually called Faculties, these intermediate structures have their own board made up of the directors of the relevant departments, representatives of teaching staff and students. Faculty teacher-student joint committees may be set up in charge of monitoring activities, as for Departments.

2. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

Early childhood education and care has two different stages based on child age groups. Provision for children aged 0-3 years, offered by nursery schools, is not part of the education system and, thus, is outside of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR). The educational function of public nursery schools, as opposed to the merely utilitarian aspect of the service they provide for families, was established through central regulations in 1971. ECEC services are run directly by the municipalities, in accordance with general criteria defined at regional level.

Provision for children over 3 years of age is called *scuola dell'infanzia*. It is part of the education system and falls under the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, although institutions providing pre-primary education are also run at local level, not only by the State, but by the municipalities and the private sector. This level of education is not compulsory and lasts up to three years (from 3 to 6 years of age).

Pre-primary education 'contributes to the affective, psychomotor, cognitive, moral, religious and social development of children and promotes their potential to establish relationships, for autonomy, creativity, learning and to secure equal educational opportunities: in accordance with parent responsibility for education, it contributes to the full education of children; through its autonomy and didactical and pedagogical unity, it implements the educational project and educational continuity, together with all childhood services and the primary school'.

This chapter deals only with the educational offer for children over 3 years of age.

2.1. Organisation of Pre-primary Education

Geographical Accessibility

Although pre-primary school for children aged over three years is not compulsory, over the years, the State has adopted a policy of generalising the service. This means setting up pre-primary schools in areas of the country without such provision or where the provision, if it exists, is insufficient.

Admission Requirements and Choice of School

In general, children turning three, four or five by 31 December of the relevant school year can enrol in pre-primary school classes. By request of the parents, and subject to specific conditions, it is also possible to enrol children turning three by 30 April of the relevant school year. The specific conditions to be met by schools for accepting early enrolments are: the availability of places and premises suitable for receiving children under three years of age; all children on waiting lists have been enrolled; the Teachers' Council has decided the times and procedures for including these children at school.

Parents are free to choose the school they wish to send their children to. The only limitations may be due to a lack of available places or to a lack of school staff assigned to each school by the School Administration. If the number of requests exceeds the number of available places, each school sets its own admission criteria.

Age Levels and Grouping of Children

State pre-primary schools are organised into groups called 'sections', with each section containing children of the same age. However, sections may be made up of children of different ages, in accordance with the school's organisational autonomy and freedom to form the groups of children. The general trend is to alternate activities carried out in a section with activities carried out by groups of children of different ages, thus creating heterogeneous groups. The aims of this approach are to stimulate the relationship between teachers and children, increase interaction among children and enable a better and wider use of rooms, spaces and materials.

The number of pupils per section ranges from a minimum of 18 to a maximum of 26. Such limits can be derogated on the basis of different factors, such as the presence of disabled pupils, the geomorphology of the territory, financial conditions and social disadvantages, availability of school staff.

Organisation of Time

Every year, the Ministry of Education establishes the calendar for nationwide holidays, including for the pre-primary level. The Regions are responsible for defining the school calendar (start and end of school activities, length of breaks for national holidays, other holidays) so that it reflects local needs. Every year, the Ministry publishes a summary table on its website, showing all regional school calendars.

Educational activities take place between 1 September and 30 June for a total of 35 weeks, according to the specific school calendar established at regional level.

The weekly teaching timetable for pre-primary school is set at central level. Usually, the weekly timetable at pre-primary level is 40 hours a week (1400 hours/year). This can also be extended to up to 50 hours a week (1750 hours/year). By request of parents, schools can organise classes with a shorter timetable of 25 hours a week, (875 hours/year) with activities in the morning only. The timetables includes Catholic religious education.

Organisation of the Day and Week

Schools autonomously define what timetable model/models to offer, in accordance with their educational offer plans (POF) and regulations in force, and taking into account the requests of parents and staff. In schools offering different timetables, children are grouped according to the timetable chosen by their parents at enrolment.

The District/School Council sets the timetable for the start and end of daily activities, as well as the days of the week on which lessons are conducted, which can be no fewer than 5.

Out-of-school reception of pupils before or after the school timetable is a service run by the municipalities and as such is subject to demand and the financial and staff resources available to local administrations.

2.2. Teaching and Learning in pre-primary education

Steering Documents and Types of Activities

The pre-primary school curriculum follows the guidelines set by the Ministry of Education before the start of the 2012/13 school year. These guidelines replaced the national guidelines for personalised study plans and educational activities of 2004 as well as the curriculum guidelines of 2007.

According to the new national guidelines for the curriculum, the general aim of school is the harmonious and comprehensive development of the individual, in keeping with the principles of the Italian Constitution and European cultural tradition, to be achieved through the promotion of knowledge, respect for individual diversity and the active involvement of students and their families. The reference for these new guidelines is the Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning set up by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union through the Recommendation of 18 December 2006.

Specifically, the aim of pre-primary school is to promote the development of identity, autonomy and competences in children and to initiate them into citizenship. Five different fields of experience, each providing a range of objects, situations, images and languages related to the symbolic systems of our culture, progressively foster certain learning outcomes: the self and others; body and movement; images, sounds and colours; speech and words; knowledge of the world.

Each field of experience has specific competency development goals to which teachers refer. These fields of experience point to cultural and teaching paths and help teachers direct their educational action towards the full development of pupils.

Starting from school year 2009/2010, the subject 'Citizenship and Constitution' was introduced to all schools, including pre-primary schools. It is not a separate subject and its content is developed through teaching projects drawn up by individual schools. Starting from school year 2010/2011, the teaching of 'Citizenship and Constitution' became an objective that must be considered by schools in their educational offer plan.

The specific learning objectives for Catholic religious education were approved by Decree of the President of the Republic, according to the Concordat rules.

Teaching Methods and Materials

Teachers are free to choose teaching methods. However, the National guidelines for the curriculum establish some general criteria for the organisation of the learning environment:

- balanced integration of the time dedicated to care, relationships and learning, with routines (reception, meal, body care, rest/sleep, etc.) regulating the pace of the day and representing a 'safe foundation' for new experiences and stimuli;
- promotion of learning through action, exploration, contact with objects, nature, art, territory, in a playful dimension, as a typical form of relationship and knowledge;
- provision of cosy, warm, tidy rooms with an attention to aesthetics;
- unstrained management of time, so that children can spend the day serenely, play, explore, speak, understand, feel self-confident and secure in the activities they experiment;
- educational approach of teachers oriented towards listening, guiding, interaction, communication, mediation, continuous observation of the child, making themselves responsible for the child's 'world', interpreting the child's discoveries, offering support and encouragement to his/her learning developments.

2.3. Assessment in Pre-primary Education

At pre-primary level, teachers do not assess children's educational performance, rather they observe and interpret them. Teachers observe children occasionally and systematically in order to better understand their needs and to make balanced educational suggestions to be shared with the children's parents. Indeed, the task of pre-primary schools is to promote, support and strengthen processes which allow children to develop their abilities in the best way possible.

Assessment of the levels attained includes the following:

- an initial period aimed at outlining the abilities possessed when entering pre-primary education;
- time within teaching activities aimed at adjusting and individualising the educational and learning process;
- final period aimed at verifying learning outcomes, the quality of the educational and teaching activity and the entire educational experience.

Record-taking enables both adults and children to keep a trace of performance, thus making the development process visible and progress in individual and group learning more valuable.

3. PRIMARY EDUCATION

Primary school is compulsory, lasts for a total of five years and is attended by pupils aged between 6 and 11. Although they are two completely different levels of education, each with its own specificities, primary school and lower secondary school make up the first cycle of education, which lasts a total of eight years.

The aim of this level in the education system is to provide pupils with basic learning and the basic tools of active citizenship. It helps pupils to understand the meaning of their own experiences.

Primary education is divided, for teaching purposes only, into the first year, linked to pre-primary school, followed by a further two periods of two years each.

3.1. Organisation of Primary Education

Geographical Accessibility

The Constitution of the Italian Republic (art. 33 and 34) establishes that it is the duty of the State to provide access to education to all young people living in the country, regardless of the geographical condition of the area they live in and of their individual social and economic situation.

The central and branch administrations of the State, as well as regional, provincial and local administrations (municipalities) are responsible for setting up and operating educational establishments all over the country, based on the age of pupils, the geographical context of the area and the social conditions of the families living there.

To encourage school attendance by all and implement the universal right to study, various services and support measures are available. Municipalities are responsible for the organisation of transport services in accordance with criteria established at regional level. Transport services for pupils with special needs are provided free of charge.

Admission Requirements and Choice of School

Children who reach the age of six by 31 December of the relevant school year must enrol in the first year of primary school.

Children who reach the age of six by 30 April in the calendar year in which they begin school can be enrolled in the first year, by request of the parents (early enrolment). However, the Ministry recommends families to take note of the advice of the pupil's primary school teachers.

Parents are free to choose the school they want to send their children to. Parents or guardians can choose whether to enrol the child at the school in the area of

residence or in any other school they may prefer (e.g. on account of its educational offer or timetable). The only limitations may be due to a lack of available facilities or the lack of school staff assigned to each school by the school administration. Schools accept applications, within the maximum limits of available places, in accordance with criteria established by the School Council and published before the start of enrolment procedures. Since primary school is compulsory, all children must be guaranteed the right to attend including through coordination at local level between schools and local authorities.

Age is the main criterion for enrolment and inclusion in a specific class for foreign pupils; however, in their cases, the teaching staff can take other factors into consideration, such as the educational system of the country of origin, their previous study path, their assessed level of attainment.

Age Levels and Grouping of Pupils

Primary school lasts five years and is generally for pupils aged from 6 to 11.

In primary schools, children are organised into groups called 'classes'. Pupils are enrolled into class according to their age. However, pupils from different classes can be grouped together for special school activities or objectives. A class has a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 26-27 pupils. These limits can be modified within a 10% range. The maximum number of pupils per class is usually lowered to 20, if there are pupils with special educational needs. In schools located in small villages, usually in mountain areas or on small islands, the minimum number of pupils per class is 10.

If the population is too low for the school to form separate classes of pupils of the same age, 'multi-classes' are allowed. In multi-classes, pupils of different ages are grouped together to form a single class. This practice is marginal today affecting only a very small number of pupils. Teachers working in multi-classes have to plan and present activities that are tailored to the different age groups in their class.

Teachers in primary schools are generalists. The number of teachers per class varies according to the different timetable models (for details, see 'Organisation of the School Day and Week'). In fact, the classes adopting the weekly school timetable of 24, 27 or 30 hours usually have only one teacher, who may be supported by English language and Catholic religious studies teachers. Conversely, two teachers work – although not at the same time – in classes with a weekly timetable of 40 hours.

Organisation of the School Year

As with pre-primary school (*scuola dell'infanzia*), the Ministry of Education is responsible for setting the calendar for nationwide holidays, for all school levels. The Regions are responsible for defining the school calendar (start and end of school activities, length of breaks for national holidays, other holidays) so that it reflects

local needs. Every year, the Ministry publishes a summary table on its website showing all regional school calendars.

The school year starts on 1 September and ends on 31 August. Teaching activities, including end-of-term assessments, final assessments and examinations, as well as in-service training activities are carried out between 1 September and 30 June. There are 200 teaching days in a year. For pupil evaluation purposes, the school year can be divided into two or three terms (periods of three or four months, as decided by the Teachers' Council of each school).

The minimum and maximum number of teaching hours is set at central level.

The teaching timetable offers the following options:

- 24 hours a week;
- 27 hours a week;
- up to 30 hours a week, involving additional activities to the 27-hour timetable (i.e. up to 3 extra hours per week);
- 40 hours a week, including the lunchtime meal, known as 'full-time'.

Parents can choose which timetable to enrol their children on. Schools form classes on the basis of demand, bearing in mind that 30-hour or 40-hour classes can only be formed, if the school has the necessary human resources and facilities available. Furthermore, the minimum number of pupils per class must be met.

Organisation of the School Day and Week

The District/School Council establishes the daily and weekly timetable and the distribution of teaching hours in the morning and afternoon. Lessons must be spread over no fewer than 5 days a week. Lessons are usually held from Monday to Friday, but some schools offer a six-day week with lessons on Saturday.

Schools can autonomously adopt flexible solutions on the basis of the requirements of families, the teaching staff they have available, their facilities and services. Furthermore, the District/School Council can decide to redistribute the annual curricular teaching hours across different weeks of the school year, provided lessons are distributed over no fewer than five days a week.

Out-of-school reception of pupils before or after the school timetable is a service run by the municipalities and as such is subject to demand and the financial and staff resources available to local administrations.

The table below presents a sample 30-hour-week timetable (lunchtime not included):

	Out-of-hours provision	Lessons	Lunch break	Lessons	Out-of-hours provision
Monday	7.30-8.30	8.30-12.30	12.30-13.30	13.30-16.30	16.30-17.30
Tuesday	7.30-8.30	8.30-13.00	-	-	13.00-14.00
Wednesday	7.30-8.30	8.30-12.30	12.30-13.30	13.30-16.30	16.30-17.30
Thursday	7.30-8.30	8.30-13.00	-	-	13.00-14.00
Friday	7.30-8.30	8.30-12.30	12.30-13.30	13.30-16.30	16.30-17.30
Saturday	-	-	-	-	-

The table below presents a sample 27-hour-week timetable :

	Out-of-hours provision	Lessons	Lunch break	Lessons	Out-of-hours provision
Monday	-	8.00-13.00	13.00-14.30	14.30-16.30	16.30-17.30
Tuesday	-	8.00-13.00	-	-	13.00-14.00
Wednesday	-	8.00-13.00	-	-	13.00-14.00
Thursday	-	8.00-13.00	-	-	13.00-14.00
Friday	-	8.00-13.00	-	-	13.00-14.00
Saturday	-	-	-	-	-

The table below presents a sample 24-hour-week timetable, including Saturday:

	Out-of-hours provision	Lessons	Lunch break	Lessons	Out-of-hours provision
Monday	7.00-8.20	8.20-12.20	-	-	-
Tuesday	7.00-8.20	8.20-12.20	-	-	-
Wednesday	7.00-8.20	8.20-12.20	-	-	-
Thursday	7.00-8.20	8.20-12.20	-	-	-
Friday	7.00-8.20	8.20-12.20	-	-	-
Saturday	7.00-8.20	8.20-12.20	-	-	-

3.2. Teaching and Learning in Primary Education

Curriculum, Subjects, Number of Hours

At primary level, the curriculum is defined through the National Guidelines for the Curriculum (*Indicazioni nazionali per il curricolo*) implemented from school year 2012/2013. As mentioned in the section on pre-primary school (*scuola dell'infanzia*), this document replaced the National Guidelines for the Personalised Study Plans in primary schools (*Indicazioni nazionali per i piani di studio personalizzati*) of 2004 and the Guidelines for the Curriculum (*Indicazioni per il curricolo*) of 2007.

Specifically, the purpose of primary education is to enable pupils to acquire the fundamental knowledge and skills to develop basic cultural competence. According to the new guidelines, the general aim of school is the harmonious and comprehensive development of the individual, according to the principles of the Italian Constitution and European cultural tradition, to be achieved through the promotion of knowledge, respect for individual diversity and the active involvement of students and their families. The reference for these new guidelines is the Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning set up by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union through the Recommendation of 18 December 2006.

The subjects taught during the 5 years of primary school are: Italian, English, history, geography, mathematics, science, technology, music, art, sports science (also called body, movement and sport), Catholic religious education. Catholic religious education is optional.

After a three-year experiment starting in 2009/2010, the curriculum now also includes 'Citizenship and Constitution'. It is not a separate subject and content is defined through teaching projects developed by each school. To pursue this objective, all schools must include this teaching in their educational offer plans.

Each subject has goals for the development of skills, which are mandatory for teachers and learning objectives which are needed to reach the goals. The specific learning objectives for Catholic religious education are defined by Presidential Decree in agreement with the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI).

