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A survey of language learning/teaching with an overview of activities in Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic

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A SURVEY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING/TEACHING WITH AN OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES IN ITALY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

This publication summarizes the key findings of the survey carried out by INDIRE in collaboration with representatives from the European Commission. It is divided into two parts: the first part introduces a range of activities related to language teaching/learning, including CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), carried out by INDIRE and the Italian Ministry of Education during the pandemic and outlines a theoretical and methodological background to this study. The second part reports the findings from the survey and provides recommendations.

Il volume raccoglie i principali risultati della survey promossa da INDIRE con la collaborazione di rappresentanti della Commissione Europea. La pubblicazione è caratterizzata da una prima parte introduttiva che raccoglie le attività relative all'insegnamento/apprendimento delle lingue, includendo modalità CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), condotte da INDIRE e dal Ministero dell'Istruzione durante la pandemia e offre un inquadramento teorico e metodologico all'indagine. La seconda parte comprende l'analisi dei risultati della survey e fornisce raccomandazioni finali.

A survey of language learning/teaching with an overview of activities in Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic

A report by INDIRE with the support of representatives from the European Commission

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PART 1 – THE BACKGROUND

1.1. Foreword

Kristina Cunningham
Senior Expert, European Commission

Excellent language competences are fundamental for school success, as all education begins with language. In the words of the European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya Gabriel, that "all learners can achieve their full potential, regardless of their socio-economic background or personal situation, it is essential to make European societies fairer, more inclusive and better prepared for the future."

The idea of education as the main vehicle for equity and inclusion is the guiding principle for the achievement of the European Education Area. *The Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages*[1], adopted by the Education Ministers of the EU Member States in May 2019, was an important building block in this process. The Recommendation takes account of Europe's complicated linguistic landscape and of the current super-diversity in our schools. The objectives set out in the Recommendation and the policy measures proposed, are to a large extent in line with the more recent Recommendation by the Committee of Ministers to the Member States of the Council of Europe on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture.

These policy documents demonstrate a high degree of agreement between policy makers and education authorities across Europe, about the necessity to invest in and to facilitate better language education. It begins with awareness of language policy in schools and a greater openness for multilingualism as an asset and a tool to make learners more comfortable with using more than one language. This is very encouraging and a big step compared to previous monolingual mindsets.

However, it is at the level of schools and other education institutions that these Recommendations will be applied to the teaching and learning that take place there. This report provides a reality check and background knowledge about the conditions for language teaching in Italy. The scenario and conditions for successful language teaching is different to those of other Member States, but there are challenges and principles that are universal, as Terry Lamb points out in his conclusions.

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[1] https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/improving-quality-equity/multilingualism/comprehensive-approach-teaching-learning

The fact that the survey took place during the school lockdown imposed as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic during 2020 and 2021, sheds additional light on the use of on-line tools and digital teaching methods used for language education. These findings can be analysed in the light of the European Commission's Digital Education Action Plan and will have a bearing on the more general shift towards more online and distance learning in primary and secondary education.

One question raised in the conclusions is the relative lack of ambition concerning the level to achieve for the first foreign language learned in school. This is generally English in Italy, as in most other EU Member States. The spirit of the EU Council Recommendation is to develop proficiency in the first foreign language to a level very close to that of the main language of schooling, regardless if this is the mother tongue or a foreign language of the student.

From 2025, English competences among 15 year olds will be possible to assess through a voluntary PISA module along with reading, maths and science. In practice, this means that the first foreign language will be considered as a basic skill, along with literacy in the language of schooling. We believe that this will be an important step to consider bilingualism normal and to make it easier to learn and maintain further languages. It is nice to see an overwhelming support for such an approach in this report.

On behalf of the European Commission, I would like to thank the team behind this survey in Italy for their passion and dedication to language teaching and learning and for their tireless efforts to contribute to better practices and to support the teaching staff. Immense gratitude also goes to Professor Terry Lamb for his invaluable insights and reflections on the findings of this report.

1.2. Preface

Flaminio Galli
Director General, INDIRE

INDIRE[2], the National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research in Italy has developed a wide range of initiatives in recent years to support Italian teachers to focus on innovative teaching methods and classroom practice. The aim was to move away from the old-fashioned top-down delivery approach towards more active, interactive and student-centred teaching methodologies.

These are among the aims of the "Educational Avant-Guarde Movement[3]", an educational movement, now involving more than 1300 schools all over Italy, aimed at spreading innovation in different areas: school organization, learning environments and teaching methodologies.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the school networks of the "Educational Avant-Guarde Movement" set up a very active community of practice, with the aim of sharing ideas, practices and suggestions about remote and blended teaching solutions. A wide range of webinars[4] were run by expert teachers and school leaders sharing different solutions adopted to cope with the emergency. A high number of webinars were focused on learning technologies for language learning and for CLIL. They were run by language teachers and CLIL teachers, presenting effective teaching methods adopted for remote and blended learning. These included online debate, synchronous and asynchronous webtools and applications, collaborative platforms and digital boards, which were adopted to foster interaction and communication online, providing meaningful opportunities for using the language for authentic tasks and projects.

A recent initiative carried out by INDIRE is the "Library of Innovation[5]" ("Biblioteca dell'Innovazione"), a repository of tutorials, videos and other material produced by the schools during the pandemic. It aimed to provide teachers with practical ideas and input to face the challenges of the ever-evolving educational scenarios linked to the pandemic. Foreign languages and CLIL are among the topics included in the Library and specific filters will show all the available material.

The survey launched by INDIRE with the endorsement of the European Commission was planned within this context, with the aim of collecting the

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[2] https://www.indire.it/
[3] http://innovazione.indire.it/avanguardieeducative/
[4] https://www.indire.it/didattica-a-distanza-per-docenti-e-studenti/
[5] https://biblioteca.indire.it/home

teachers' reactions and input on a wide range of aspects related to language learning and CLIL during the pandemic.

INDIRE would like to thank the European Commission, and in particular Dr Kristina Cunningham, for her kind support and Inspector Gisella Langé from the Ministry of Education for her collaboration and dedication. We would also like to thank Prof. Terry Lamb, from the University of Westminster, London, ECML consultant and expert, for his invaluable reflections and recommendations and a final thank you goes to Sarah Ellis for her contribution to the final draft of the Report.

1.3. Executive Summary

This report is divided into two parts. The first summarizes the different activities carried out by INDIRE and the Italian Ministry of Education in schools focusing on the role of language teachers in new learning contexts as a result of the pandemic. In the second part the report presents the findings from a survey exploring the knowledge, attitudes and reactions of Italian teachers of languages and/or CLIL with reference to language teaching, learning and assessment in Italian schools.

In the first part there is an overview of how teachers and schools responded to the pandemic emergency thanks to different initiatives organized by the Italian Ministry of Education (TV programmes, language projects inspired by European institutions, action-oriented research, supporting online teaching and learning plus other activities) and INDIRE (webinars, round-tables, panels, teacher training and research projects focusing on language and CLIL methodologies). The variety of activities allowed the creation of different innovative language communities fostering and raising awareness of the importance of plurilingual education.

In the second part the report presents the findings drawn from a nationally representative quantitative survey of 2.805 respondents: 78,4% foreign language teachers, 5,3% CLIL teachers, 9,3% both CLIL and language teachers, 0,9% school leaders, 6,1% others. Respondents were mainly from upper secondary (41,3%) and lower secondary schools (31,9%), however primary teachers were also well represented (25,1%).

This report aims to answer the following three research questions:

RQ1: Are Italian teachers of foreign languages and CLIL teachers familiar with the Italian language policies, norms and reforms, as per the 2019 Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages?

RQ2: What are the teachers' levels of knowledge, attitudes and reactions towards language learning, teaching and assessment?

RQ3: How did foreign language and CLIL teachers deal with the challenge of online, remote and blended language teaching, learning and assessment during the pandemic?

The main findings from the different sections of the questionnaire are summarized below:

- *Section on "Awareness of Language Policy"*
  Italian teachers are generally aware of how language provision is

organized in the school curriculum at different school levels. They are mostly aware of the fact that Italian school curricula are generally not flexible in terms of language provision, apart from specific initiatives activated according to the Italian Law on School Autonomy.

- *Section on "Home Languages"*
  A range of projects on plurilingualism and home languages have been carried out in Italy, however it is recommended that more activities and projects should be activated at all school levels.

- *Section on "Standardized Language Tests":*
  Italian standardized tests of English (INVALSI tests) are generally regarded positively. OECD-PISA language tests would be welcomed for the assessment of listening, oral interaction and reading. The results showed a significant interest in the assessment of oral skills.

- *Section on "CLIL Activities"*
  CLIL is more common at upper secondary school level. However, this is not surprising considering it should be compulsory as a result of the Reform Law. Italian teachers are generally aware of the CLIL teacher profile and the training courses delivered by Italian universities. It should be noted that in-service permanent teachers are required to follow a 20-credit university course on CLIL methodology, whereas participants in initial teacher training are required to complete a 60-credit course.

- *Section on "Teacher Education"*
  Initial teacher training and continuous professional development can be considered an integral part of the Italian teacher profile. However, mobility abroad for training either as a language or CLIL teacher is not very popular and should be encouraged and facilitated. Since a high percentage of respondents declared they had studied abroad using "other funding", it is recommended that more and more initiatives should be promoted to increase participation in European programmes (Erasmus Plus, eTwinning, Epale etc.).

- *Section: "Language Teaching and Learning in COVID times"*
  Almost all the respondents used webtools and platforms for remote teaching during the pandemic. They were generally quite satisfied about this experience, despite all the problems and challenges.
  Oral production and oral interaction proved to be the most challenging skills to develop remotely.
  The use of webtools for online learning and collaboration resulted in teachers' upskilling their digital competences.

1.4. The Italian scenario: resilience and innovation

Gisella Langé,
Foreign Languages Inspector, Italian Ministry of Education

The 4th of March 2020 is a date that people will never forget in Italy: in response to the growing pandemic of COVID-19 all over the country, a Decree issued by the Italian government imposed a total "national lockdown" or quarantine, restricting the movement of the population except for necessity, work, and for health reasons.

Schools all over the country were closed and headteachers, teachers and staff were asked to move to remote teaching, requiring them to reinvent their traditional model of face-to-face classes from one day to the next.

In order to support this unique educational challenge, the Italian Ministry of Education issued decrees and regulations aimed at assisting, guiding and supporting schools in implementing distance delivery of lessons in different ways[6].

General guidelines for schools were developed and new acronyms became part of school life: "didattica a distanza – DAD" (distance teaching) and "didattica digitale integrata" – DDI" (hybrid digital instruction). A ministerial decree dated 7th August 2020 formalised a document of reference, "Linee Guida per la Didattica Digitale Integrata[7]" which offered recommendations and guidelines to support schools.

From the very beginning it was evident that there was a need for a variety of teaching and learning resources to support remote teaching and enable teachers to devote more time to interaction with students, particularly for those in need of greater support.

This is the reason the Ministry immediately focused on building a strong digital learning infrastructure based on platforms of quality educational resources. Interaction with local education authorities and a wide range of other stakeholders led to new offers, positive choices and innovative changes in the provision of education.

The Ministry of Education, INDIRE, RAI TV network, University professors, researchers, educational material and assessment providers, digital and

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[6] A complete list of the different legal norms and regulations can be found at the link https://www.istruzione.it/coronavirus/norme.html
[7] https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/ALL.+A+_+Linee_Guida_DDI_.pdf/f0eeb0b4-bb7e-1d8e-4809-a359a8a7512f?t=1596813131027

online companies and many other stakeholders worked together to find quick solutions to the emergency situation providing support and new opportunities for teachers and students.

1.4.1. The RAI national public TV network

Thanks to increased educational budgets, most teachers and students were able to benefit from the latest advances of digital technology. However, some students were without computers and internet access at home and some lived in areas not covered by mobile networks. This is the reason the Ministry of Education and RAI, the public TV service network, agreed to set up television-based programmes to implement distance education.

The solution proved to be a good alternative in some parts of the country where online learning was not possible: students were informed by their headteachers, teachers and local authorities of scheduled TV lessons on different channels (designed for different school ages) and they would meet in front of a tv-set from 8.30 am until 1.30 p.m. This started from the end of March 2020 and... still continues.

Rai SCUOLA (channel 146), Rai STORIA (channel 54), Rai 3 offered broadcasts for a 14 + audience, whereas Rai GULP (channel 42) and Rai YoYo (channel 43) proposed activities for children aged 3 - 14. These are only some of the broadcasts offered by RAI: a complete list can be found on the Ministry of Education website[8].