At primary level, there are no specific subject timetables. Only English and Catholic religious education have a specific timetable: one hour of teaching for English in the first grade, two hours in the second grade, three hours in the third, fourth and fifth grades, amounting to a minimum compulsory total of 396 hours throughout primary education. Two hours a week are allocated to either the teaching of Catholic religious education or alternative activities for those who opt not to take Catholic religious education.

Teaching Methods and Materials

Freedom in teaching is a principle set out in the Italian Constitution (art. 33). The choice and use of teaching methods and materials must be consistent with each school's educational offer plan (POF), which, in turn, must be consistent with the general and educational objectives of the different branches and levels of study established at national level.

While safeguarding the freedom in teaching, the National Guidelines for the Curriculum (see, 'Curriculum, Subjects and Number of Hours') suggest some basic methodological approaches, such as, taking advantage of pupils' experiences and knowledge, promoting exploration and discovery activities, encouraging cooperative learning, developing awareness of one's own learning method, carrying out in-lab learning, etc.

Teachers choose textbooks and teaching tools. Textbooks should be in digital or mixed format (mixed format means paper, paper plus digital or digital, all with integrated digital content). In all events, textbooks and teaching tools must be consistent with the curriculum and with the school's educational offer plan. Textbooks are free for pupils and the costs are met by municipalities, in accordance with regional legislation on the right to study. Every year, the Ministry sets the retail price of textbooks. In addition, for specific subjects, schools can create their own digital teaching tools which students will use as textbooks. Teachers can develop such tools in class during teaching hours and in collaboration with other class teachers and students. Schools can share and distribute their textbooks free of charge to other State schools, upon registration of the product.

Primary schools are usually provided with many teaching materials and tools. Schools are encouraged to organise laboratories or set up rooms as libraries, gymnasiums, science or music laboratories. Primary schools generally have ICT laboratories to support teaching activities and several classrooms are also equipped with interactive whiteboards (IWB).

Every school pays for teaching materials, tools and equipment from its own financial resources. Local authorities can share the expense, in accordance with regional legislation on the right to study.

3.3. Assessment in Primary Education

Pupil Assessment

Periodic assessment takes place at the end of each term. For assessment purposes, the school year is divided into three-month or four-month terms, as established by each school. Final assessment takes place at the end of each school year. Pupils do not take final examinations at the end of primary school (see 'Progression of pupils' below).

The periodic and final evaluation of the pupils in a class is the responsibility of the teachers of that class. Evaluation focuses on the learning process of pupils, their behaviour and their overall learning outcomes. These assessments should be consistent with the learning objectives established in the educational offer plan (POF) of each school. In the POF, the Teachers' Council of each school also defines the methods and criteria for assuring that pupil assessment is uniform, transparent and fair. Teachers also certify the competences attained by pupils by the end of primary school (see 'Certification' below).

Periodic and final evaluation of pupils' learning outcomes in each subject is expressed in numerical marks out of ten (from 0 to 10). Conduct is evaluated through a report assessment, which may be analytical or a summary, subject to the Teachers' Council decision. At the end of each term and at the end of the school year, pupils receive a personal assessment document which includes their marks in numbers and letters for each subject, as well as a report of their behaviour. Pupils who have attended optional Catholic religious education receive a separate assessment report by that teacher. The report describes the interest shown by the pupil in the subject and the results achieved.

Schools are free to develop their own assessment document, provided these basic requirements are met.

The assessment of pupils with a certified disability follows the criteria described above (marks out of ten) and refers to their behaviour, subjects and the activities included in each pupil's individual educational plan. For pupils with certified specific learning difficulties (SpLD), assessment procedures must be adapted to the specific situation. For pupils who are temporarily hospitalised and attend school while in hospital, assessment is guaranteed through the continuous exchange of information on the pupil's work between hospital teachers and school teachers. If hospitalisation lasts longer than their attendance at school, pupils are assessed directly by the hospital teachers, although always in coordination with the school.

The external assessment of pupils' learning outcomes is conducted by the INVALSI agency. For primary education, data is normally collected in the second and fifth years. The outcomes are returned to schools to provide school heads and teachers with useful tools for self-evaluation and to improve teaching.

Progression of Pupils

Pupils are admitted to the next grade on the basis of the outcomes of the final evaluation made by all teachers working in the class. Pupils do not take examinations to progress to the next grade. Non-admission of a pupil to the following school grade is infrequent and is decided unanimously by all class teachers who must provide specific reasons. If a pupil is admitted to the following grade with learning gaps, the school might inform parents in a note on the personal assessment document.

The above procedure also applies to admission from the last grade of primary school

to the first grade of lower secondary school. There is no final examination at the end of primary school, because along with lower secondary school, it is part of a single school cycle called the “first cycle”. Indeed, according to the Italian Constitution, final examinations are only given at the end of each cycle of education.

Certification

Periodic and final assessments of learning and behaviour, as well as global analytical assessments, are presented in the pupils’ personal assessment document. Admission or non-admission to the following grade is certified in the final certificate, on the cover page of the personal assessment document issued at the end of each school year. The personal assessment document is delivered to the pupils’ parents.

As with the previous grades, pupils completing the last grade of primary education also receive a personal assessment document, whose cover page certifies admission or non-admission to the first grade of lower secondary school. The assessment document is issued with a certificate of the skills acquired by the pupil on completion of primary school.

According to the National Guidelines for the Curriculum, the object of the certificate is the skills set out in the ‘Student’s Profile at the end of the first cycle’. The Profile is a document which briefly describes, within the Guidelines, the skills that each pupil is expected to possess in the subjects taught at primary school by the end of the first cycle of education. The competency goals are the criteria for assessing the skills required.

There is no specific certificate for the completion of primary education, since primary school is part of the first cycle of education, which also includes lower secondary school.

Schools draft both the personal assessment document and their own certificate, provided the fundamental requirements established by the Ministry are observed (pupil’s name and surname, date of birth, class the pupil has attended, legal/administrative references, reference to the class teachers’ assessment, statement on admission or non-admission of the pupil to the next year, signature of the school manager).

3.4. Organisational Variations and Alternative Structures in Primary Education

Apart from the difference regarding the timetable, there are no significant organisational variations or alternative structures to primary schools.

However, compulsory education can also be completed through home education (*scuola familiare*) or at private institutions (schools that are neither State-run nor publicly subsidised schools).

Home education is the provision of primary education directly by parents or by a person appointed by the parents. The latter are required to certify that they hold the technical skills and economic capacity to deliver this kind of education on their own, through a declaration addressed to the head teacher of the school the pupil was meant to attend. The veracity of this declaration, which must be submitted every year, is verified by the head teacher.

Children who complete compulsory education through home education are required to sit an aptitude examination every year and if they are willing to enrol in mainstream schools. Pupils attending private schools must take the aptitude examination only if they are willing to return to a mainstream school and on completion of primary school, in order to enrol in lower secondary education. Qualifying exams are held at State and publicly subsidised primary schools.

Hospitalised children are also guaranteed the opportunity to complete compulsory education and, in general, to exercise their right to study. Education is offered at all levels to children staying in hospital, both through hospital-based schools and home schooling. Major hospitals and paediatric wards offer hospital classes where properly trained teachers provide children with an educational offer on a par with mainstream lessons. Furthermore, teachers in the hospital classes also work closely with the teachers of the child's school class on the periodic and final assessment which, in cases of long-term hospitalisation, is carried out directly by the hospital teachers.

Pupils who are not hospitalised but are nevertheless unable to attend school for a long period of time on account of health problems, can receive home schooling and be taught by one or two teachers. For access to this service, parents must submit a duly documented request to the child's school. The school then draws up a specific teaching plan to be approved by the competent Regional School Office.

The education and training of persons held at a detention centre is guaranteed through courses that are suited to their specific needs. For detainees of compulsory school age, the Prison Regulation establishes that the Ministry of Education, together with the Ministry of Justice, must provide local educational branch offices with specific guidance on the organisation and set-up of courses at detention centres. Courses are organised to suit the educational needs of detainees. Courses are run by the competent offices of the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the centres themselves, which are required to provide the necessary facilities.

4. SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary education is organised into a compulsory lower level, called first-level secondary school (*scuola secondaria di primo grado*) and an upper level, called the second cycle of education (secondo ciclo di istruzione). The latter is made up of State-run general and vocational upper secondary schools (*scuola secondaria di secondo grado*) and vocational education and training (*Istruzione e formazione professionale* - IFP) which are run at regional level.

The first two years of the second cycle of education and training are compulsory. Together with the eight compulsory years of the first cycle of education, they make up the 10 years of compulsory education (from 6 to 16 years of age) and can be undertaken at any of the State or regional second-cycle institutions.

Lower secondary school lasts for 3 years and is attended by pupils aged 11 to 14. Lower secondary school and compulsory primary school make up the first cycle of education which lasts eight years altogether. Each portion of the first cycle has its own specificities.

State upper secondary education offers general, technical and vocational education. The overall length of studies at upper secondary level is 5 years (from 14 to 19 years of age).

Vocational education and training (IFP) run by the Regions is organised into three- and four-year courses for those who have completed the first cycle of education and wish to complete their compulsory education in the vocational training system or receive a three-year qualification by their 18th birthday (known as a right/duty - *diritto/dovere*).

Courses can be organised by local training agencies and vocational upper secondary schools in partnership with training agencies. Compared with pathways in mainstream education, these courses are shorter (3 or 4 years), make more use of laboratories and periods of work experience and aim for faster access to the job market. Vocational qualifications are regulated to the IFP national register and are defined at central level in agreement with the Regions.

State-run general and vocational upper secondary education has recently been reformed. The reform applied from school year 2010/2011 and began with first year pupils. The whole process will end in school year 2014/2015 when the new organisation will apply to all grades. The descriptions in the following sections refer to the new organisation of general upper secondary education.

4.1. Organisation of General Lower Secondary Education

Types of Institutions

Lower secondary education is offered by State and publicly subsidised lower secondary schools, which are present nationwide.

Compulsory education can also be completed through home education or at private institutions that are neither State run nor publicly subsidised schools.

There are not different types of lower secondary schools.

Geographical Accessibility

As already stated for primary education, the Constitution of the Italian Republic (art. 33 and 34) establishes that the State must provide access to education to all young people living in the country, regardless of the geographical condition of the area they live in and their individual social and economic situation.

The central and branch administrations of the State, as well as regional, provincial and local administrations (municipalities) are responsible for achieving this goal. The Regions are responsible for the general planning of the educational offer and the school network. In this way, resources can be used more rationally and the school system can be run more efficiently.

To encourage school attendance by all and implement the universal right to study, various services and support measures are available. Of these services, transport is the responsibility of municipalities in accordance with criteria established at regional level. Transport services for pupils with special needs are free of charge.

Admission Requirements and Choice of School

Enrolment in lower secondary school is compulsory for pupils possessing the admission certificate presented at the end of primary school. Pupils are not required to sit a final examinations to transition from primary to lower secondary school, because examinations are only required at the end of each cycle of education (the end of the first cycle coincides with the end of lower secondary school).

Generally, as for primary schools, parents are free to choose which school to send their children. However, limitations may be due to a lack of available facilities or the lack of school staff assigned to each school by the school administration.

Each school will establish its own criteria for the enrolment of students in case applications exceed the number of places available. As this level of education is compulsory, schools and local authorities must work closely together to guarantee the right of all to study. The primary school submits admission applications directly to the chosen lower secondary school.

At enrolment, students and their parents sign a 'Joint responsibility agreement'. This document details the rights and duties (e.g. use of mobile telephones and electronic devices at school) of all stakeholders in the school community, i.e. the school itself, the students and their families.

Age Levels and Grouping of Pupils

Lower secondary education lasts 3 years and is generally attended by pupils aged from 11 to 14 because it is possible to enrol children into primary schools from an earlier age, thus, pupils will be able to attend lower secondary school from the age of 10.

Classes are organised according to the age of pupils. In the first grade, a class is made up of a minimum of 18 and a maximum of 27-28 pupils. In the second and third grades, classes must have a minimum of 20 pupils. These limits can vary by 10%. Usually, the maximum number of pupils per class is lowered to 20, if there are pupils with special educational needs. In schools located in small villages, usually in mountain areas and on small islands, the minimum number of pupils per class is 10. If the population is too low for the school to be able to form separate classes with pupils of the same age, classes made up of pupils of different ages are allowed. However, this occurs very rarely and involves a very small number of pupils.

Class teachers are specialists in one or more subjects. Teachers usually follow the same class throughout the whole three-year period.

Organisation of the School Year

The Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) is responsible for defining the dates for the first and the second cycle leaving examinations and the calendar for nationwide holidays. The Regions are responsible for defining the school calendar (start and end of school activities, length of breaks for national holidays, other holidays) so that it reflects local needs. Every year, the Ministry publishes a summary table on its website showing all regional school calendars.

As in primary schools, the school year starts 1 September and ends 31 August. Teaching activities, including end-of-term assessments, final assessments and examinations, as well as in-service training activities are carried out between 1 September and 30 June. There are a minimum of 200 teaching days in a year. For pupil evaluation purposes, the school year can be divided into two or three terms (periods of three or four months, as decided by the Teachers' Council of each school).

The annual amount of compulsory teaching time for lower secondary schools is established at central level. The current minimum annual teaching time is 990 hours, corresponding to 30 hours per week.

- the 'mainstream compulsory timetable' with 30 hours per week (29 hours + 1 hour dedicated to the in-depth study of literary subjects), corresponding to the 990 annual compulsory hours of teaching;
- the 'extended timetable' with an average of 36 hours a week or, exceptionally, 40 hours including mealtimes.

Parents choose the timetable at enrolment.

Organisation of the School Day and Week

As in primary schools, the District/School Council establishes the weekly and daily timetable and the distribution of activities over the different days of the week. Schools must distribute lessons over a minimum of 5 days a week. Lower secondary schools generally operate 6 days a week, including Saturdays. Schools can organise their daily timetables autonomously.

The table below presents a sample 30-hour-week timetable, Saturday included:

	out-of-hours provision	Lessons	Lunch break	Lessons	out-of-hours provision
Monday	-	8.15-13.15	-	-	-
Tuesday	-	8.15-13.15	-	-	-
Wednesday	-	8.15-13.15	-	-	-
Thursday	-	8.15-13.15	-	-	-
Friday	-	8.15-13.15	-	-	-
Saturday	-	8.15-13.15	-	-	-

The table below presents a sample 36-hour-week timetable, Saturday included:

	out-of-hours provision	Lessons	Lunch break	Lessons	out-of-hours provision
Monday	-	8.15-13.15	13.15-14.15	14.15-16.15	-
Tuesday	-	8.15-13.15			-
Wednesday	-	8.15-13.15	13.15-14.15	14.15-16.15	-
Thursday	-	8.15-13.15			-
Friday	-	8.15-13.15	13.15-14.15	14.15-16.15	-
Saturday	-	8.15-13.15			-

4.2. Teaching and Learning in General Lower Secondary Education

Curriculum, Subjects, Number of Hours

As at primary level, the lower secondary curriculum is defined through National Guidelines for the Curriculum (*Indicazioni nazionali per il curricolo*) that the Ministry of Education sent to all schools before the start of the school year 2012/2013.

According to the new guidelines, the general aim of school is the harmonious and comprehensive development of the individual, according to the principles of the Italian Constitution and European cultural tradition, to be achieved through the promotion of knowledge, respect for individual diversity and the active involvement of students and their families. The reference for these new guidelines is the Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning set up by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union through the Recommendation of 18 December 2006.

Specifically, the purpose of lower secondary education is to enable pupils to acquire the fundamental knowledge and skills to develop basic cultural competence. At this level, this is achieved by using school subjects and disciplines as a means to know, interpret and represent reality and the world.

The subjects taught for the 3 years of lower secondary school are: Italian, English, a second foreign language, history, geography, mathematics, science, technology, music, art, sports science (also called body, movement and sport), Catholic religious education. Catholic religious education is optional.

Each subject has goals for the development of skills, which are mandatory for teachers, as well as learning objectives for the level of knowledge and skills needed to reach the development goals. The specific learning objectives for Catholic religious education are defined separately by Presidential Decree in agreement with the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI).

After a three-year experimental phase, which began in 2009/2010, 'Citizenship and Constitution' is now included in the curriculum. It is not a separate subject and its content is developed by individual schools through didactic projects included in history and geography. According to the new Guidelines, the curriculum of the first cycle of education includes basic knowledge of the Italian Constitution. The aim of citizenship education is also to build a sense of legality and responsibility, to encourage young people to choose and act conscientiously and also to promote ideas and actions to improve individual contexts.

Below are the weekly teaching timetables for each subject according to the two different school-time models. One hour corresponds to 60 minutes. These tables apply to each year of lower secondary school.

Mainstream compulsory timetable (30 hours per week)

Subjects	No. hours per week	Annual no. hours
Italian, History, Geography	9	297
In-depth studies in literary subjects	1	33
Mathematics and Science	6	198
Technology	2	66
English	3	99
Second foreign language	2	66
Art and design	2	66
Sports science	2	66
Music	2	66
Catholic Religious Education	1	33
	30	990

Extended timetable (from 36 to 40 hours per week)

Subjects	No. hours per week	Annual no. hours
Italian, History, Geography	15	495
Mathematics and Science	9	297
Technology	2	66
English	3	99
Second foreign language	2	66
Art and design	2	66
Sports science	2	66
Music	2	66
Catholic Religious Education	1	33
In-depth studies in one of the subjects above	1/2	33/66
	39/40*	1287/1320

*The table shows the maximum number of hours for the 'extended timetable'. The Teachers' Council can autonomously decide on a lower weekly limit of hours, which must be no less than 36 hours. The timetable always includes lunchtime, by reducing the weekly timetable of subjects with a greater number of hours.

At the request of parents and depending on the availability of school staff, the teaching of English language can be increased to 5 hours per week, using the two hours allocated per week to the teaching of a second foreign language. These can also be used for teaching Italian to foreign students.

Teaching Methods and Materials

As for primary education, freedom of teaching is a principle established by the Constitution of the Italian Republic. The National Guidelines for the Curriculum set out some basic methodological approaches (see 'Methods and teaching materials' at 3.2.).

The most common teaching methods used are traditional lessons, exercises and group work. Generally, schools have a gymnasium, a library and ICT, science and multimedia laboratories. Increasing numbers of classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards (IWB).

Teachers choose textbooks and teaching tools. Textbooks should be in digital or mixed format (mixed format means paper, paper plus digital or digital, all with integrated digital content). In all events, textbooks and teaching tools must be consistent with the curriculum and school's educational offer plan and should comply with total cost restrictions.

Textbooks are not free for parents. Subsidised textbooks can be provided according to specific regional restrictions and certain income limitations.

Every year, the Ministry of Education sets the total maximum cost of textbooks. Measures introduced to help parents deal with the cost of textbooks also include rental and the free loan of textbooks, as well as the partial reimbursement of costs.

Schools can also create their own digital teaching tools for specific subjects, which students will use as textbooks. Teachers can develop such tools in class during teaching hours and in collaboration with other class teachers and students. Schools can share and distribute their textbooks free of charge to other State schools, upon registration of the product.

4.3. Assessment in General Lower Secondary Education

Pupil Assessment

The Charter of Students in Secondary Schools establishes that students are entitled to 'a transparent and rapid evaluation aimed at starting a process of self-evaluation to identify his/her own strengths and weaknesses and improve his/her own performance'.

Periodic assessment takes place at the end of each term. For assessment purposes, the school year is divided into three-month or four-month terms, as established by each school. Final assessment takes place at the end of each school year and at the first-cycle State leaving examination held at the end of the third year of lower secondary school.

Class teachers are responsible for periodic and final assessment and certification of the pupils' acquired skills.

Periodic/Annual Assessment

The periodic and annual evaluation of pupils focuses on the learning process, their behaviour and their overall learning outcomes. These assessments should be consistent with the learning objectives established in the educational offer plan

(POF) of each school. In the POF, the Teachers' Council of each school also defines the methods and criteria for assuring that pupil assessment is uniform, transparent and fair. Teachers also certify the competences attained by pupils by the end of lower secondary education.

At the end of every term and every school year, the Class Council, made up of all the teachers for a given class, assigns the final marks to each student (*scrutinio*). Each teacher proposes the mark for a given pupil to the Class Council for his or her subject. The final mark is approved by majority vote. If no majority is reached, the vote of the school manager prevails.

Recurrent and annual assessment of pupils' learning outcomes and behaviour leads to the assignment of a mark out of ten. A mark of 6/10 corresponds to a pass.

At the end of each period and at the end of the school year, pupils receive a personal assessment document, which includes their marks in numbers and letters for each subject, which includes their behaviour. Pupils who have attended optional Catholic religious education receive a separate assessment report by the teacher. The report describes the interest shown by the pupil in the subject and the results achieved.

Schools are free to develop their own assessment document, provided these basic requirements are met.

For the school year to be valid, pupils must attend at least three quarters of the annual teaching time. In exceptional cases, schools can autonomously provide for justified derogations. However, if the number of absences jeopardises the possibility of a regular assessment, pupils cannot be admitted to the next grade or to the State examination at the end of the first cycle of education. Before the start of each school year, schools must define the annual teaching time to be used to calculate the 75% attendance required to validate that school year. At the same time, the school also defines the circumstances for derogations.

The external assessment of pupils' learning outcomes is conducted by the INVALSI for the first and third grades of lower secondary school (in the third grade, it is part of the first-cycle State leaving examination, see paragraph below). The outcomes are returned to schools to provide school heads and teachers with useful tools for self-evaluation and to improve teaching.

First-cycle State Leaving Examination

The first-cycle State leaving examination takes place at the end of the third year of lower secondary school.

To be admitted to the State examination, pupils are required to:

- have attended at least 75% of the annual teaching time
- have obtained, at the end of the third year, a mark of 6/10 or higher in each subject or group of subjects assessed with a single mark

- have obtained, at the end of the third year, a mark of 6/10 or higher for conduct (a mark lower than 6/10 always precludes admission to the examination).

The Class council decides by majority vote whether or not pupils can be admitted to the examination and assigns a mark out of ten.

An examination committee is set up in every school consisting of all teachers of all classes and chaired by an external member. The examination committee is divided into sub-committees, each corresponding to a class, which administer the examinations and carry out the assessment.

The examination consists of a national written test set by INVALSI (National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System) and four written tests in the following subjects: Italian, Mathematics and Rudiments of Science and ICT, the two community languages studied. The examination committee sets the four written tests. After the written tests, students also sit an oral test on all subjects from the last grade of school. Written and oral tests are conducted on different days, according to the calendar set by individual schools, with the exception of the national test which is conducted on the same day throughout the country, as defined by the Ministry.

The final examination is assessed as a mark out of ten calculated by taking the average of all written tests, including the national written test, the oral test of all subjects and the mark held at the time of admission to the examination. A pass is considered a mark of 6/10 or higher. A distinction (*lode*) can be assigned by unanimous decision of the Committee to students who have obtained a final mark of 10/10.

The final mark obtained by students is described analytically in the certificate of competences acquired and the student's overall level of development. A pass on the first-cycle state leaving examination and the award of the Diploma enable access to the second cycle of education.

Progression of Pupils

Admission to the next grade and the first-cycle leaving examination requires fulfilment of minimum attendance requirements and a mark of 6/10 or higher in each subject or group of subjects assessed with a single mark, and in conduct. The Class Council can, by majority resolution only, refuse admission or concede admission to pupils with low marks.

Pupils with a fail in conduct (a mark below 6/10), usually assigned in serious cases which must be duly explained, are always refused admission to the following grade and to the final examination.

Certification

Schools autonomously establish how to inform pupils and their parents of the results obtained in periodic and final assessments. Generally, the pupil's individual assessment document contains their assessment results.

Pupils who have passed the final examination receive the first-cycle leaving certificate (*Diploma di licenza conclusiva del primo ciclo di istruzione*), which must be signed by the chairman of the examination committee. The Diploma shows the final mark obtained at the State examination. Certificates are printed by the State Polygraphic Institute, according to the model provided by the Ministry of Education and are delivered to schools by the local branches of the Regional School Offices (USRs). The Ministry has also provided a model certificate, issued alongside the Diploma, stating the personal details of the student, his or her final mark, the length of the course of studies, the foreign language and the musical instrument tested at the examination and the number assigned to the Diploma in the 'Register of Diplomas'. The Register is kept by the school under the responsibility of the School manager.

According to the National Guidelines for the Curriculum, the object of certification is the skills set out in the 'Student's Profile at the end of the first cycle'. The Profile is a document which briefly describes, within the Guidelines, the skills that each pupil is expected to possess by the end of the first cycle of education in the subjects taught.

The Ministry will provide schools with a specific model for certification of the competences acquired by pupils at the end of lower secondary education.

4.4. Organisation of General Upper Secondary Education

Types of Institutions

General upper secondary education lasts five years and is delivered by six types of *liceo* specialising in the following areas: art (*Liceo artistico*), classical studies (*Liceo classico*), science (*Liceo scientifico*), languages (*Liceo linguistico*), music and dance (*Liceo musicale e coreutico*), human sciences (*Liceo delle scienze umane*).

The arts-based *liceo* offers the following branches of studies: figurative arts, architecture and the environment, design, audiovisual and multimedia design, graphics, set design. The first two years are the same for all branches. The science-based *liceo* offers an option in applied sciences and the human sciences *liceo* offers an option in social and economic studies.

Geographical Accessibility

For all levels of education, the Constitution of the Italian Republic (art. 33 and 34) establishes that it is the duty of the State to provide access to education for all young people living in the country, regardless of the geographical condition of the area they live in and their individual social and economic situation. The central and branch administrations of the State, as well as regional, provincial and local administrations (municipalities) are responsible for achieving this goal.

The Regions are responsible for the general planning of the educational offer and the

school network. In this way, resources can be used more rationally and the school system can be run more efficiently.

Admission Requirements and Choice of School

Compulsory education lasts 10 years and covers the first two years of the second cycle of education. Thus, students who have successfully completed the first cycle of education must enrol in State-run upper secondary schools (general and vocational) or on the vocational training courses (IFP) organised by the Regions.

Possession of a first-cycle leaving certificate is the only admission requirement for a *liceo*.

Parents are free to choose which school to send their children to. However, there may be limitations due to a lack of available facilities or to the lack of school staff assigned to each school by the School administration. Schools establish their own enrolment criteria when applications exceed the number of places available. Applications to the chosen upper secondary school are submitted directly by the lower secondary school attended by the student.

At enrolment, students and their parents sign a 'Joint responsibility agreement'. This document details the rights and duties (e.g. use of mobile telephones and electronic devices at school) of all the stakeholders in the school community, i.e. the school itself, the students and their families.

Age Levels and Grouping of Students

Liceo courses are generally directed at students aged 14 to 19 and, for teaching purposes only, are organised into two periods of two years each and the final fifth year.

Classes at upper secondary level should generally have no fewer than 27 and no more than 30 students in the first grade. The minimum required number of students in the following grades of upper secondary school is 22. Usually, the maximum number of students per class lowers to 20, if there are students with special educational needs. These figures can increase or decrease depending on the availability of school staff, as established by the Regional School Office.

Class teachers are specialists in one or more subjects from the same subject area (e.g. maths and sciences).

Organisation of the School Year

The Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) is responsible for defining the dates for the first and the second cycle leaving examinations and the calendar for nationwide holidays. The Regions are responsible for defining the school calendar (start and end of school activities, length of breaks for national holidays, other holidays) so that it reflects the needs of their local area. Every year, the Ministry publishes a summary table on its website showing all regional school calendars.

The school year starts 1 September and finishes 31 August. Teaching activities, including end-of-term assessments, final assessments and examinations, as well as in-service training activities are carried out between 1 September and 30 June (upper secondary leaving examinations should end within July). There are a minimum of 200 teaching days in a year distributed over 33 weeks. For student evaluation purposes, the school year can be divided into two or three terms (periods of three or four months, as decided by the Teachers' Council of each school).

The compulsory annual and weekly (based on 33 weeks/year) teaching time is established at central level. The minimum annual and weekly teaching timetable varies according to the type of *liceo* and grades.

Liceo specialising in arts: the compulsory teaching time for all branches of study is 1122 hour/year (approx. 34 hours per week) in the first and second grades, 759 hours/year (approx. 23 hours per week) in the third and fourth grades and 693 hour (approx. 21 hours per week) in the fifth grade. In addition to the standard teaching time, 396 hours/year (approx. 12 hours/week) in the third and fourth grades and 462 hours/year (approx. 14 hours/week) in the fifth grade are devoted to studies specific to each branch of specialisation.

Liceo specialising in classical subjects: 891 hours/year (approx. 27 hours per week) in the first and second grade, 1023 hours (approx. 31 hours per week) in the third, fourth and fifth grade.

Liceo specialising in languages: 891 hours/year (approx. 27 hours per week) in the first and second grade and 990 hours/year (approx. 30 hours per week) in the third, fourth and fifth grade.

Liceo specialising in music and dance: 594 hours/year (approx. 18 hours per week) standard to both branches of study (music and dance), plus 462 hours/year (approx. 14 hours per week) specific to each branch of specialisation, for a total of 1056 hour/year.

Liceo specialising in sciences: 891 hours/year (approx. 27 hours per week) in the first and second grade and 990 hours/year (approx. 30 hours per week) in the third, fourth and fifth grade.

Liceo specialising in human sciences: 891 hours/year (approx. 27 hours per week) in the first and second grade and 990 hours/year (approx. 30 hours per week) in the third, fourth and fifth grade.

For each *liceo*, central regulations also provide tables with the annual teaching timetable for each subject (see 4.5.).

Organisation of the School Day and Week

As in primary and lower secondary education, the school is responsible for defining the weekly and daily timetable and deciding how to distribute activities across the days of the week.

Lessons must be spread over no fewer than 5 days a week and are usually held on 6 days, including Saturday. Schools can set daily timetables autonomously.

The table below presents a sample school week. The timetable includes breaks between lessons.

Length of school day, every day of the school week					
	Out-of hours provision	Lessons	Lunch break	Lessons	Out-of-hours provision
Monday	-	8.15-14.15	-	-	-
Tuesday	-	8.15-14.15	-	-	-
Wednesday	-	8.15-14.15	-	-	-
Thursday	-	8.15-14.15	-	-	-
Friday	-	8.15-14.15	-	-	-
Saturday	-	8.15-12.15	-	-	-

4.5. Teaching and Learning in General Upper Secondary Education

Curriculum, Subjects, Number of Hours

The five years of general upper secondary studies at *licei* are organised, for teaching purposes only, into two periods of two years and a final fifth year. The purpose of the first two-year period is to deepen and develop the knowledge, competences and skills acquired by students in the first cycle of education. Knowledge, competences and skills are further developed in the second two-year period. In the fifth year, students are expected to have fully reached the specific learning objectives for each branch of specialist study and to have completed their educational, cultural and professional profile (PECUP).

The first two years of upper secondary education, whether undertaken in a general or vocational school, are compulsory. Thus, in order to ensure equal education

and training (general and vocational) to all students, the Ministry has defined the knowledge and competences that all students are expected to have acquired on completion of compulsory education. This knowledge and competences integrate the current upper secondary curricula, specific for each type of school.

Knowledge and competences are organised into four 'cultural areas': languages, mathematics, science/technology and history/social studies. Knowledge and competences are also the basis for building learning pathways aimed at acquiring key skills that can help students in adulthood and for lifelong learning. Key competences are: learning to learn, planning, communicating, collaborating and participating, acting autonomously, problem solving, creating connections and relations, acquiring and interpreting information.