Needless to say, the value of these educational broadcasts through television went beyond the needs of students' in full time education since they were also conceived to provide intergenerational learning. Due to the total lock-down, many parents and grand-parents would watch the TV broadcasts together with their children.

1.4.2. *La scuola in tivù*: a new TV programme

A small working group was set up by the Ministry to define the contents of a new TV programme, *La scuola in tivù*, which was designed to meet the needs of teachers and students aged 14+ as closely as possible. A selection of school subjects was chosen. Between March and June 2020 one hundred video lessons for students in licei and technical and vocational schools were produced, targeting the following subjects:

- Foreign languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Russian, Spanish)

- Italian, Latin and Greek, history, geography, philosophy and humanities

- Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)

- Art, music, cinema, performing arts, physical education.

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[8] https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/-/rai-ministero-dell-istruzione-un-offerta-sempre-piu-ricca-per-imparare-in-tv

The recorded video lessons were made available on TV in two time slots and sometimes three, on the RAI SCUOLA channel and also on the web portals RaiCultura, RaiPlay and RaiScuola[9].

This is the first time in the history of the RAI that video lessons were conceived, planned and executed by secondary school teachers identified by the Ministry of Education. It is worth noting that at the very beginning of the lockdown the recordings were made from home with the teachers' own digital resources and only later in a RAI recording studio.

The public's response to this great novelty was very positive: the episodes, which were premiered in the morning from Monday to Friday and repeated in the afternoon within programming bands divided by subject areas, which were watched not only by students and teachers in secondary schools, but also by a wider audience of adults, who for the first time could "enter" a "classroom" to attend lessons in various disciplines.

From the beginning of the emergency period, March 2020, until June 2020 on RAI SCUOLA in the day time slots (morning and afternoon) there was an increase in audience numbers of +50% compared to January 2020.

1.4.3. Languages on TV

A wide range of languages also became available through *La scuola in tivù* delivered by teachers of Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Russian and Spanish who created more than 100 thirty-minute video lessons. Each video lesson lasts about 30 minutes and is made up of 3 units of about 9 minutes each, all available on the TV screen and on the RAI websites. Each unit develops a specific aspect of a macro topic covered in the video lesson and can be viewed separately on Rai websites.

RAI video lessons offer the possibility to foster motivation and interest in the study of foreign languages by proposing a communicative and action-oriented approach as well as focusing on cultural aspects.

The video lessons are arranged according to the levels of linguistic competence of upper secondary school students and two categories of lessons were identified: a) language video lessons and b) culture and CLIL video lessons. This is a practical categorization as it is inevitable that cultural aspects will be covered in the language lesson, and vice versa.

Video lessons can be used both in face-to-face or distance learning contexts. They are therefore widely usable for integrated digital teaching. For example, they can integrate, enrich and complete the teacher's foreign language lessons; they can provide ideas for work in small groups to explore, consolidate and/or revise the topics covered; they can be the basis for flipped classroom activities and finally they can be used as a stimulus for self-study activities.

[9] www.raiscuola.rai.it   www.raiplay.it/programmi/lascuolaintivu   www.raicultura.it

The Culture/CLIL video lessons are recommended for intermediate/advanced language levels (from B1 level onwards). However, they can also be used at lower levels by adapting the activities to the class.

The flipped classroom mode is particularly useful as it allows the video resource to be used to its fullest extent by encouraging learners to work autonomously. For example, the teacher can send students a link to the whole lesson or to a single unit to be watched individually, suggesting stimulus questions on the subject and/or exercises taken from the coursebook. After viewing, the teacher can prepare comprehension questions on the content of the video and/or ask for a short written presentation (done individually or collaboratively) as a real-world task.

There has been great interest in these broadcasts, which have also attracted considerable attention abroad. For example, on the 4th of August 2020 reporter Kong Geil of the *People's Daily Online* devoted an article to RAI's Chinese language lessons[10].

Local newspapers in various regions of Italy have publicized the initiatives with positive comments, especially when the video lesson involved the teacher and the local school. We should not forget that the synergy between the Ministry of Education and RAI was able to happen thanks to willing teachers, but also to the willingness of school headteachers to facilitate the participation.

This successful initiative continued until December 2021: the series also included additional professional sectors (art, hotel and tourism, agriculture, technology, etc.) and a special episode on plurilingualism involving governmental Cultural Organizations from seven different countries[11].

A special mention should finally be made about a RAI daily programme, "#Maestri", created in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. The format is based on "conversations" between a TV presenter and leading experts on culture and science followed by lectures delivered by academics on different topics. Some of these broadcasts focus on languages and plurilingualism.

A special acknowledgement should be given to the interviews by Paolo Balboni from Ca' Foscari University of Venice (*Cosa vuol dire sapere una lingua*[12]; *Apprendere una lingua straniera*[13]; *Lingua e intercultura*[14]); Lucilla Lopriore from Roma3 University (*Come sta cambiando la lingua inglese?*[15]),

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[10] http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0804/c1002-31809579.html

[11] https://www.raiplay.it/video/2021/12/Gli-enti-culturali-per-il-plurilinguismo-74e01e5d-80b1-4913-8467-e0b516d8b68c.html

[12] https://www.raiscuola.rai.it/lingueculturestraniere/articoli/2021/04/Paolo-Balboni-a-Maestri-bccf3b9d-ad6c-46fa-b901-eb6c8ac6b323.html

[13] https://www.raiscuola.rai.it/lingueculturestraniere/articoli/2021/03/Paolo-Balboni-a-Maestri-e85cdd4a-442f-455c-bf5c-9056a9247843.html

[14] https://www.raiscuola.rai.it/lingueculturestraniere/articoli/2021/02/Paolo-Balboni---Lingua-e-intercultura-211d8c02-addb-49e8-8a2d-5ed177a00f24.html

[15] https://www.raiscuola.rai.it/lingueculturestraniere/articoli/2021/10/Lucilla-Lopriore-a-Maestri--d9586e83-e495-4600-8ec2-255ba7d9703f.html

Federico Masini from Sapienza University of Rome (*Parliamo cinese?*[16]),
Serena Vitale, Professor of Russian Literature (*Diavoli Russi*[17]) and Enrica
Piccardo from the University of Toronto (*Plurilinguismo: una nuova via per
la comunicazione*[18]).