Following the recent reform of the second cycle of education, the curricula in *licei* have been revised. New curricula are now defined in National Guidelines (*Indicazioni nazionali per il curricolo*). The National Guidelines set out the specific learning objectives for each type of *liceo*. For each subject, specific learning objectives describe the knowledge and skills that students are expected to acquire as the basis for building her/his competences. The National Guidelines also include the student's educational, cultural and professional profile (PECUP) representing what a student should know and should be able to do at the end of her/his studies at a *liceo*.

As at all other education levels, after a three-year experimental phase, 'Citizenship and Constitution' is now part of the curriculum and schools are required to include it in their educational offer plan (POF). It is not a separate subject and its content is developed by individual schools through teaching projects included in history and geography.

In *licei* specialising in languages, CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is compulsory in one language starting from the third year and in a second language starting from the fourth year. In all other types of *liceo*, CLIL is compulsory in the fifth year. In all types of *liceo*, with the exception of the *liceo* specialising in applied sciences, the teaching of mathematics in the first and second grades also includes ICT. In all types of *liceo*, the teaching of human sciences includes biology, chemistry and earth sciences.

The study plans of each *liceo* indicate the compulsory annual number of teaching hours for each subject. The duration of lessons is 60 minutes, although schools can decide to have shorter lessons, providing that the compulsory annual amount of teaching time for each subject is met.

Through their educational offer plan (POF), institutions can offer additional courses which must be consistent with the Educational, Cultural and Professional Profile (PECUP) of each *liceo*. Such courses are optional for students. Once a student has chosen an optional course, attendance is compulsory and performance is assessed on a par with all compulsory subjects in the study plan.

Minimum compulsory teaching time for the *liceo* specialising in art (*Liceo artistico*)

	1st grade	2nd grade	3rd grade	4th grade	5th grade
Subjects/groups of subjects compulsory for all students					
Italian language and literature	132	132	132	132	132
Foreign language and culture	99	99	99	99	99
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	
<i>Chemistry of materials (1)</i>			66	66	
History of art	99	99	99	99	99
Drawing and graphics	132	132			
Geometry	99	99			
Sculpture and plastics	99	99			
Art laboratory	99	99			
Sports	66	66	66	66	66
Catholic religious education or alternative activities	33	33	33	33	33
Total					
Compulsory courses for each specific branch of study					
Laboratory activities specific to each branch			198	198	264
For set design only			165	165	231
Courses specific to each branch			198	198	198
For set design only			231	231	231
Total			396	396	462
Overall total	1122	1122	1155	1155	1155

(¹) Replaces natural sciences in the 3rd and 4th years in the following branches of specialisation: architecture and the environment, figurative arts, design, set design. DPR 89/2010.

**Minimum compulsory annual teaching time for the *liceo* specialising in classics
(*Liceo classico*)**

	1st grade	2nd grade	3rd grade	4th grade	5th grade
Subjects/groups of subjects compulsory for all students					
Italian language and literature	132	132	132	132	132
Latin language and literature	165	165	132	132	132
Ancient Greek language and literature	132	132	99	99	99
Foreign language and culture	99	99	99	99	99
History and Geography	99	99			
History			99	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 art			66	66	66
Sports	66	66	66	66	66
Catholic religious education or alternative activities	33	33	33	33	33
Total	891	891	891	891	891

**Minimum compulsory annual teaching time for the *liceo* specialising in languages
(*Liceo linguistico*)**

	1st grade	2nd grade	3rd grade	4th grade	5th grade
Subjects/groups of subjects compulsory for all students					
Italian language and literature	132	132	132	132	132
Latin language	66	66			
1st foreign language and culture(1)	132	132	99	99	99
2nd language and culture(1)	99	99	132	132	132
3rd language and culture(1)	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 art			66	66	66
Sports	66	66	66	66	66
Catholic religious education or alternative activities	33	33	33	33	33
Total	891	891	891	891	891

(¹) Includes 33 hours/year of conversation with a native speaker teacher.

Minimum compulsory annual teaching time for the *liceo* specialising in music and dance (*Liceo musicale e coreutico*)

	1st grade	2nd grade	3rd grade	4th grade	5th grade
Subjects/groups of subjects compulsory for all students					
Italian language and literature	132	132	132	132	132
Foreign language and culture	99	99	99	99	99
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			
History of the art	66	66	66	66	66
Catholic religious education or alternative activities	33	33	33	33	33
Total	594	594	594	594	594
Music branch(1)					
Sports	66	66	66	66	66
Performance and interpretation	99	99	66	66	66
Theory, analysis and composition	99	99	99	99	99
History of music	66	66	66	66	66
Ensemble music laboratory	66	66	99	99	99
Music technologies	66	66	66	66	66
Total	462	462	462	462	462
Dance branch					
History of dance			66	66	66
History of music			33	33	33
Dance techniques	264	264	264	264	264
Dance laboratory	132	132			
Choreography laboratory			99	99	99
Music theory and practice for dance	66	66			
Total	462	462	462	462	462
Overall number of hours	1056	1056	1056	1056	1056

(¹) Courses are organised in agreement with Conservatories and recognised music institutes (Higher Education in Art and Music, AFAM).

Minimum compulsory annual teaching time for the *liceo* specialising in sciences, main path ⁽¹⁾ (*Liceo scientifico*)

	1st grade	2nd grade	3rd grade	4th grade	5th grade
Subjects/groups of subjects compulsory for all students					
Italian language and literature	132	132	132	132	132
Latin language and literature	99	99	99	99	99
<i>(not included in the applied sciences option)</i>					
Foreign language and culture	99	99	99	99	99
History and geography	99	99			
History			66	66	66
Philosophy			99	99	99
<i>Applied sciences option</i>					
Mathematics	165	165	132	132	132
<i>Applied sciences option</i>		132			
<i>ICT</i>	66	66	66	66	66
Physics	66	66	66	66	66
Natural sciences	66	66	99	99	99
<i>Applied sciences option</i>	99	132	165	165	165
Drawing and history of art	66	66	66	66	66
Sports	66	66	66	66	66
Catholic religious education or alternative activities	33	33	33	33	33
Total	891	891	990	990	990

⁽¹⁾ The *liceo* specialising in sciences may also offer a study plan specialising in applied sciences, which differs slightly from the main programme. Differences are shown in Italics.

Minimum compulsory annual teaching time for the *liceo* specialising in human sciences, main path ⁽¹⁾ (*Liceo delle scienze umane*)

	1st grade	2nd grade	3rd grade	4th grade	5th grade
Subjects/groups of subjects compulsory for all students					
Italian language and literature	132	132	132	132	132
Latin language and literature	99	99	66	66	66
<i>(not included in the economic-social option')</i>					
History and geography	99	99			
History			66	66	66
Philosophy			99	99	99
<i>Economics /social studies option</i>			66	66	66
Human sciences (2)	132	132	165	165	165
<i>Economics /social studies option</i>	99	99	99	99	99
Law and economy	66	66	-	-	-
<i>Economics /social studies option</i>	99	99	99	99	99
Foreign language and culture	99	99	99	99	99
2nd foreign language and culture	99	99	99	99	99
Mathematics	99	99	66	66	66
<i>Economics /social studies option</i>	99	99	99	99	99
Physics	-	-	66	66	66
Natural sciences	66	66	66	66	66
<i>Economics /social studies option</i>	66	66	-	-	-
History of art	-	-	66	66	66
Sports	66	66	66	66	66
Catholic religious education or alternative activities	33	33	33	33	33
Total	891	891	990	990	990

(¹) The *liceo* specialising in human sciences may also offer an economics/social studies option, which differs slightly from the main programme. Differences are shown in Italics.

(²) Includes anthropology, pedagogy (replaced by 'methods of research' in the economics/social studies option), psychology, sociology.

Teaching Methods and Materials

As for all other levels, the Constitution of the Italian Republic establishes the principle of freedom of teaching (see 3.2.). Schools generally plan their teaching activities at two different levels: at department level for the objectives of each subject and each grade; and at class council level for cross-curricular objectives. In the last decade, special focus has been given to student drop-out prevention, study methods, catch-up activities and increasing the use of information and communication technologies. Schools are usually equipped with a gymnasium, library, science and computer laboratories and laboratories for the specific courses offered by individual schools.

Teachers choose textbooks and teaching tools. Textbooks should be in digital or mixed format (mixed format means paper, paper and digital or digital, all with integrated digital content). In any events, textbooks and teaching tools must be consistent with the curriculum, with the school's educational offer plan and should comply with total cost restrictions.

Textbooks are not free for parents. Every year, the Ministry of Education sets the total maximum cost of textbooks. Measures introduced to help parents deal with the cost of textbooks also include rental and free loan of textbooks, as well as the partial reimbursement of costs.

Schools can also create their own digital teaching tools for specific subjects, which students will use as textbooks. Teachers can develop such tools in class during teaching hours and in collaboration with other class teachers and students. Schools can share and distribute their textbooks free of charge to other State schools, upon registration of the product.

4.6. Assessment in General Upper Secondary Education

Students Assessment

The 'Charter of students in secondary schools' sets out the right of students to 'transparent and rapid evaluation aimed at starting a process of self-evaluation to identify his/her own strengths and weaknesses and improve his/her own performance'.

Periodic assessment takes place at the end of each term. For assessment purposes, the school year is divided into three-month or four-month terms, as established by each school. Final assessment refers to the procedures that take place at the end of each school year and for the final State examination, which students sit at the end of the fifth year of *liceo*. Class teachers are responsible for periodic and final assessment certification of the competences acquired by students.

Students also undergo an external assessment of their learning outcomes carried out by INVALSI (National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System). As the system is under development, external assessment currently applies to second-year students only. Assessment results are returned to schools to provide teachers and school managers with useful tools for self-evaluation and to improve teaching.

Periodic/Annual Assessment

As in primary and lower secondary schools, the periodic and annual evaluation of students focuses on the learning process, their behaviour and their overall learning outcomes. Teachers also certify the competences attained by pupils by the end of compulsory education (16 years of age) and completion of the second cycle of education.

The periodic and annual assessment of pupils' learning outcomes and behaviour leads to the assignment of a mark out of ten. A mark of 6/10 corresponds to a pass. Assessment procedures are the same as for primary and lower secondary schools.

In addition, in the final assessment for each of the last three grades of upper secondary school, students who perform well receive points (credits), corresponding to their average final mark in each subject and conduct and includes other aspects such as school attendance, extracurricular activities etc. The number of credits obtained at the end of each year is known as the final 'school credit' (*credito scolastico*) up to a total of 25 points. The final mark assigned to students in the upper secondary State leaving examination also includes the final 'school credit'. The Ministry has published a table for the conversion of marks into credits.

Students are awarded 'training credits' (*crediti formativi*) for any approved experience gained outside of school (e.g. training in cultural activities, the arts, sports, etc.). Such experiences must be duly documented and be related to the specialisation of the State examination. 'Training credits' contribute, along with 'school credits', to the final score in the final State examination.

At the end of each term and at the end of the school year, students receive a personal assessment document which includes their marks in numbers and letters for each subject, including conduct. Students who have attended optional Catholic religious education receive a separate assessment report by the teacher. The report describes the interest shown by the student in the subject and the results achieved. Schools are free to develop their own assessment document, provided these basic requirements are met.

For the school year to be valid, students should attend at least three quarters of the annual teaching time. In exceptional cases, schools can autonomously provide for justified derogations. However, if the number of absences jeopardises the possibility of a regular assessment, the student cannot be admitted to the next grade or to the

State examination at the end of the second cycle of education. Before the start of each school year, schools must define the annual teaching time to be used to calculate the 75% attendance required to validate that school year. At the same time, the school also defines the circumstances for derogations.

Upper Secondary Education Leaving Examination (State Examination)

At the end of both general and vocational upper secondary school, students take a State examination.

The upper secondary school State leaving examination aims to verify the knowledge and skills gained during the last year of the study path, according to the general and specific objectives of each branch of study, as well as the general cultural knowledge and the critical skills the candidates.

Admission of Internal Candidates

Students sit examinations at the school they have attended.

Admission to the State examination requires students to have obtained a mark of 6/10 or higher in each subject or group of subjects assessed with a single mark, and conduct. Students with a fail in conduct (a mark below 6/10) are not admitted to the examination. Students are also required to make up for any gaps in their studies (called 'debts') from previous years.

The Class Council makes an overall assessment of students, taking into consideration their knowledge and competences gained in the last year of study, their critical and expressive skills and their efforts to make up for gaps in their learning and prepare suitably for the state examination.

After the overall assessment, the Class Council decides whether or not to admit the student to the final examination. The decision is also made on the basis of the school credits assigned to the student. The outcome of the final assessment, along with the indication <admitted> or <not admitted>, is posted on the school notice board. The marks assigned for each subject and for conduct are included on the student's assessment document.

Students enrolled in the penultimate year may also be admitted to the State examination if they:

- have gained a mark of 8/10 or higher in each subject, except for Catholic religious education and conduct in their final assessment;
- have attended upper secondary school regularly;
- have obtained marks of no lower than 7/10 in each subject and conduct in the final assessment of the previous two years;
- have not repeated any school year in the previous two years.

Admission of External Candidates

Admission to the State examination is also granted to:

- students who turn 19 in the calendar year in which the State examination takes place and have completed compulsory education;
- students who have obtained the first-cycle leaving certificate, issued at least the same number of years previously as the duration of their current course, irrespective of their age;
- students who turn 23 years of age in the calendar year in which the state examination takes place; in this case, the candidates are not required to present any lower qualification;
- students who hold any other qualification obtained at the end of an upper secondary education course lasting at least four years;
- students who stopped attending the last year of their course before 15 March.

The Examination Committee

The examination committee for the State leaving examination is made up of a maximum of six members – 50% external members and 50% internal – and an external chairman. The examination committee is appointed by the director of the Regional School Office, in accordance with criteria established at central level. The chairman is appointed, according to specific criteria and procedures, from among school managers, state school teachers and higher education teachers. The external members of the examination committee are appointed from among teachers of upper secondary State schools.

The chairman of the examination committee and the external members examine students from two classes. Each year, the Ministry of Education selects the subjects that the external experts are to test during the final examination.

Content of the State Examination

The State examination includes three written tests and an oral test.

The purpose of the first written test is to verify proficiency in Italian or the language in which the course is taught, as well as the expressive, logical-linguistic and critical skills of the candidate. The second paper tests one of the main subjects of the programme. The third paper is determined autonomously by the school and is closely related to the school's educational offer plan (POF). The third test is multidisciplinary and covers up to five of the subjects taught in the final year of study. It may consist in the concise treatment of topics, single or multiple choice questions, a problem-solving exercise, a practical and professional case study or the development of a project. Furthermore, it usually tests knowledge of a foreign language.

The texts for the first and second written tests are selected by the Minister and sent to schools by the Ministry of Education. The text of the third written test is set by the examination committee using criteria established at central level. Tests are delivered to schools via data communication.

The oral test is multidisciplinary in content and covers the course programmes of the final year of school.

The calendar for examinations is decided by the Ministry of Education every year.

Examination Results

The final result of the State examination is expressed as a mark out of one hundred. The examination committee adds the scores gained in the written and oral tests to the school credit score of each candidate.

Teachers assign a maximum of 15 points to each written test which, when totalled, account for 45 points. The pass mark for tests is 10 points. The maximum mark for the oral test is 30 points. The final mark is the sum of the school credit (maximum of 25 points) and the points obtained in the written and oral tests. The pass mark is 60 out of 100 points.

The school publishes the results of the written tests on the notice board at least two days before the start of the oral tests. The examination committee can award a maximum of five supplementary points to the final mark if the candidate has obtained a school credit of at least 15 points and a minimum overall score of 70 in the tests. The reasons for this decision must be accounted for. The examination committee can also award a merit (*lode*) to students who have gained the maximum score of 100 with no supplementary points and have achieved scores of 8/10 or more in all subjects and in conduct over the last three years of study.

Candidates who pass the examination receive the related diploma and certificate, according to the models provided by the Ministry of Education.