These and other conversations helped focus on some "hot topics" about
language learning and teaching and stimulated debates at different levels.
A new TV series filmed in different Italian schools was finally launched in
February 2022: *Laboratorio Scuola (La nuova didattica e il mondo digitale:
metodologie, contenuti, strumenti)*[19] . In this series headteachers, teachers,
students and experts present best practice on new methodologies and
digital tools focusing on online teaching/learning, CLIL, Debate, and other
subjects.

1.4.4. Language projects inspired by European institutions

At the beginning of 2020 two tools came to the virtual desks of
language teacher practitioners (Langé, 2021): the already mentioned
*Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and
learning of languages* adopted by the Education Ministers of the EU Member
States in May 2019 and the *Common European Framework of Reference
for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment – Companion Volume*[20]
published in April 2020 by the Council of Europe.

The *CEFR Companion Volume* (CEFRCV) offered new perspectives for
language education since it included new descriptors for mediation,
online interaction, plurilingual/pluricultural competence, and sign
language competences. The illustrative descriptors have been adapted
with modality-inclusive formulations for sign languages and all descriptors
are now gender-neutral.

This publication marks a crucial step in the Council of Europe's engagement
with language education, which seeks to protect linguistic and cultural
diversity, promote plurilingual and intercultural education, reinforce the
right to quality education for all, and enhance intercultural dialogue, social
inclusion and democracy.

The 2020 CEFRCV updates and extends the 2001 CEFR which was designed
to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the:

[16] https://www.raiscuola.rai.it/lingueeculturestraniere/articoli/2021/10/Federico-Masini-a-Maestri--49789bcc-5105-45cc-84d4-f4fbc710c69b.html
[17] https://www.raiscuola.rai.it/lingueeculturestraniere/articoli/2021/11/Serena-Vitale-a-Maestri--f7fdef87-8bb6-489e-9ff4-1d8873cfd0cd.html
[18] https://www.raiscuola.rai.it/lingueeculturestraniere/articoli/2021/11/Enrica-Piccardo-a-Maestri--77b518b7-14f7-42e8-b271-06ab0441fa52.html
[19] Full TV episodes: https://www.raiplay.it/programmi/laboratorioscuola
Separate units: https://www.raiscuola.rai.it/percorsi/laboratorioscuola
[20] https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages

- elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines;
- design of teaching and learning materials;
- assessment of foreign language proficiency.

The 2001 CEFR has been translated into over 40 languages and is used all over Europe and in other continents. The translation of the CEFRCV into ten different languages is in progress while the translation into Italian was published by Università degli Studi di Milano in December 2020[21]. This translated volume has enabled Italian teachers of all languages to work together to organize multilingual projects.

1.4.5. Trialling online interaction

The importance of digital and multimedia resources and tools to support and enhance the teaching and learning process in 21st century schools, led the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), in collaboration with INDIRE, in January 2018 to develop a research pilot project aimed at trialling and observing online interaction among students. Activities were organized within the same class and/or in different classes and/or different countries, using English as means of communication and interaction. The project was carried out with a sample of primary, lower and upper secondary schools in Italy, focusing on the descriptors "Online Interaction" and "Collaborating in a Group" from the 2017 *Provisional Edition of the CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors.*

The pilot project was carried out in nine Italian regions where 20 English language teachers (plus some CLIL subject teachers) were asked to plan and trial activities in their classes involving online CLIL-oriented tasks, preferably within online international projects such as eTwinning. The aim was to enhance the international dimension of the curriculum and foster new ways and new channels of communication.

Following the project coordinators' guidelines offered by both concept papers and online meetings, the teachers planned and implemented creative and innovative tasks facilitating online interactions in English among students. Teachers were also asked to observe and document their student's interaction, using their favourite tools: note-taking, making videos, taking pictures, etc.

At the end of the pilot project, the teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire with closed and open questions on a Likert scale, adapted from a template created with the support of Dr. Brian North, CEFR expert at the Council of Europe.

The opportunity to experience interactive and student-centred methods in authentic environments also enabled teachers to gain insights into

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[21] Quadro comune europeo di riferimento per le lingue: Apprendimento, Insegnamento, Valutazione. Volume Complementare. Available at: https://rm.coe.int/quadro-comune-europeo-di-riferimento-per-le-lingue-apprendimento-inseg/1680a52d52

their own self-efficacy in using new tools for discussion and interaction. The choice of focusing on the descriptor scales for "Online Interaction" and "Collaborating in a Group" of the *Companion Volume* was considered positively by the teachers because they were offered the opportunity, not only to reflect on their students' learning and communication strategies, but also to strengthen their own teaching and collaborative techniques, thus improving the teaching/learning process.

The outcomes of the pilot project have been published in an article[22], in a volume[23] and disseminated in face to face and distance seminars as an example of how crucial the digital dimension can be in the language learning and teaching agenda. This pilot has also been included as a case study in a publication of the Council of Europe to be released in 2022 (online and paper versions).

It is worth noting that since this pilot project was developed before the pandemic crisis, valuable hints and suggestions were given to both organizing institutions (INDIRE and the Ministry of Education) on how to deal with online interactions during the COVID-19 emergency.

1.4.6. Supporting online learning and teaching

Since the onset of the COVID-19 lockdowns, educators were required to transition first to emergency remote teaching, and then to become developers and disseminators of fully online courses. In 2020 this unique challenge was matched with an equally unique opportunity for educational stakeholders to rethink what quality in education means by seeking new ways to promote community, adaptability, and inclusivity online.

With such a sudden shift to online learning, teachers and learners found themselves struggling to adapt to the absence of the socially interactive dimension, which is crucial in language learning, and they needed sustained expert support to avoid relying on outdated pedagogical approaches, which would be detrimental to the learning process.

Within this context, in May 2020 the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education - University of Toronto (OISE), which specializes in teacher education and research in language education, decided to participate in an initiative launched by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (a Federal Research Centre) entitled "Partnership Engage Grants COVID-19 Special Initiative".

The project was based on previous research conducted in 2015-2019 and led by Dr. Enrica Piccardo from OISE, the LINguistic and Cultural DIversity

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[22] Gisella Langé, Letizia Cinganotto, Fausto Benedetti, *Interazione online: una sperimentazione italiana*, Italiano L2, Anno 12/1 2020. Available at: https://riviste.unimi.it/index.php/promoitals/article/view/13948/13090

[23] Fausto Benedetti, Letizia Cinganotto, Gisella Langé, *L'interazione online nel Companion Volume del Quadro Comune Europeo di Riferimento per le Lingue. Un progetto pilota italiano.* INDIRE, 2020. Available at: https://www.indire.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Volume-Companion-07.07.pdf

REinvented project (LINCDIRE)[24]. This project had developed resources and an online plurilingual tool called LITE[25] (Language Integration Through E-Portfolio) to foster action-oriented pedagogy.