Outstanding students may be awarded one of the following:

- free or subsidised access to libraries, museums and cultural centres;
- admission to training courses;
- admission to special initiatives organised by science centres throughout the country;
- educational trips and visits to specialist centres;
- economic benefits;
- other benefits by special agreement with public or private organisations.

Finally, outstanding students may be awarded 25 marks out of 105 for university admission tests.

Progression of Students

Admission to the following grade requires, besides the minimum school attendance, marks equal to or higher than 6/10 in each subject, or group of subjects assessed with a single mark, and conduct.

The assessment is suspended if a student obtains a mark just below 6/10 in one or more subjects. In this case, the student is re-assessed before the start of the following school year in each subject in which he or she has a fail. Schools can autonomously organise catch-up courses or activities. Students with a minimum score of 6/10 can attend the next grade.

Students with a fail in conduct (a mark below 6/10), usually assigned in serious cases which must be duly explained, are always refused admission to the following grade and to the final examination.

Students are entitled to course and transfer to another type of school, if they pass a supplementary examination which grants admission to a class of the corresponding level. The supplementary examination is based on all or part of the subjects not included in the curriculum of the school of origin.

From the first or second year of study, schools offer integration activities to students who wish to transfer to a different type of school. Teachers from both schools work together to design support activities, which usually take place in the school of origin. On completion of these special courses, the student receives a certificate attesting that they have acquired the knowledge, skills and abilities required to change course.

Certification

Students who pass the final State examination receive a *Diploma Liceale* and a certificate.

In addition to the student's personal details, the *Diploma* contains the type of *liceo* they attended, the area of study and their score in the final examination. The certificate indicates the area of study and the duration of the course, the final mark, the score from all written tests, the score from the oral test, the 'school credit' score, the 'training credits' score and any additional points awarded by the examination committee, the subjects included in the curriculum and the total number of teaching hours dedicated to each subject. The certificate also shows any earlier tests where a high score was achieved.

Both documents are signed by the chairman of the examination committee and are written in four European languages.

The Ministry of Education, University and Research provides schools with the models for the certificate and the *Diploma*.

Finally, the Ministry provides the model, which is valid nationwide, for certification of

the levels of competences (basic, intermediate and advanced) acquired by students after 10 years of compulsory education. Schools draft the certificate and deliver it when it is requested by students.

4.7. Organisation of Vocational Upper Secondary Education

Types of Institutions

State Upper Secondary Education

State vocational upper secondary education, which lasts 5 years, is provided by technical institutes and vocational institutes.

Technical institutes offer vocational education in economics and technology sectors. There are 2 economics-based programmes and 9 different technology-based programmes. These courses have 11 different options. Specific guidelines set out the target learning outcomes for each option and each subject and these are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences.

Vocational institutes offer vocational education in areas of the service sector and the industry and crafts sector. There are 4 service sector programmes and 2 industry and crafts programmes. These courses include 10 different options and specific guidelines for targets as described above for technical institutes.

Regional Vocational Education and Training (IFP)

Three-year and four-year vocational education and training courses are available from vocational training agencies and upper secondary vocational institutes. Training agencies are vocational training institutions that are accredited by the Regions according to specific criteria established in agreement with the State. Upper secondary vocational institutes follow the guidelines issued by their Regions for IFP courses.

The Regions accredit training agencies that meet the following specific criteria:

- a) they are part of a non-profit institution offering educational services to young people;
- b) their educational plan involves offering young people the opportunity to acquire certain defined competences and skills;
- c) they implement the national labour contract for vocational training with all staff;
- d) their teaching staff is qualified to teach at upper secondary level;
- e) they create networks and relationships within the territory and with families;
- f) they take joint decisions on the planning and management of teaching activities and guarantee periodic assessment and the final certification of learning;
- g) they have suitable facilities and premises.

Training agencies are in the private sector (religious institutions or trade unions) and the public sector (regional, provincial and local institutions).

Vocational upper secondary institutes in the mainstream education system can also offer IFP courses. Vocational upper secondary institutes can provide, on a subsidiary basis and in keeping with the competences of the Regions, two types of IFP course:

- a) integrated subsidiary courses for students attending mainstream 5-year upper secondary vocational courses to obtain an IFP qualification after three years of training;
- b) complementary subsidiary courses organised in special classes at vocational institutes, preparing students for a three/four-year qualification within the IFP system. Vocational institutes can issue IFP certificates.

So far, most Regions have opted for the first of the two types of offer.

Furthermore, guidelines include the possibility for those with a four-year IFP qualification to be admitted to universities, institutes of AFAM (Higher Education in Music and Art) and ITS (Higher Technical Institutes) courses, provided they have attended a one-year integration course offered by the Regions and organised by the vocational institutes and the training agencies themselves.

Geographical Accessibility

State Upper Secondary Education

Please see 'Geographical accessibility' in 4.4.

Regional Vocational Education and Training (IFP)

The presence of training agencies and vocational upper secondary institutes offering courses within the regional vocational education and training system is not uniform throughout the country and, therefore, users may find it difficult to choose and attend courses leading to different qualifications.

Admission Requirements and Choice of School

State Upper Secondary Education

Please see 'Admission requirements and choice of school' in 4.4.

Regional Vocational Education and Training (IFP)

Candidates to IFP courses are required to have completed the first cycle of education. Enrolment in the first year is for students under the age of 15. Candidates from other education pathways must be under 18.

Age Levels and Grouping of Students

State Upper Secondary Education

Courses at technical and vocational institutes are generally aimed at students aged from 14

to 19 and teaching is organised in two distinct periods: the first period lasts two years and the second lasts 3 years and is in turn split into another block of 2 years plus the final year.

For the number of students per class-group, see 'Age level and grouping of students' in 4.4.

Class teachers are specialists in one subject or more subjects from the same subject area (e.g. maths and sciences). In the technical institutes with a technology bias, two teachers work together teaching theory and practice in laboratory classes.

Regional Vocational Education and Training (IFP)

The average number of learners per class is usually 20. Maximum limits are set at regional level and a minimum number of learners is usually required for administrative reasons (e.g. 12 learners). Each class-group corresponds to the grade of the course (i.e. first, second and third grade) and to the qualification issued at the end of the course (e.g. first grade 'catering worker').

Organisation of School Year

State Upper Secondary Education

For general information on the organisation of the school year, see 'Organisation of the school year' in 4.4.

The compulsory annual and weekly timetable (based on 33 weeks/year) for technical and vocational schools is set at central level.

The annual timetables in these schools consist of a portion that is common to all branches and a portion that is specific to each branch of specialisation. The common timetable covers general activities and teaching and accounts for 660 hours (approximately 20 hours a week) in the first and second grades and 495 hours (approximately 15 hours a week) in the last three grades. The timetable for activities and teaching that are specific to each branch of specialisation accounts for 396 hours (approximately 12 hours a week) in the first and second grade and 561 hours (approximately 17 hours a week) in the last three grades. The overall compulsory teaching time is 1056 hours, corresponding to approximately 32 hours a week.

For technology courses at technical institutes, the annual teaching time also includes laboratory lessons taught by two teachers: 264 hours in the first and second grades, 561 hours in the third and fourth grade and 330 hours in the fifth grade.

Regional Vocational Education and Training (IFP)

The overall number of teaching hours on courses organised by training agencies ranges between 2 900 and 3 600 hours for the entire three-year period. Within these hours, the amount of time devoted to general knowledge and culture, specialist subject areas, work experience and integrated activities (guidance, catch-up, etc.) also varies. The average time devoted to the acquisition of cultural competences

ranges from 35 to 45% of the overall timetable; 45-50% is devoted to the technical-vocational specialist area and the remaining time goes towards work experience and integrated activities.

In most Regions, guidance activities are incorporated and spread across the years of study, with a concentration of career guidance time in the third year. In other Regions, individual courses include an additional block of time for guidance and teachers decide how to tailor this time to the specific needs of individual learners.

Courses organised by vocational upper secondary institutes generally follow the specialist branch structure of vocational institutes, devoting 15-30% of the technical-vocational portion of the timetable to integrated activities.

In courses organised by vocational upper secondary institutes, school teachers usually teach general subjects and technical and vocational subjects are usually taught by trainers from partner training agencies. Conversely, trainers on courses organised by training agencies, including those specialising in key competences, are mainly recruited by the training agencies themselves, according to the criteria set for the accreditation of agencies.

The year can be divided into two or three terms (periods of three or four months). At the end of each term, students are assessed and parents are informed of their learning outcomes.

Organisation of the School Day and Week

State Upper Secondary Education

For general information on the organisation of the school day and week, see 'Organisation of the school day and week' in 4.4.

The table below presents a sample school week in a first grade class at a technical institute. The timetable includes breaks between lessons.

Length of school day, every day of the school week					
	Out-of-hours provision	Lessons	Lunch break	Lessons	Out-of-hours provision
Monday	-	8.15-14.15	-	-	-
Tuesday	-	8.15-13.15	-	-	-
Wednesday	-	8.15-14.15	-	-	-
Thursday	-	8.15-13.15	-	-	-
Friday	-	8.15-14.15	-	-	-
Saturday	-	8.15-12.15	-	-	-

Regional Vocational Education and Training (IFP)

Learners attend IFP courses for about 5-6 hours a day with a mid-morning break, 5 or 6 days a week. Lessons correspond to the school calendar, i.e. starting in September and ending in June-July. Calendars may vary locally depending on regional planning and the availability of funds annually allocated by the Ministry.

4.8 Teaching and Learning in Vocational Upper Secondary Education

Curriculum, Subjects, Number of Hours

State Upper Secondary Education

Technical institutes offer courses in economics and technology sectors.

Economics-based courses are organised in the following branches of study:

- management, finance and marketing
- tourism

Technology-based courses are organised in the following branches of studies:

- mechanics and energy
- transport and logistics
- electronics and electrical engineering
- ICT and telecommunications
- design and communication
- chemistry, biotechnology
- fashion design
- agriculture, food and agriculture, agroindustry
- construction, environment

Vocational institutes offer courses for the service sector and for the industry and crafts sector.

Courses for the service sector are provided in the following branches of specialisation:

- services for agriculture and the development of rural areas
- social and health services
- hotel and catering
- commerce

Courses for industry and crafts are provided in the following branches of specialisation:

- industrial and craft products
- maintenance and technical assistance

For teaching purposes only, the five years of study at technical and vocational institutes are organised into a two-year period and a three-year period; the latter

is in turn organised into a two-year period and the final year. In the three-year period, besides deepening their knowledge in the general areas common to all branches, students are expected to acquire and develop content that is specific to their branch of specialisation, in order to fully achieve the specific competences of their professional sector, as set out in the educational, cultural and professional profile (PECUP). Once acquired, these competences enable students to go further in their studies at a higher level or to go directly into their professions.

The first two years of upper secondary level of education, whether general or vocational, are compulsory. Thus, in order to ensure that education and training is the same in all types of school (general or vocational), the Ministry has defined what knowledge and competences all students are expected to have acquired on completion of compulsory education. This knowledge and competences integrate the current upper secondary curricula, specific for each type of school.

These knowledge and competences are organised into four 'cultural areas': languages, mathematics, science/technology and historic/social studies. Knowledge and competences are also the basis for building learning pathways aimed at acquiring key competences that can help students in adulthood and for lifelong learning. Key competences are: learning to learn, planning, communicating, collaborating and participating, acting autonomously, problem solving, creating connections and relations, acquiring and interpreting information.

Following the recent reform of the second cycle of education, the curricula of technical and vocational institutes have been revised. New curricula are now defined in National Guidelines.

The National Guidelines set out the specific knowledge and skills a student is expected to acquire, for each sector and branch of specialisation, in each subject included in the relevant study plan. In addition to knowledge and skills necessary for building the competences of students, the National Guidelines also include the student's educational, cultural and professional profile (PECUP), representing what a student should know and be able to do at the end of his or her technical or vocational education.

As at all other education levels, after a three-year experimental phase, 'Citizenship and Constitution' is now part of the curriculum and schools are required to include it in their educational offer plan (POF). It is not a separate subject and its content is developed by individual schools through teaching projects included in the history and geography.

Timetables for all sectors, branches of specialisation and options in technical and vocational pathways show the compulsory number of teaching hours for each subject in the study plan. The duration of lessons is 60 minutes, although schools can decide to have shorter lessons, providing that the compulsory annual amount of teaching time for each subject is met.

Through their educational offer plan (POF), institutions can offer additional courses which must be consistent with the Educational, Cultural and Professional Profile (PECUP) of each technical and vocational study plan. Such courses are optional for students. Once a student has chosen an optional course, attendance is compulsory and a performance is assessed on a par with all compulsory subjects in the study plan. Optional courses must not account for more than 20% of the overall timetable.

For general information on the curriculum organisation, see 'Curriculum, subjects, number of hours' in 4.5.

Regional Vocational Education and Training (IFP)

Three-year and four-year IFP courses do not refer to national study programmes that are specific to the different subjects.

The main IFP offer, which is an alternative to the school offer, is organised in two large areas: courses organised and run by training agencies accredited by the Regions and courses organised and run by upper secondary vocational institutes in partnership with training agencies. In the second case, schools follow the guidelines of their Regions for the organisation of these courses.

Training providers prepare teaching projects based on the tasks and skills that are specific to the relevant professional profiles. Generally, teaching projects are modular and cover basic, transversal and technical or vocational skills.

The first two years of IFP courses correspond to the last two years of compulsory education. So, as in mainstream general and vocational upper secondary education, the curricula include key competences for citizenship, which learner should have acquired by the end of compulsory education (see 'Curriculum, Subjects, Number of Hours' in 4.5.).

Learning and training objectives refer to the technical and professional standards set for 22 three-year vocational qualifications and 21 four-year vocational qualifications. These standards are organised into work processes/activity and the acquisition of the competences that are typical of the professional qualification. Competences are described in terms of skills and knowledge.

At present, the 22 three-year vocational qualifications areas are:

- tourism promotion and reception
- agro-food production
- wellness
- administration
- retailing
- warehousing

- graphics
- construction
- wood
- pleasure boats
- engine vehicles
- thermo-hydraulic systems
- electrical systems
- electronic systems
- mechanical systems
- clothes
- shoes
- food
- agriculture
- art
- chemical production
- marine and inland waters

Some Regions also provide four-year IFP courses, leading to a vocational diploma, in the following 21 vocational qualification areas :

- tourism promotion and reception
- agro-food production
- automation systems
- retailing
- industrial automation
- beauty treatments
- graphics
- construction
- wood
- waiting staff and bar services
- engine vehicles
- thermal systems
- electrical systems
- electronic systems
- services for enterprise
- clothes
- food
- agriculture
- art
- leisure time and tourist activities
- hairdressing

The purpose of three and four-year vocational training courses (IFP) is to qualify 14/17-year olds who wish to enter the labour market after a short period of training. However, these courses ensure that students acquire the key competences and skills required on completion of compulsory education.

Teaching Methods and Materials

State Upper Secondary education

Please see 'Teaching methods and materials' in 4.5.

Regional Vocational Education and Training (IFP)

The main teaching aspect of IFP courses, especially on courses organised by upper secondary vocational institutes, is the use of guidance-centred teaching methods. This teaching approach makes it possible to: a) link training to the future profession more clearly and emphatically; b) rethink students' choices, if they do not correspond to their training needs and their initial training path.

In addition to this aspect, the Regions also provide training agencies with methodological guidance on approaches and techniques based on active teaching, particularly through projects, simulated business experiences and other simulation techniques (e.g. role play and case studies). They also strongly recommend the use of problem-solving methods.

Hence, in addition to traditional active teaching methods, training institutions are often open to local opportunities and participate in extracurricular initiatives such as study visits, competitions and twinning experiences.

These methods aim to facilitate the learning process and meet the needs of learners to acquire cultural and technical/professional competences through practice. In this regard, work placements are a much appreciated learning experience for learners.

The Regions establish the length of work placements, taking into account individual qualifications. However, in the first year, placements are guidance-oriented and take place through visits to local enterprises. In subsequent years, placements have a practical and training focus. Learners work within the company and their training is organised and coordinated by the placement tutor in the training institution and the tutor at the host company.

The publishers of textbooks for vocational training are the same as those of school textbooks. Teachers are free to use textbooks and other teaching materials.

4.9. Assessment in Vocational Upper Secondary Education

Students Assessment

State Upper Secondary Education

Please see 'Students assessment' in 4.6.

Regional Vocational Education and Training (IFP)

Continuous assessment is carried out through several tools ranging from more traditional interviews and class work to assess content, to practical tests (e.g. producing of technical projects) for a more effective assessment of the learning/teaching of competences.

The final assessment, i.e. the qualification examination, varies from region to region, but shares a number of elements.

In most Regions, for admission to the final examination, students are expected to have attended at least 70% of the overall final-year programme and 50% of the work placement.

There are generally three types of tests:

- theory or written
- practical (e.g. laboratory work, use of machines, problem-solving, etc.)
- oral or interview

In some Regions, institutions prepare their own tests, whereas in some Regions, tests are prepared centrally at provincial/regional level and used by all institutions/agencies (provided that final examinations take place at the same time); in other Regions, theory tests are prepared centrally and practical tests are organised at institution/agency level.

The final overall mark leading to the final qualification is the sum of several evaluations, whose importance varies from Region to Region. These evaluations include the average mark for the last year of study, the overall score from the final examination and, in some cases, the work placement company's appraisal.

The composition of examination committees varies between the Regions. Committees may be small (three members and one chairman) and made up of internal members or larger with mostly external members from the Regions, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, trade unions and employers, as well as teachers and the person in charge of the agency/institution.

Although assessment procedures, tests and admission requirements to the final examination are generally shared at national level, the same does not apply to assessment scales. In fact, some Regions use written assessments, while others use different numerical scales, which may range out of one hundred, six or thirty.

Once or several times per year, learners evaluate teaching and the organisation of

the course through questionnaires. In some cases, these assessments are carried out within standardised quality assurance procedures.

Progression of Students

State Upper Secondary Education

Please see 'Progression of Students' in 4.6.

Regional Vocational Education and Training (IFP)

A three-year vocational qualification entitles the holder to enrol in a fourth year of specialisation (only available for a few qualifications and offered by only a few training agencies in some Regions) and in the third or fourth year of upper secondary education (mainly technical and vocational institutes), leading to an equivalent qualification. Furthermore, a first-level vocational qualification can also be submitted for enrolment in second-level vocational training courses and to apply for professional apprenticeships (for people aged over 18). It also gives access to Higher technical education and training (IFTS) courses, after verification of the skills acquired.

Holders of a four-year IFP technical qualification can apply to university, AFAM (Higher education in art and music) and ITS (Higher Technical Institutes) courses after attending a one-year conversion course offered by the Regions and organised by the vocational institutes and the training agencies.

Certification

State Upper Secondary Education

Students who pass the final State examination at technical and vocational institutes, receive a technical education diploma (*Diploma di istruzione tecnica*) and a vocational education diploma (*Diploma di istruzione professionale*) respectively, and a certificate.

In addition to the student's personal details, the *Diploma* shows the technical or vocational institute and the branch of specialisation attended and the mark score obtained in the final examination.

The certificate attests the branch of study and the duration of the course, the final mark, the total number of points obtained in the written tests, the number of points obtained in the oral test, the points assigned as 'school credits', the points assigned as training credits and any additional points awarded by the examination committee, the subjects on the curriculum and the total number of teaching hours dedicated to each subject. The certificate also shows any earlier tests where a high score was achieved.

Both documents are signed by the chairman of the examination committee and are written in four European languages.

The Ministry of Education, University and Research provides schools with models for the certification and the *Diploma*.

Finally, the Ministry provides the model, which is valid nationwide, for certification of the competences (basic, intermediate and advanced) acquired by students after 10 years of compulsory education. Schools draft the certificate and deliver it when it is requested by students.

Regional Vocational Education and Training (IFP)

Three-year vocational training courses lead to the qualification of 'worker in +', while four-year courses lead to the qualification 'technician in +'.

Certification aims at ensuring the recognition of qualifications, in order to enable trainees to enter or re-enter the system of vocational education and training. The certified competences constitute training credit. The regions are responsible for the final and intermediate certification. They organise the implementation procedures taking into account the minimum standards and the types of certification defined at national level.

5. HIGHER EDUCATION

The following types of institution offer higher education in Italy:

- universities (including polytechnics)
- institutes of Higher Education in Art and Music (*Alta formazione artistica e musicale* - AFAM)
- Higher technical institutes (*Istituti Tecnici Superiori* - ITS)

Universities and AFAM institutions are autonomous bodies. They adopt their own charters, appoint their own governing bodies (such as the rector, senate, and executive board) and their own teaching and research facilities.

Higher technical institutes (ITS) are highly specialised technical schools set up to meet the demand for new and advanced competences from the labour market, particularly from the technical and technological sectors. They offer short-cycle, non-university, tertiary education, which has been part of the education system since 2011/2012.

In addition to universities, AFAM institutions and ITS, other specialised institutions also offer tertiary education in specific fields. Generally, access to courses requires an upper secondary education qualification and a pass in the entrance examination. The number of available places is limited and fixed annually. In some cases, previous relevant training may also be required. These institutes issue qualifications that are recognised within the education system but refer to national authorities other than the Ministry of Education, University and Research; hence, the following articles do not describe the offer in detail. Specialist institutions offering tertiary education include: *Scuola nazionale di cinema* (National School of Cinema), *Scuole di archivistica, paleografia e diplomatica* (Schools for archive systems, palaeography and diplomatics), Military academies (Air Academy of Pozzuoli, Revenue Guard Academy, Military Naval Academy of Livorno, Military Academy of Modena), *Istituti superiori di scienze religiose* (Higher Institutes of Religious Sciences), the Foundation for the Preservation and Restoration of Books.

The following sections describe higher education offered by universities, AFAM and ITS institutes and are organised according to the type of programme offered.

5.1. Types of Higher Education Institutions

University Education

University education is provided by 96 university institutes:

- 67 state universities (of which 9 are higher schools, or institutes, called 'special system higher schools');
- 29 non-state universities (of which 11 are online universities).

Finally, the following institutes issue qualifications equivalent to those issued by universities:

- Higher schools for language mediators (*Scuole superiori per mediatori linguistici*, SSML), offering three-year courses and issuing qualifications equivalent to the *laurea* (first-cycle degree) in language mediation issued by universities;
- Specialisation institutes for psychotherapists, issuing qualifications equivalent to the Specialisation diploma (third-cycle qualification) issued by Italian universities in the wider field of psychology
- Other institutes offering 5-year single-cycle courses leading to a qualification equivalent to a second-cycle qualification. These include: the Higher Institute for Conservation and Restoration (*Istituto superiore per la conservazione e il restauro*) in Rome, the School of the Gemstone Factory (*Scuola dell'Opificio delle pietre dure*) in Florence, with its branch in Ravenna at the School of Mosaic Restoration (*Scuola di restauro del mosaico*), the Higher School at the Central Institute for Book Pathology (*Istituto centrale per la patologia del libro*) in Rome. These institutes fall under the responsibility of the Ministry for the Arts and Culture, rather than the Ministry of Education.

Higher Education in Art and Music (AFAM)

The following institutes provide Higher Education in Art and Music (*Alta formazione artistica e musicale* – AFAM):

- *Accademie di belle arti* (Academies of fine arts): higher institutes of applied arts, whose main purpose is preparing students for the practice of fine arts (painting, sculpture, decorating and set design). There are 20 State and 23 legally recognised Academies of fine arts nationwide.
- *Istituti superiori per le industrie artistiche*, ISIA (Higher institutes for Artistic Industries): they are state institutes offering specific training in design (graphic design). There are 4 Higher institutes for Artistic Industries with headquarters in Faenza, Rome, Florence and Urbino.
- *Accademia nazionale di arte drammatica* (National Academy of Drama), in Rome: it offers training courses for Italian and foreign actors and directors.
- *Conservatori di musica* (Conservatoires): higher institutes of applied arts teaching music. There are 58 Conservatoires and 21 Higher institutes of music.
- *Accademia nazionale di danza* (National Dance Academy), in Rome: its main purpose is to train dancers, soloists, choreographers.
- Other institutes offering higher education in the arts sector, particularly in design, music and fashion and allowed to issue equivalent qualifications. There are 14 institutes nationwide.

Higher technical institutes (ITS)

ITS are specific types of foundations (halfway between associations and private foundations). The minimum organisational standard requirements are for:

- a vocational/technical upper secondary school located in the same province as the foundation, which acts as a reference body and issues the relevant qualification;
- a training institution which has been accredited by the Region for higher level training and located in the same province as the foundation;
- a business belonging to the same production branch as the ITS;
- a university department or any other body belonging to the technological/scientific research system;
- a local authority (municipality, province, extended urban area, etc.).

The offer is available nationwide. At present, there are 63 ITS.

5.2 First-Cycle Programmes (Bachelor)

Branches of Study

University Education

According to the National qualification framework, university Bachelor's programmes (3-year courses corresponding to 180 university credits), lead to the qualification called the *laurea*.

University Bachelor's programmes are organised in the areas of health, science, social sciences and classics.

Bachelor programmes do not include studies in medicine and surgery, pharmacy, veterinary science and dentistry studies, law, primary teacher education and architecture. Programmes in these fields are organised as single-cycle courses (6 or 5 years, corresponding to 300-360 credits). These courses lead directly to a second-cycle qualification (single-cycle *laurea magistrale*).

Each area of study involves '*laurea* classes'. One 'class' groups together several courses with the same core qualifying objectives and the same core activities established at national level for each class (e.g. the *laurea* course in 'Employment consulting' and the *laurea* course in 'Italian and European law' are part of the same *laurea* class (L-14) 'Legal Services' within the social sciences area).

Classes, with the relevant core objectives and minimum number of credits required, are determined at national level for all universities. There are currently 43 *laurea* classes. A complete list of *laurea* classes is available on the Ministry of Education website in a regularly updated national database.

Universities autonomously open courses and regulate their organisation (course title, objectives, curriculum and relevant study activities, credits, final assessment procedures).

Higher Education in Art and Music (AFAM)

According to the National qualification framework, AFAM Bachelor's programmes (3-year courses corresponding to 180 university credits), lead to the qualification called *Diploma accademico di primo livello* (First level academic diploma).

AFAM institutions offer highly qualified specialisations in:

- visual arts (painting, sculpture, decoration, set design, photography, multimedia, new technologies for the arts, film and TV set design, conservation and restoration of modern and contemporary works of art)
- drama (acting and direction)
- dance (ballet and contemporary dance, choreography)
- music (all instruments, jazz and electronic music)
- design (product design, communication, system and fashion design).

Admission Requirements

University Education

The general requirements for access to university courses are decided centrally.

Admission is restricted for single-cycle courses in medicine, pharmacy, veterinary sciences and dentistry, primary education and architecture; admission is also restricted for courses in the health professions or for bachelor's courses which involve practical training and the use of laboratories.

Admission requires an upper secondary school leaving certificate or other equivalent qualification obtained abroad. Furthermore, individual universities can also require suitable initial preparation. For this purpose, university regulations should also determine what knowledge is required for admission and should set out the test procedures.

Tests may be conducted on completion of preparatory training courses delivered in collaboration with institutes of upper secondary education. A fail does not preclude enrolment. Teaching regulations should specify additional training requirements to be fulfilled within the first year of the course.

Furthermore, students attending the final year of upper secondary school should submit a pre-enrolment application to their chosen university, so that the institutions are able to plan their teaching offer and also inform students with sufficient notice.

Institutions decide whether to recognise qualifications obtained abroad, in accordance with European Union directives and regulations and international agreements in force.

Higher Education in Art and Music (AFAM)

Admission to Bachelor's courses at AFAM institutions requires an upper secondary school leaving certificate or another equivalent qualification obtained abroad. Furthermore, individual universities can also require suitable initial preparation and determine the assessment procedures. Tests may be conducted on completion of preparatory training courses delivered in collaboration with institutes of upper secondary education.

Conservatoires, officially recognised music institutes and the National Dance Academy may admit highly gifted students with no upper secondary school leaving certificate onto courses leading to a *Diploma accademico di primo livello*. However, an upper secondary leaving certificate is required to obtain the final qualification.

Institutions decide whether to recognise qualifications obtained abroad, in accordance with European Union directives and regulations and international agreements in force.

Curriculum

Central regulations establish the general criteria for the organisation of university studies and Higher Education in Art and Music (AFAM), as well as the qualification they can issue.

For universities, the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) decides national *laurea* classes and, for each class, the qualifying educational objectives and the subsequent learning activities necessary to reach these objectives.

According to central regulations, learning activities for each *laurea* class (university) and for each study course (AFAM) are grouped as follows:

- basic studies;
- learning activities in one or more areas typical of each class or course.

Each class or course should also have:

- learning activities in one or more areas of study similar or supplementary to the areas of study typical to the field of study;
- learning activities chosen by students;
- learning activities aimed at the final examination to obtain the final qualification and assess knowledge of a foreign language;
- further learning activities aimed at improving linguistic knowledge, as well as ICT skills, relational skills and any other skills useful for entry to the labour market, such as training and guidance apprenticeships.

Furthermore, learning activities include laboratory activities or artistic productions, where relevant.

Study courses can be divided into branches, each with its own specific curriculum.

The minimum number of credits that institutions should assign in their teaching regulations to learning activities and areas of study is established at central level. However, the total amount of these reserved credits must not exceed 66% and 60% for universities and AFAM institutions, respectively.

Universities and AFAM institutions issue their own regulations, approved by the Ministry of Education. Each regulation determines:

- the name and training objectives of the study courses; the general framework of the training activities that must be included in the curriculum; credits assigned to the various training activities; outline of the final examination for the final qualification;
- the organisational aspects of the teaching activities that are common to all courses, such as objectives, times and methods to be adopted for planning, co-ordinating and evaluating the results of the activities; procedures to assign the annual teaching tasks to teachers and researchers; examination procedures; student assessment procedures, within the limits established by central regulations; evaluation of the students' initial training and organisation of training activities preparatory to the assessment of the initial training; quality assurance.

It is thus not possible to provide an in-depth picture of programmes and the contents of each course.

The teaching regulations of courses determine what is taught, the training objectives and credits, the curriculum and the requirements for presentation of individual study plans, provisions concerning compulsory attendance. The curriculum is the sum of the training activities (courses, seminars, practical work and laboratory, small group activities, tutoring, guidance, apprenticeship, projects, dissertation, individual study activities and self-learning) the student has to complete to obtain the qualification.

Knowledge of a language of the European Union is required to obtain the final qualification. The official language of teaching is Italian. However, many institutions offer activities (seminars, conferences) and courses or modules in a foreign language (mainly English).

Teaching Methods

Universities and Higher Education in Art and Music (AFAM) institutions set out in their regulations the procedures for teaching activities, with full respect of freedom of teaching and the rights and duties of teachers and students.

Teachers are free to choose their own teaching methods. They may be given a few mandatory requirements. The use of new technologies is increasingly widespread, as are seminars, group work, etc.

Progression of Students

Students are expected to obtain the credits for the study plan for each academic year, by passing scheduled examinations. Students who do not pass the scheduled examinations cannot attend the courses of the following academic year. In order to graduate, students are required to have passed all the examinations in their study plan. If they have not, they are expected to meet the requirements set out in the regulations of each institution.

Students holding a university or AFAM first-cycle qualification have access to second-cycle programmes.

At present, the teaching regulations of every institution set out the procedures and criteria to be followed when students ask to switch from one course to another within the same or at a different university, or to move from a university to an AFAM institution and vice versa. Regulations can require the acquired credits be monitored in order to ensure that the student's knowledge is not obsolete. For students who wish to change from one course to another or from one university to another, teaching regulations must ensure recognition of the highest possible number of credits obtained by the student. When students change within the same class of studies, no fewer than 50% of credits can be accepted. Non-recognition of credits must be suitably explained.