OISE proposed a partnership to the Lombardy Regional Education Authority (Ufficio Scolastico Regionale per la Lombardia) as the first region in Europe to be heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in February 2020. Lombardy was also the first region outside China that had gone into unplanned quarantine. The sudden shift to online teaching presented challenges that could only be solved or improved by using action-oriented, innovative language teaching tools such as the ones developed by the LINCDIRE project.

The goal of the research project was to advance current knowledge on online collaborative, action-based pedagogies for language teaching. Action-based approaches, which have proved effective in improving students' engagement and language proficiency, focus on the use of languages in the class through meaningful tasks and projects encouraging learners to use and develop their linguistic and cultural resources.

The Lombardy Regional Education Authority found the proposal an effective way for the improvement of online language teaching and the practical application of innovative online pedagogies. The motto was: "let's build teacher confidence with action-oriented approaches while teaching online".

The goal of this project was therefore to investigate factors that support or hinder the adoption of collaborative action-based pedagogies in online language teaching practices. The main activities were:

- collect information from public schools to identify challenges related to online language teaching;

- support teachers in the implementation of online action-oriented resources in their classes;

- identify successful strategies used in the implementation of online action-based language pedagogies;

- prepare a guiding document with selected case studies aiming to support teachers in innovating online language pedagogy;

- design a decision-making simulation case that can be used by teachers, curriculum developers and decision-makers in response to emergency situations;

- foster an international culturally and linguistically diverse community for language teachers.

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[24] https://www.lincdireproject.org/
[25] https://lite.lincdireproject.org/it/

The project *Supporting online language learning: Fostering pedagogical innovation in a time of crisis*[26] was approved by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Since September 2020, a project team of experts of different nationalities from OISE (Dr. Enrica Piccardo as general coordinator) and the Lombardy Regional Education Authority (Inspector Gisella Langé as scientific coordinator) have organized the different phases of the project which began with the training of 12 Italian Team Leaders and one hundred teachers of different languages from primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools.

In the school year 2020/21 Italian teachers of English, French, German, Italian L2 and Spanish worked on action-oriented multilingual scenarios using the CEFRCV descriptors and content and tools from the LITE platform.

The OISE researchers, the Team Leaders, the teachers and the project coordinators are currently working to produce a publication which will be released in 2022 about the different activities and outcomes of the project.

In 2022 the project will be implemented in new schools in Lombardy and in two other Italian regions (Lazio and Campania) thanks to funding from the Ministry of Education.

To sum up, the project will offer educational institutions and decision makers new strategies and best practice for engaging young people in their language learning using an approach that promotes social change. It will also build institutional capacity to be more responsive to the need for implementing online teaching under external pressure while maintaining sound collaborative pedagogies in multilingual contexts. In addition, learners from different socio-economic backgrounds, who may experience marginalization, will be more engaged in ways that are meaningful and connected to their everyday lives.

1.4.7. The new role of online communities

Over the past two years the Covid-19 pandemic has proven to be a catalyst for the growing importance of online communities. Schools' abrupt move to eLearning strengthened the digital literacy of students and teachers. For this to become a reality, educators needed new digital tools and platforms. Thanks to the engagement of digital and online providers (for example Google and Microsoft) new spaces and new environments were created where educators could connect using different tools.

Moving classes to an online environment implied inventing new ways to build community for trainers, teachers and learners. Educators then focused on how to:

[26] https://www.lingueculture.net/progetti-internazionali/
https://www.lingueculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Progetto-Universita-di-Toronto-USR-per-la-Lombardia.zip

- create a safe and welcoming environment
- facilitate learning from others' experiences
- help those members of the classroom community who may be experiencing different challenges
- organize spaces where teachers and students could "live" and work productively.

Many different forms and modalities of online communities came into life. Online communities can be considered successful if they are able to create spaces for their members to connect, since connection is the basis of any community, no matter where it is located. Within these contexts, key words for community members are "purpose" and "strong sense of belonging".

During the past two years the ability of experts working for international/ national organizations and institutions, university professors, researchers, trainers and school teachers to share proposals and work together on projects has led to the creation of four significant communities based around the:

a. 2019 Language Recommendation
b. CERFCV descriptors on online interaction and mediation
c. CertiLingua® quality label for students
d. CLIL/EMILE global community.

Thanks to the **2019 Language Recommendation**, different publications and webinars were organized by the European Commission to implement the "comprehensive approach" to foster linguistic diversity and support the development of students' multilingual competences. In particular two reports were released in the summer of 2020: the first, *The future of language education in Europe. Case studies of innovative practices* (European Commission, 2020a)[27], gathered case studies from different nationalities and the second, *Education begins with language* (European Commission, 2020b)[28] made recommendations from a programme of seminars with peer learning to support the implementation of the Council Recommendation.

Webinars and events were organized to disseminate both the Recommendation and the reports. These were opportunities for innovative practitioners to meet and activate new relationships and exchanges. One of the events which launched the latter report was the celebration of the European Day of Languages held in Bruxelles on 28th September, 2020[29]. This event and the 2021 EDL event were streamed live and recorded[30] and the languages of communication were English, French, German and Italian.

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[27] https://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/NESET_AR_2020_Future-of-language-education_Full-report.pdf
[28] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6b7e2851-b5fb-11ea-bb7a-01aa75ed71a1/language-en
[29] https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/european-day-of-languages-am
[30] https://education.ec.europa.eu/events? https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-216826

Since the dissemination of both reports connections among educators have evolved, both at national and international level. A special mention and thank you goes to Kristina Cunningham for her invaluable contribution to creating an active European language community.

As mentioned previously, the **CERFCV descriptors on online interaction and mediation** were and are a source of inspiration for many different projects. Thanks to the valuable guidance of two experts, Dr. Brian North and Dr. Enrica Piccardo, teams of University professors (a special acknowledgement goes to the State University of Milan), researchers, trainers and teachers have found new ways of developing research and class activities. Transcontinental collaboration (the University of Toronto and the Lombardy Regional Education Authority) has built new bridges: interconnected teams are continuously producing and exchanging multilingual materials and upskilling Italian Team Leaders' and teachers' professional competences.