Employability

University Education

In accordance with the most recent labour legislation, (Decree of 20 September 2011), universities play a mediation role between students and the labour market, provided that universities join the Register of employment agencies. This register includes all the subjects authorised by the Ministry of Labour to carry out mediation activities.

'Cliclavoro' is the portal where universities publish the CVs of their students and graduates (within 12 months) in order to make them available to employers who can, in turn advertise, available positions.

Those wishing to work freelance (e.g. agronomists and forestry graduates, agro-technicians, architects, social workers, actuaries, biologists, chemists, geologists, engineers), are usually required to pass a qualifying State examination and then to enrol on the relevant registers managed by professional associations and councils.

These are divided into two sections, according to the level of ability and competence gained at university: section A is for those who have a second-cycle degree; section

B is for those who have a first-cycle degree. Registers have separate sections for specific educational paths corresponding to highly specific professional activities.

To encourage the entry of students into the labour market, universities are required to include guidance activities in their regulations. Guidance activities include indoor and outdoor initiatives, such as the promotion of consortia and agreements with companies for grants, apprenticeships or traineeships.

There are several types of apprenticeship, or traineeship:

- apprenticeships carried out during or after university studies and combined with the qualifying State examination for practising one of the regulated professions (professional bodies and registers);
- apprenticeship specifically required for a study course;
- apprenticeship carried out as part of international projects;
- apprenticeship organised independently and offered to students and teachers by a company.

Apprenticeships must be part of training and guidance projects and comply with agreements between the universities and companies or employer associations involved, in some cases involving other players such as professional associations, local authorities and public bodies.

Moreover, trainees must be insured (civil liability and occupational accident) and be monitored by a tutor who is responsible for teaching; activities must be organised for which the trainee must assigned credits (CFU).

Many universities have set up special offices for the organisation of traineeships and to inform students more efficiently.

Beside these offices there are also student associations dealing with the apprenticeship offer. They are mainly international associations that group together students from certain areas of study (economics, engineering, law, medicine, etc.) and act through a network of local offices. Many graduate associations also aim to establish links between universities and companies and facilitate the transition from university to the labour market, through the promotion of traineeships.

Higher Education in Art and Music (AFAM)

Activities carried out by AFAM institutions to facilitate the access of students to the labour market depend on the type of profession taught at each institute. Thus, an overall description is not possible.

Student Assessment

Every university and AFAM sets out its own teaching regulations, procedures and methods for student assessment. However, central regulations require that grades

assigned at examinations should be calculated on a scale of 0 - 30, with 18 as the pass mark. Final examination scores should be calculated on a scale of 0 – 110, with 66 as the pass mark for the final qualification. In both cases, it is possible to graduate with a distinction (30 with distinction; 110 with distinction).

Both universities and AFAM institutions have adopted a credit system. University students are assigned CFUs (university training credits), whereas AFAM institutions assign CFAs (academic training credits). CFUs and CFAs both have the following characteristics:

- credits represent the quantity of learning, including gained by individual study, students are required to gain from their courses. One credit corresponds to 25 hours of study;
- the average quantity of learning for a full-time student corresponds to 60 credits;
- total or partial recognition of the credits obtained by a student who wants to continue his/her studies is the responsibility of the educational institution receiving the student;
- teaching regulations of each institution can provide for the periodic verification of credits and indicate the minimum number of credits to be gained within a fixed period of time;
- on the basis of predefined criteria, institutions can give CFUs/CFAs for professional abilities and skills certified in conformity with regulations in force, as well as other abilities and skills gained through educational activities at post-secondary level planned and carried out in collaboration with the university.

CFU and CFA correspond to ECTS credits. Each institution establishes a specific conversion table to facilitate the conversion between the national marks and the ECTS grading.

To achieve a first-cycle qualification either at university or at an AFAM institution, students have to sit for a final test in front of the examination committee. To be admitted to the final test, students must have passed all the examinations foreseen in their study plan, and have received 180 credits, corresponding to a three-year first-cycle programme. In the final test, the student submits an original work to the commission prepared under the guidance of a supervisor.

Certification

University and AFAM students, who have completed a three-year programme, have been assigned the corresponding 180 CFU/CFA and have successfully passed the final test, are awarded a *laurea* or a *Diploma accademico di primo livello* (First level academic diploma) respectively.

The university rector and the AFAM institution director, who represent the university and the AFAM institution, are responsible for issuing the qualification. University titles have academic value and do not qualify for professional status in one of the regulated professions. They do give access to the qualifying State examination required to enrol in the relevant register.

University and AFAM institutions determine the methods and procedures to issue the relevant certificate and the *Diploma* supplement, in compliance with the models adopted in the European countries, providing the main information about the curriculum followed by the student to obtain the certification concerned.

According to specific agreements, institutions can issue qualifications together with other Italian and foreign institutions of the same level, qualified to issue qualifications recognised in Italy according to international and European community law (joint qualification).

5.3. Short-Cycle Programmes

Branches of Study

Higher Technical Institutes (ITS) offer highly qualifying courses in the following six technological areas: energy efficiency, sustainable mobility, new technologies in life, new technologies for 'Italian-made goods', innovative technologies for the arts and cultural activities - tourism, ICT.

Admission Requirements

Anyone (adults included) holding an upper secondary education qualification can access courses offered at Higher Technical Institutes (ITS).

ITS organise enrolment tests to assess the basic technical and technological competences of candidates as well as their knowledge of English, which is required for successful participation in the training activities offered. Assessment criteria are defined by each ITS.

In addition, candidates obtain a specific mark based on the final mark obtained at the end of upper secondary school.

Curriculum

Courses at Higher Technical Institutes (ITS) last four semesters corresponding to 1 800/2 000 hours and, for specific branches, up to a maximum of 6 semesters. Courses have a modular organisation. The duration of each module varies.

The curricula involve the acquisition of general basic competences, which are the same for all technological areas, technical competences, which are the same for all professional qualifications in each technological area and specific competences

to each professional qualification. In particular, general basic competences refer to the following areas: languages, communications and public relations, science and technology, law and economics, organisation and management.

Courses include theory lessons and laboratories. 30% of the overall timetable should be given to on-the-job training (including abroad).

Teaching Methods

Freedom of teaching is a principle established by the Constitution of the Italian Republic and, therefore, teachers are free to choose their own teaching methods.

50% of teachers on ITS courses come from business or specific professions.

In general, 'learning by doing' is the most common teaching method. The use of laboratories at research centres, universities and companies is also common. Furthermore, courses facilitate the integration of common and technical-vocational skills in problem solving, planning, administration and control of systems/services in the relevant area of studies.

Progression of Students

ITS courses have a modular organisation. Students do not progress from one grade to the next, as they do in the school system.

Employability

Courses at ITS give access to professions in the following six technological areas: energy efficiency, sustainable mobility, new technologies in life, new technologies for the 'Italian-made goods', innovative technologies for the arts and cultural activities - tourism, ICT.

The final certificate, 'Higher Technical Diploma', issued at the end of the course and on completion of the final examination, gives access to public competitions and university courses, with conversion of credits into CFUs.

Student Assessment

Courses end with a final examination assessing students' skills. Candidates sit in front of a committee made up of representatives of the school, university and vocational education sectors and experts from the world of employment.

Certification

At the end of courses and on completion of the final examination, students are awarded the Higher Technical Diploma (*Diploma di tecnico superiore*). The certificate states the technological area of specialisation and the relevant national qualification. Certificates are issued by the upper secondary school, either technical or vocational,

which is the reference institute of the ITS foundation.

The *Diploma* gives access to public competitions, to university courses, with conversion of credits into CFUs, and to the labour market.

5.4. Second Cycle Programmes (Master)

Branches of Study

University Education

According to the National qualification framework, Master's programmes (2-year courses corresponding to 120 university credits), lead to the qualification called *laurea magistrale*.

Second-cycle university studies are organised in the areas of health, science, social sciences and classics.

Each area of study is made up of courses and so called '*laurea magistrale* classes'. One 'class' groups together several courses with the same core objectives and the same core activities established at national level for each class (e.g. the *laurea magistrale* course in 'Visual arts' and the *laurea magistrale* course in 'Historical heritage', belong to the same class (LM-89) 'History of arts' within the classics area). Classes, with the relevant core objectives and a minimum amount of credits required, are determined at national level for all universities. There are currently 94 *laurea magistrale* classes. A complete list of classes is available on the Ministry of Education website in a regularly updated national database.

Studies in medicine and surgery, pharmacy, veterinary science and dentistry, law, primary education and, for a few courses only, construction engineering-architecture, have a single-cycle organisation (6 or 5 years, corresponding to 300-360 credits). These courses lead directly to a second-cycle qualification (single-cycle *laurea magistrale*).

Universities autonomously activate courses and regulate their organisation (course title, objectives, curriculum and relevant study activities, credits, final assessment procedures) in their own regulations.

Higher Education in Art and Music (AFAM)

According to the National qualification framework, AFAM Master's programmes (2-year courses corresponding to 120 university credits), lead to the qualification called *Diploma accademico di primo livello* (First-level academic diploma).

AFAM institutions offer highly qualified specialisations in:

- visual arts (painting, sculpture, decoration, set design, photography,

- multimedia, new technologies for the arts, film and TV set design, conservation and restoration of modern and contemporary works of art);
- drama (acting and direction);
 - dance (ballet and contemporary dance, choreography);
 - music (all instruments, jazz and electronic music);
 - design (product design, communication, system and fashion design).

Admission Requirements

University Education

The general requirements for access to university courses are decided centrally.

Admission is restricted for single-cycle courses in medicine and surgery, pharmacy, veterinary science and dentistry, primary education and architecture; admission is also restricted for courses in the health professions or for courses which involve practical training and the use of laboratories. The selection procedures for courses with limited admission are conducted in Italian. Selection procedures for medicine and surgery courses taught in English are conducted in English.

Access to courses requires a laurea (first-cycle qualification), or another equivalent qualification obtained abroad. To access single-cycle programmes an upper secondary school leaving certificate, or another suitable qualification obtained abroad, is required.

Each university determines its own admission criteria, including possession of certain curricular requirements and verification of each student's preparation. All credits obtained in the previous cycle (180 CFU) will be recognised, if the second-cycle course is fully consistent with the contents of the completed three-year degree course; otherwise, the students will be enrolled with a 'debt' (*debito formativo*).

Higher Education in Art and Music (AFAM)

Admission to courses requires an AFAM or university first-cycle qualification, (First level academic diploma or *laurea*, respectively) or another suitable qualification obtained abroad.

Individual institutions decide whether to recognise qualifications obtained abroad, in accordance with European Union directives and regulations and international agreements in force.

Curriculum

Central regulations determine the general criteria for the organisation of university studies and Higher Education in Art and Music (AFAM), as well as the qualifications they can issue.

For further information, see 'Curriculum' in 5.2.

Teaching Methods

Please see 'Teaching methods' in 5.2.

Progression of Students

Please see 'Progression of students' in 5.2.

Employability

Please see 'Employability' in 5.2.

Student Assessment

For marks and credits assignments, see "Student Assessment" in 5.2.

To achieve the second-cycle qualification either at university or at an AFAM institution, students have to sit for a final test in front of the examination committee.

To be admitted to the final test, students must have passed all the examinations foreseen in their study plan, and be awarded a total of 120 credits (or 300-360 in case of single-cycle programmes), corresponding to the two years of studies.

The test involves the submission of a project developed by the student under the guidance of a supervisor.

Certification

University students who have completed a second-cycle programme have been assigned the corresponding 120 CFU credits (or 300-360 for single-cycle programmes) and have successfully passed the final test, are awarded a *laurea magistrale*. Under the same conditions, AFAM students are awarded a *Diploma accademico di secondo livello* (Second level academic diploma).

Please see 'Certification' in 5.2.1.

5.5. Programmes outside the Bachelor and Master Structure

Specific Second-Cycle Programmes

University Education

In addition to mainstream second-cycle courses leading to the *laurea magistrale*, universities may organise scientific in-depth studies and advanced specialisation courses leading to different second-cycle qualifications.

Courses last a minimum of one year (60 CFU credits) and lead to the qualification called *Master universitario di primo livello* (First-level university master).

Access to courses leading to a first-level university master's degree requires a

laurea (first-cycle qualification); universities may also require candidates to pass an admissions examination or meet other requirements.

The first-level university master's qualification does not give access to third-cycle programmes. Courses are not organised along the lines of national programmes and individual universities issue the relevant qualification autonomously.

Higher Education in Art and Music (AFAM)

In addition to mainstream second-cycle programmes leading to the *Diploma accademico di secondo livello*, AFAM institutions may organise courses leading to the following second-cycle qualifications:

- *Diploma accademico di specializzazione I* (Academic Specialisation Diploma I);
- *Diploma di perfezionamento o Master I* (In-depth Diploma). Courses are aimed at holders of a *Diploma Accademico di primo livello* (first-cycle degree).

Courses leading to an Academic Specialisation Diploma I aim to provide students with high-level professional skills in specific sectors.

Courses have a minimum length of two years (120 CFA).

Courses leading to the In-depth Diploma or Master I, aim to meet the cultural needs of in-depth studies in certain sectors of study as well as professional refreshment or requalification and lifelong learning needs. Their duration is a minimum of one year (60 CFA credits).

Holders of a First-level academic diploma can have access to both courses.

Neither of the programmes gives access to third-cycle programmes.

Specific Third-Cycle Programmes

University Education

In addition to PhDs courses, universities may organise courses leading to the following third-cycle qualifications:

- *Master universitario di secondo livello* (Second-level university Master's). Courses last a minimum of one year (60 credits);
- *Diploma di specializzazione* (Specialisation Diploma). The duration of courses varies from 2 up to 6 years (120-360 credits).

Courses leading to a second-level university Master's aim to provide scientific and high-level training.

Admission to courses leading to a second-level university Master's requires a second-cycle degree (*laurea magistrale*); universities may also require candidates to pass an admissions examination or meet further requirements.

The Second-level university Master's qualification does not allow access to third-cycle programmes. In fact, courses are not organised along the lines of national programmes and individual universities issue the relevant qualification autonomously.

Courses leading to a Specialisation Diploma are designed to provide knowledge and skills for particular professional activities. Courses can be set up exclusively according to specific regulations or European directives. Courses are mainly opened for clinical surgical subjects and offer specialist training for legal professionals (lawyers, judges, notaries).

Admission to courses leading to a Specialisation Diploma requires a second-cycle degree, or another equivalent qualification obtained abroad; specific ministerial decrees establish specific admission requirements for each course, which may include further additional credits to the qualification required for admission. In addition to the required qualifications, candidates should also pass an open competition.

Higher Education in Art and Music (AFAM)

In addition to the courses leading to the *Diploma accademico di formazione alla ricerca* (Academic Research Diploma), AFAM institutions organise courses leading to the following qualifications:

- *Diploma accademico di specializzazione II* (second-level specialisation academic diploma)
- *Diploma di perfezionamento o Master II* (second-level in-depth diploma or master). Please see 'Specific second-cycle programmes'.

5.6. Third Cycle (PhD) Programmes

Universities and Higher Education in Art and Music (AFAM) institutes organise third-cycle programmes, which aim to deliver the skills needed to carry out highly qualified research activities.

University third-cycle programmes lead to a *Dottorato* (PhD), while AFAM programmes lead to a *Diploma accademico di formazione alla ricerca* (Academic Research Diploma).

Organisation of Doctoral Studies

Doctoral studies are offered in all areas and sectors of study and research.

Courses and the institutions offering the courses should have accreditation from the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), upon advice from National agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research System (ANVUR).

Universities and any Italian advanced training and research institution can apply for accreditation.

Accredited institutions determine their own regulations for access to courses, methods for obtaining the final qualification, learning objectives and programmes, the length of courses, fees, the number of fellowships available, methods for awarding grants and their amount.

Courses can also be organised through consortia and agreements with other public and/or private, Italian or foreign universities and research institutes (international doctorate) and with enterprises involved in research and development (industrial doctorate). However, qualifications are always issued by university institutions.

Higher Education in Art and Music institutions (AFAM) offer third-cycle courses equivalent to university PhDs.

Courses are organised in all areas and sectors of the arts, music and dance.

AFAM institutions can also offer third-cycle courses through consortia and agreements with other AFAM institutions, universities and other public or private, Italian or foreign institutions.

Both university and AFAM third-cycle courses have a minimum length of 3 years.

Admission Requirements

Access to third-cycle programmes at universities and AFAM institutions is subject to passing a public competition.

To access the public competition for university third-cycle programmes, a second-cycle qualification (*laurea magistrale*), or other equivalent qualification obtained abroad is required.

Access to the competition is also open to those who, on the date of the competition, do not possess the required qualification. However, if they are successful they should have obtained the qualification by 31 October after the competition.

The call for entry should be published in Italian and English on the website of the institution offering the doctoral course, on the Ministry of Education website and on Euraxess. Furthermore, the call for entry should indicate the number of available places, the requirements, assessment criteria, tests (written and/or oral), grants available and costs for future PhD students. Selection procedures should end by 30 September of each year.

Access to public competitions at AFAM institutions requires a second-cycle qualification, obtained from an Italian or foreign university or AFAM institution.

The call for entry should be published in the Official Gazette of the Italian Republic, and the MIUR should be informed. The call should indicate the number of available places, tests, the number of grants available and their value.

Status of Doctoral Students/Candidates

Doctoral students have the status of full-time university students with an exclusive relationship with the institution. During doctoral studies, students are allowed to tutor and teach, with maximum restriction of 40 hours/year.

If a student is also a civil servant, he or she is entitled to unpaid leave for the official duration of the course (e.g. if the official duration of the course is three years and the student needs an extra year to complete his or her studies, the fourth year is not covered by leave). Female students are entitled to maternity leave.

Students receive yearly grants, which can be renewed subject to completion of all the activities foreseen in the study plan of the previous year. Grants have a minimum nationwide limit by Ministerial Decree. The amount can be increased to cover additional costs for research abroad. Grants also cover social security costs.

Supervision Arrangements

Every university and AFAM institution establishes its own assessment and supervision criteria. Every university doctoral course has its own Teachers' Council, with its own coordinator. The council plans and organises the course. The council is made up of professors, researchers from Italian and foreign universities and research institutes and highly qualified experts. Individual regulations govern participation at meetings.

Tutoring is available subject to the criteria and methods established by each institution. Every AFAM PhD course has its own council, with its own coordinator. The council is made up of all the professors on the course and deals with the organisation of the course, defining the study plans and the assessment procedures, etc.

Employability

As for the third-cycle studies, issues concerning guidance and transition to active life are provided for within the teaching activities of each course. These are thus the responsibility of the teaching body which manages the courses. Please also see 'Employability' in the Bachelor's programmes.

Assessment

Assessment of university and AFAM doctoral students takes place every year at the time of their admission to the subsequent year. Individual institutions determine assessment methods in their regulations.

At the end of the entire course, students pass a final assessment. University doctoral students submit a final research project written in Italian and English, contributing to the advancement of knowledge and methodologies in the chosen area of study. Students also submit a report on the activities carried out during the doctoral course and on publications made.

A minimum of two external highly qualified professors evaluate the student's work and write an analytical assessment. If the evaluation is positive the student is admitted to discuss his/her work publicly. If the assessment is negative, the public discussion of the thesis is postponed for up to six months to allow the student to amend and integrate his or her work.

The student discusses the final thesis before a committee, whose composition is defined in the university's regulations. The committee approves or rejects the thesis, stating the reason, and can award distinctions for particularly significant work.

AFAM doctoral students also discuss their work publically. The final research paper should be original and approved beforehand by the relevant members of the course. The committee is made up of highly qualified experts of whom at least three should be external.

Certification

On completion of a third-cycle programme, universities issue the qualification *Dottorato di ricerca* and award the title of *Dottore di ricerca* (Dott. Ric.) or PhD.

AFAM institutions issue a *Diploma accademico di formazione alla ricerca* (Academic Research Diploma) and the related title of Academic Research Doctor.

Individual institutions regulate this matter autonomously.

Organisational Variation

Distance learning is available for some university courses. Universities can provide this form of delivery, including in a consortium with several other universities or with the support of other public and private bodies.

The teaching regulations of each university and the courses include the possibility of organising training for students who do not attend full-time, as well as the type of courses, including provisions for distance learning, examinations and other ways of monitoring student performance.

6. ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Adult education and training is for people whose age puts them at risk of dropping out of school and should be included in mainstream school reintroduction/coaching pathways. It also targets those who, despite completing compulsory education, have left the school system and wish to re-join it.

Presidential Decree No. 263 of 29 October 2012 set out rules to reorganise the structure and teaching in Provincial adult education centres (CPIA), including evening courses. Assisted projects were launched nationally in school year 2013/2014. These projects involve 9 Regions and aim to experiment the new organisational structure. Starting from school year 2014/2015, adult education and training courses, including those offered in prisons and detention centres, will be organised as follows: first-level education courses, literacy and Italian language courses held by provincial adult education centres (CPIA); second-level education courses held by schools which offer technical, vocational and artistic courses.

This chapter describes the current system and the new organisation based on the reforms.

6.1. Institutions Providing Adult Education and Training

Permanent Territorial Centres (*Centri Territoriali Permanenti* - CTPs)

Permanent Territorial Centres (CTPs) were set up in 1997 for adult education and training. They were established to guarantee a wider educational and training offer in order to be better able to meet different social needs at national level. Their purpose is to ensure an 'integrated training offer among universities, schools and vocational training agencies'.

According to the regulations:

- the CTPs co-ordinate education and training offers in the local territory, together with the other training agencies;
- the Regional School Offices of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) set up the centres where well-established experiences already exist, or if there is demand from the community and a flow of 90/100 users is expected during the year;
- for the benefit of users, activities may be conducted offsite at different venues made available by public or private partners;
- in agreement with the Ministry of Justice, the initiatives are also guaranteed for adults held in prisons and juvenile detainees;
- each CTP is administered by a school;
- on the basis of the previous point, the school manager appoints the CTP co-ordinator.

Specifically, the activities of these centres include:

- reception, listening and guidance;
- primary functional and post literacy, including for possible access to higher education;
- language learning;
- recovery and development of basic knowledge and skills;
- recovery and development of cultural and relational skills necessary for full participation in society;
- acquisition and development of basic vocational training or re-qualification;
- recovery of marginalised subjects in educational and training paths.

Evening Classes at Upper Secondary Schools

The aim of evening classes is to strengthen and extend basic skills in order to:

- provide qualification opportunities to young people and adults for whom lower secondary school qualifications do not necessarily prevent their cultural alienation and exclusion from the job market;
- provide professional re-conversion or cultural development opportunities for adults already socially integrated and in employment, but wish to develop their personal and professional skills.

Evening classes at upper secondary schools:

- offer flexible paths which take advantage of students' previous experience; they are based on the knowledge approach in adult age for integrating general knowledge and culture skills and for vocational training;
- foresee the following modules subdivisions concerning: teaching time (distributed over five days, subjects grouped together by area, according to agreements with the Regions, access to laboratories, etc.); school time (to allow for intensive modules and catch-up activities); students grouped together according to level.

In some cases, schools have begun research and project activities to include distance learning in their educational offer.

6.2. Programmes Leading to Qualifications Issued within the School Education System

Permanent Territorial Centres (CTP) and evening classes offer the following types of courses:

- first-cycle education courses divided into:
 - primary school cultural literacy classes with final assessment
 - lower secondary school classes with State examination
- upper secondary school classes with State examination (qualification).

Furthermore, the Permanent Territorial Centres, in agreement with secondary schools providing evening classes, may start up educational pathways granting credits for admission to evening classes at upper secondary schools leading to an upper secondary qualification.

Admission Requirements

Adults and young adults older than 16 years can enrol in courses from the first cycle of education; in special cases or for network projects at provincial level, pupils at high risk of dropping out can enrol at the age of 15.

Admission to evening classes at upper secondary school requires a minimum age of 18, a lower secondary school qualification and proof "that they are unable to attend ordinary courses for personal reasons".

The following are entitled to enrol: workers; unemployed people who dropped out of school after the first cycle of education; people wishing to convert their vocational qualifications into equivalent specialisations; people whose family situation prevents them from attending lessons regularly during the day; people registered in the public employment service who want to professional training in line with the requirements of the local labour market.

The reintegration and advancement of adults in training are highly flexible.

Learner Assessment/Progression

The educational offer of upper secondary school courses is highly diversified throughout Italy. Shorter pathways to qualifications are also being experimented, such as those where students begin in the second or third grades, or are exempted from attending certain subjects.

The assessment of adult learners should detect and correct possible mistakes in their study path in order to encourage proper self-evaluation.

Learner assessment and progression takes account of evaluation of skills during the reception phase and that, given the modular format of courses which goes beyond traditional classroom-based learning, study pathways may vary from one learner to the other.

If there is full attendance of a course, current assessment regulations apply. On the other hand, where there is partial attendance, assessment should be based on the general principles in force. However, there should be a clear distinction between students who wish to obtain a qualification and those who are only interested in partial outcomes related to attendance of only a few courses or series of courses.

In the first case, at the end of the school year, learners are tested on the subjects they have not attended before the Class Council which assigns final term marks.

Assessment is based on final term marks and on examination results. In the second case, assessment is carried out on individual subjects and leads to certification for training credits which can be used to attend the following year's course, for admission to examinations for private learners.

Learners who have attended a whole course or part of it and have failed some subjects must repeat the year for those subjects. Conduct is not assessed during the school year or during examinations. Only the learner's actual level of knowledge at the start and end of their course is taken into account.

These courses end with examinations leading to certification in lower or upper secondary education. These examinations are strictly regulated in terms of the tests used and the composition of the examination committees.

Certification

The CTPs issue the following:

- first-cycle education leaving certificate (at the end of lower secondary school courses followed by the relevant State examination);
- certification for the recognition of credits valid for attending evening courses for the obtainment of the upper secondary school leaving certificate and/or vocational qualification diploma.

The evening courses issue what follows:

- upper secondary school leaving certificate;
- vocational qualification diploma.

Teaching Methods and Approaches

Teaching methods and approaches should be based on school autonomy and teaching freedom provisions. Flexibility and personalisation are at the basis of curricula and course planning, supported by technologies able to stimulate interest and participation: the reception, listening and guidance phases may allow for a modular structure for every enrolled learner, through the so called 'training pact'. A modular educational offer is therefore favoured and the use of laboratories and new ICT is fundamental.

6.3. Programmes Aimed at the Development of Basic, Social and Cultural Skills

This course category includes:

- courses for the linguistic and social integration of foreign nationals;
- modular courses and functional literacy courses.

Admission Requirements

Admission requirements depend on the course.

Learner Assessment/Progression

All courses in this category can be organised freely in terms of timetables, methods and learner evaluation criteria. Decisions are taken by school managers and in accordance with legal requirements (minimum number of teaching days and hours, etc.) and taking into account the kind of certificate issued at the end of the course.

Certification

Permanent Territorial Centres and evening course providers issue attendance certificates for language courses for foreign nationals and/or short modular courses and/or functional literacy courses.

Certificates reflect the types of courses attended. Certificates issued at the end of short modular courses – a very diverse category – range from participation or attendance statements to certification within an official skills framework, as in the case of ICT or language courses. As autonomous entities, schools can make agreements with certifying bodies or private entities to issue certificates in compliance with a certain standard such as the Italian Association for Information Technology and Automatic Calculation - AICA – which issues the European Computer Driving Licence – ECDL; or various universities which issue certificates, for example CILS, PLIDA, for Italian L2).

With the exception of qualifications issued at the end of ordinary study courses, a nationally recognised certification framework has not been developed yet. The regions are responsible for developing frameworks for certification, assessment and the recognition of skills; these frameworks are valid at regional level.

Teaching Methods and Approaches

Teaching methods and approaches depend on the relevant courses; however, the criteria valid for qualification courses also apply in these cases.

6.4. The New Provincial Adult Education Centres (CPIA)

According to the new regulations, the former Permanent Territorial Centres and 'evening courses' will merge into the Provincial Adult Education Centres (*Centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti* – CPIA). The new Centres will be organised into service networks, mainly at provincial level. They have the same autonomy as mainstream schools, their own staff and collegiate bodies suited to the specific nature of users. Centres work in close collaboration with local authorities and the labour and professional markets. Centres provide their own educational offer.

Italian and foreign adults who have not completed compulsory education or have no first-cycle (primary plus lower secondary education) leaving certificate can enrol in the Centres. Foreign adults of working age, including those with certificates issued in their country of origin, can enrol in literacy courses and Italian language courses. Centres

can enrol 16-year-olds who do not possess a first-cycle certificate. Centres can also admit 15-year-old learners, but only in exceptional and justified circumstances and where specific agreements between the Regions and the Regional School Offices are in place.

Courses for adults are organised as follows:

- first-level courses for first-cycle qualifications and certification of the basic skills competences to be acquired by the end of compulsory education;
- second-level courses for technical, vocational and artistic qualifications;
- literacy courses and Italian language courses directed at foreign adults for language certification attesting the acquisition of a level higher than A2 of the Common European framework of reference for languages.

Specific measures on workload and timetables are in place to meet the needs of learners:

- reception and guidance activities aimed at establishing an 'Individual training agreement' for a maximum of 10% of the overall number of hours;
- acknowledgment of credits acquired, learners' knowledge and skills acquired formally, non-formally and informally;
- personalisation of the study path related to the level of the course, which can also be completed the subsequent year, according to the provisions of the individual training agreement;
- overall number of learning hours corresponding to 70% of the number for equivalent mainstream courses;
- distance learning, corresponding to a maximum of 20% of the overall learning hours.

The Italian Eurydice Unit

The Italian Eurydice unit has been working since 1985 as part of the education information network in Europe, on behalf of the Ministry of Education, University and Research. It is part of the Erasmus+ National Agency, hosted by INDIRE.

In addition to collecting information and documentation for the network at national level on topics dealt with at European level, the main task of the Italian unit is to develop detailed reports on the reform and innovation processes in other European education and training systems, in order to support Italian policy makers in their national policy decisions.

As part of this activity, the Italian unit carries out comparative analyses at European level of the issues most relevant to the national debate. It publishes the "*I Quaderni di Eurydice*" series and the "*Bollettino di informazione internazionale*" in partnership with the Ministry of Education, University and Research.

Furthermore, the Italian unit constantly updates and disseminates information on the Italian education and training system on Eurypedia, the online encyclopedia of the European education and training systems in the Eurydice network.

More information on the Italian Eurydice unit and its publications are available online at: www.indire.it/eurydice

The Eurydice Network

Since 1980, the Eurydice network has been one of the strategic mechanisms established by the European Commission and Member States to support European cooperation in the field of education. Since 2014, Eurydice has been included in Erasmus+, the EU programme for education, training, youth and sport. It is an action of Key Action 3 (Support for policy reform) of the programme.

It consists of 40 national units based in 36 countries participating in the EU's Erasmus+ programme (EU Member States, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Norway, Serbia* and Turkey). It is co-ordinated and managed by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels, which drafts its studies and provides a range of online resources.

The Eurydice Network's task is to understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work. The network provides descriptions of national education systems (particularly through Eurypedia, the European Encyclopedia on national education systems), comparative studies devoted to specific topics, indicators and statistics. All Eurydice publications are available free of charge on the Eurydice website or in print upon request. Through its work, Eurydice aims to promote understanding, cooperation, trust and mobility at European and international levels.

For more information about Eurydice, see <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice>

* Agreement to participate in Erasmus+ is not yet effective.

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