The **CertiLingua® European network**[31] is a network of schools in nine different countries committed to providing students with high-quality language education. The network issues a quality certificate to students who have attained a minimum B2 level of competence in two languages in schools that offer Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) classes and organize opportunities for intercultural experiences. The CertiLingua® 'Label of Excellence' is awarded to students and schools that fulfil the programme's criteria and standards. Needless to say, CertiLingua® promotes the development of the skills necessary for social and professional interaction in an international context. In Italy the programme is coordinated by the Curriculum Directorate General of the Ministry of Education: a national committee organizes activities with the help of CertiLingua® regional coordinators. In the past two years the network has grown both at national and international level thanks to the active use of new tools and platforms both for project management and for teacher training[32]. Instead of one or two international/national meetings held yearly, the different member states have organized a large number of webinars and have developed new guidelines for virtual intercultural exchanges for students and schools.

To briefly summarize: during the pandemic a real CertiLingua® community of administrators, teachers, students and other stakeholders has been activated.

The **CLIL/EMILE global community** has been a reality for many years thanks to researchers, educators and practitioners who work closely together across continents. The lack of mobility and recent scientific research and surveys led a group of professors from different parts of the world to focus on the positive impact on mind and brain for those

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[31] https://www.certilingua.net/
[32] https://www.lingueculture.net/certilingua-2/

who know more than one language. Under the guide of David Marsh, *The Impact of Language Learning on Mind and Brain*[33] was released at the end of 2020 in different languages: the publication reveals that there are six key advantages for people who use more than one language and the advantages relate to our neural architecture and memory, how we think, learn, understand other people, solve problems, and safely navigate the information-rich digital world. This paper provides a summary of the key issues involved in understanding success drivers for languages in education. It argues that knowledge of more than one language, even if partial, can provide people with advantages not accessible to monolinguals. Needless to say, the discussion of this paper in and among different countries offers the opportunity to focus more and more on how to develop global competences so that young people can thrive in an interconnected world.

A final consideration: in March 2020 moving to an online environment meant educators needed to deconstruct the existing models, strategies and practices and invent new ways to organize teaching and learning. Language educators were required to build on students' linguistic repertoires for learning and to activate positive transfer of skills and concepts.

The Ministry of Education, INDIRE, RAI TV network, University professors, researchers, educational material and assessment providers, digital and online companies and many other stakeholders found effective solutions to support and provide new opportunities for teachers and students.

As a result, the efforts and resilience of devoted, passionate and committed educators and other stakeholders has led to the creation of innovative language communities and the increased understanding of the importance of plurilingual education.

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[33] Marsh D., Díaz-Pérez, W., Frigols Martín, M.J., Langé, G., Pavón Vázquez, V., Trindade, C. (2020). *The Bilingual Advantage: The Impact of Language Learning on Mind & Brain.* Jyväskylä: EduCluster Finland, University of Jyväskylä Group. Available at: https://educlusterfinland.fi/bilingual-advantage/

1.5. Online training models during the emergency

Fausto Benedetti,
Research Director, INDIRE

In order to meet the challenges of the pandemic, INDIRE and Università Telematica degli Studi IUL[34] (the online university established by INDIRE in collaboration with the University of Foggia) organized and implemented new training models to support teachers in these unprecedented times. Key concepts included knowledge building within professional and academic courses focusing on quality, assessment, in-training services, learning communities, situated learning, problem solving and capacity building.

The Università Telematica degli Studi IUL increased the number of the different training initiatives for teachers offering webinars, refresher courses, "TeachMeet" events and other online sessions, thus creating a true community of practice where learning takes place "anytime, anywhere" and teachers can find digital content, videos and other resources to plan and implement effective digital teaching paths.

An e-learning platform using collaborative and discussion tools such as forums, blogs, and wikis represents the core of the training model, which aims at creating a Personal Learning Environment (PLE) to plan and implement tailored learning pathways in accordance with the particular learning style of each learner (Cinganotto, Benedetti, 2021). The main features of the models created at Università Telematica degli Studi IUL are: personalization and flexibility, institutional learning and communication tools; environments offering the mashup of services. Social networks enhanced and spread the learning events to a wider audience.

Live events were recorded and made available for asynchronous delivery in the form of videos, often with subtitles when they are in a foreign language. Specific guidelines for videos in terms of length, structure, equipment etc. were provided. Recordings were generally edited later to ensure lectures were effective and engaging. Keywords, graphs and visuals were often inserted into the videos to facilitate understanding of the content.

INDIRE and Università Telematica degli Studi IUL made every effort to support Italian teachers and school leaders during COVID-19 times.

The main findings of the survey on languages are reported and analysed in this publication. INDIRE and IUL institutional channels and media launched

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[34] https://www.iuline.it/

and divulged the survey. In addition, the European Commission published the survey on the platform "School Education Gateway[35]".

As IUL and INDIRE pay particular attention to all curricular school subjects as well as to language learning and CLIL, this is the reason the findings of this report are particularly important. It is also hoped the report will inspire teachers and help them develop a deeper language awareness and a better understanding of the importance of plurilingualism and linguistic diversity. Finally, this volume aims to motivate teachers to embrace innovative methodologies such as CLIL, in any educational scenario, and to facilitate the use of learning technologies.

[35] https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/index.htm

1.6. Projects and initiatives by INDIRE and IUL during the pandemic

Letizia Cinganotto, *PhD*
Senior Researcher, INDIRE

An outline of the latest projects and initiatives carried out at national and international level in the field of language learning and CLIL, will be described in this section with particular reference to those carried out by INDIRE and by Università Telematica degli Studi IUL during the pandemic.

1.6.1. PTDL & HLD projects

In the school year 2020-21 INDIRE launched two pilot projects on language learning, involving a sample of schools, with the aim to pilot two international models. These models are recognized by the European Commission in the fore mentioned 2019 Council Recommendation for a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages: PTDL (*Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning*) and HLD (*Healthy Linguistic Diet*).

"Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning[36]" (PTDL) fosters a model created by Oliver Meyer, Do Coyle, Kevin Schuck and other experts from the Graz Group[37] (Coyle, Meyer, 2021). The project is included within the initiatives organized by the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (ECML) in Graz. The model shows teachers and material developers ways of enhancing deep learning focusing on both the development of students' subject specific literacies and their conceptual understanding and automatization of subject-specific procedures, skills and strategies. Students analyze their evolving understanding and communicate this in increasingly sophisticated ways, thus internalizing their understanding and assimilating ways of acting and thinking. According to the experts, PTDL not only makes the links between content and language learning visible, but it also shows how teachers can create learning trajectories taking students' current abilities as a starting point, and tracing their progress along the learning pathway.

Three Italian upper secondary schools were selected as a result of a public tender, to pilot the PTDL project. Each school appointed a project coordinator and a project team of teachers. They were guided by the international experts

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[36] https://pluriliteracies.ecml.at/
[37] Letizia Cinganotto is a member of the PTDL consultancy team: www.pluriliteracies.com

of the project, Oliver Meyer, from University of Meinz and Kevin Schuck, ECML project coordinator and by INDIRE research group (Letizia Cinganotto, Raffaella Carro, Laura Messini), to plan and implement PTDL deep learning episodes according to their specific school contexts.

An online platform provided video-lectures given by experts as well as self-study materials, designed to provide the main features of the PTDL model.

All the teachers involved in the project had the opportunity to interact, share ideas, comments and experiences with their colleagues, the experts and the researchers.

The kick-off webinar was held in November 2020 with the objective of introducing the three school project coordinators and project teams to each other, thus facilitating the creation of a Community of Practice related to the project. The following: Gisella Langé, Oliver Meyer, Kevin Schuck, were guest speakers in the webinar.

HLD, acronym for Healthy Linguistic Diet is the second pilot project which offers an approach to language learning conceptualized and developed by Dina Mehmedbegovic-Smith, University College London and Thomas Bak, University of Edinburgh (Bak, Mehmedbegovic-Smith, 2017; Bak, Mehmedbegovic-Smith, 2021).

"This approach is based on an analogy between physical and mental health. According to Bak and Mehmedbegovic-Smith, regular physical activity and a healthy diet are important factors in maintaining physical health. In the same way, the learning of languages and their regular use provide essential mental exercise, leading to better brain health and an increase in "cognitive reserve" resulting in a later onset of dementia and improve cognitive outcome after a stroke.

HLD is aimed at initiating and facilitating a shift in thinking about learning another language/other languages as a key skill or an academic subject. Research confirms that using two languages is a key ingredient in our cognitive development and well-being.

According to the authors of the model, the main focus of HLD is on developing life-long habits of learning and using at least two, ideally three or more, languages, based on awareness that such activities will help us equip our brains for enhanced cognitive functioning from early years to advanced age. These habits will result in better focus during early childhood, superior educational attainment and improved quality of intellectual life in adulthood and advanced age.

An important part of the HLD mission is to reach out to children, parents, communities with accessible knowledge on cognitive benefits of bilingualism. The main goal is to make the benefits of using two languages as widely known as the health guidance: two litres of water a day!"[38]

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[38] http://healthylinguisticdiet.com/

The research started with a study visit to Scoil Bhríde Cailíní, a school in Dublin where HLD is used in practice (Little, Kirwan, 2019).

Three schools were selected to be involved in the project.

Similarly to the PTDL project, each school appointed a project coordinator and a project team of teachers. They were guided by Dina Mehmedbegovic-Smith, the official consultant of the project and by the INDIRE research group in planning and implementing HLD learning scenarios according to their specific school contexts.

The kick-off webinar with experts and researchers, including Gisella Langé and Dina Mehmedbegovic-Smith as guest speakers, was held in November 2020.

Online seminars about HLD and PTDL projects were held at FIERA DIDACTA 2021, the most important event in Italy focusing on education and learning technologies.

HLD and PTDL are only two examples of projects carried out entirely online during the pandemic, fostering language learning and teaching and supporting teachers in these unprecedented times.

1.6.2. The webinar with representatives from the European Commission

INDIRE, in collaboration with Università Telematica degli Studi IUL organized a wide range of webinars, panels, round tables and other online initiatives on language learning and CLIL with the aim of sharing ideas and good practice at national and international level.

Among the different initiatives, it is worth mentioning the webinar held on 13 May 2020, with Michael Teutsch, Hannah Grainger Clemson and Kristina Cunningham as special guests from the European Commission[39], which provided an overview of schools in different European countries during the pandemic, covering the following areas:

• Infrastructure and digital devices

• Supporting students with remote schooling

• Supporting teachers with remote teaching

• Examinations and Assessment

• Supporting SEN students

• Aspects related to school closure.

One of the activities proposed by the European Commission representatives during the webinar was an interactive activity, aimed at engaging the

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[39] https://www.indire.it/2020/05/07/la-commissione-europea-a-supporto-dellemergenza-educativa-webinar-iul-mercoledi-13-maggio/

participants in sharing their ideas and opinions on the online tool "padlet". They were asked to answer the following questions: "What have you learnt? What is important, in your opinion, for the future of education?" (see the following Figure).

Figure 1.1: Padlet from the webinar with the European Commission

Participants' input was collected on the padlet and the main keywords summarizing the teachers' posts can be listed as follows:

- Flexibility
- Resilience
- Webtools and digital devices
- Community of practice.

Here is a selection of some of the comments, highlighting the teachers' positive reactions to the challenges which ultimately may lead to some good practice for the future, building on flexibility, resilience and growth mindset.

"The future will be an opportunity to improve ability, knowledge and competences of students, and teachers too".

"The world has changed and whatever we will go back to, will not be the same".

"I have learnt that is important to use webtools and digital devices".

"If we are all resilient, we can teach resiliance to our students".

Communities of practice can represent a valid support for teachers during this challenging period, as reported by the following comment:

"We are creating a supportive and larger community of professionals and practitioners".

Two other polls were launched during the webinar and are reported in the figures below.

In Figure 1.2 in answer to the following question: "Out of the 7 issues described, which has seemed the most challenging so far?" results mainly focused on four of the most challenging aspects of remote teaching:

- Inclusion of disadvantaged learners (31%)
- Assessment and examinations (24%)
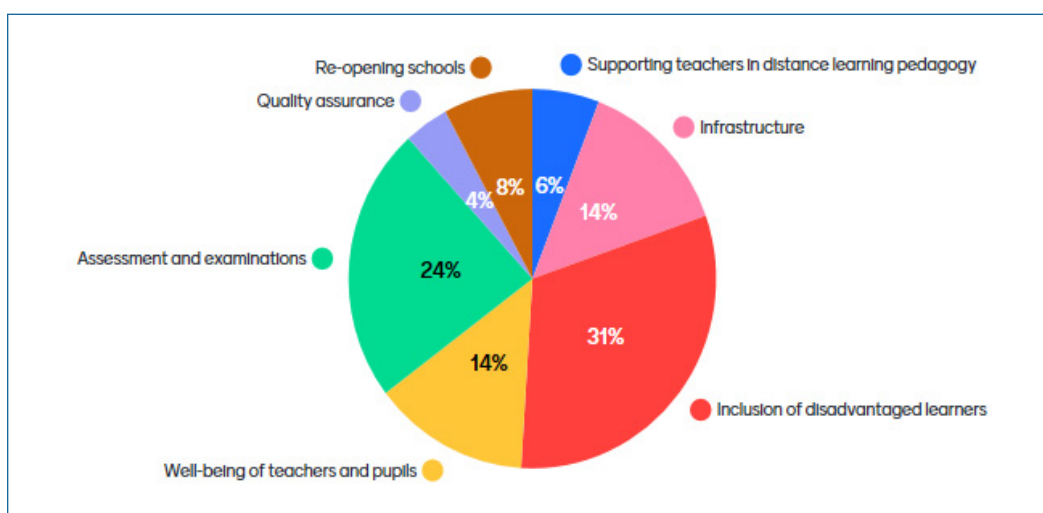- Well-being of teachers and pupils (14%)
- Infrastructure (14%).

Figure 1.2: Challenging issues during the pandemic based on 84 replies.
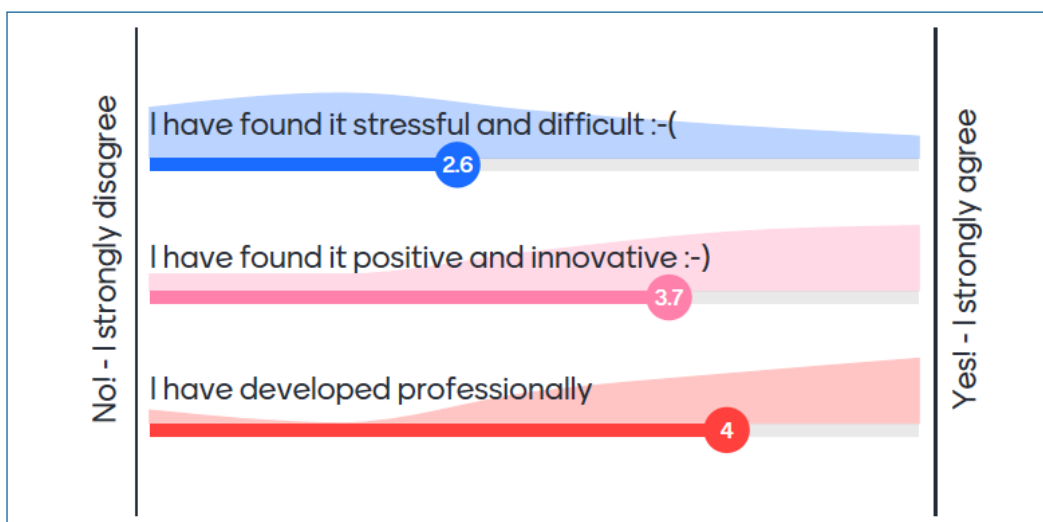

Figure 1.3 : The teaching experience during the pandemic

The participants who answered the poll defined their teaching experience during the pandemic as a positive and an innovative step for their professional development, but also as a stressful and difficult period of their life as figure 1.3 illustrates.

1.6.3. CLIL initiatives carried out by IUL

In addition to the previously mentioned activities, during the pandemic Università Telematica degli Studi IUL organized an online postgraduate course on CLIL methodology offering a wide range of webinars, round tables and panel discussions with experts. This was delivered fully online in the academic years 2019-20 and 2020-21 and was based on previous online experiences (Langé, Cinganotto, 2014; Cinganotto, 2016; Cinganotto 2021a; Cinganotto, Benedetti, 2021; Graziano et al., 2021).

The aim was to create an active Community of Practice, which shared ideas, good practice and resources as well as learning from each other.

This was the starting point of the "CLIL TeachMeet" webinar, which took place on 5 June 2020 and was attended by more than 150 teachers.

The presenters were CLIL teachers willing to share their remote CLIL teaching experience in a five-minute/five-slide presentation.

Other webinars were run by international CLIL experts and attended by hundreds of teachers.

One webinar in particular, was run by David Marsh, the inventor of the CLIL acronym, who highlighted the importance of creativity, resilience and flexibility to cope with the emergency, presenting examples of teaching methodologies, such as Phenomenon-Based Learning, included in the Finnish school curriculum, designed to plan and deliver effective cross-curricular CLIL pathways in digital modes.

A research project carried out by Letizia Cinganotto, in collaboration with David Marsh, was aimed at trialling TEHE (Teaching through English in Higher Education) matrix (Kärkkäinen, Marsh, 2019) with the Italian CLIL course attendees (Marsh, Cinganotto, 2021). The matrix, launched by David Marsh and his research group at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, in 2019, aims to assess individual levels of competence for teaching a subject through an additional language in higher education contexts. It focuses on both language use and pedagogical competences and is a flexible tool to be used for evaluating professional abilities when using English as a language of teaching and learning. The matrix provides five competence areas: managing academic content, language-enhanced methods, language use, learning environments, and engaging in academic educator self-awareness.

The TEHE matrix (see Figure 1.4) was trialled by the CLIL course attendees and proved to be an effective tool which fosters the participants' metacognitive

and reflective skills, and guides the teachers towards creating future training pathways.

The research confirmed that linguistic skills in the vehicular language must be accompanied by specific competence in bilingual education methodologies and in addition showed that the TEHE matrix can be a useful tool for supporting teachers' professional development at a school level as well.

Competence Matrix: Managing Research & Higher Education Contexts through English

The Competence Matrix is used to evaluate abilities to manage teaching and learning contexts in English on the basis of a video-recorded demonstration. Developed for the TEHE certificate (Teaching through English in Higher Education) evaluation processes, the Matrix is a multi-dimensional tool for evaluating expert and professional abilities alongside use of English as a language of communication.

Competence Area	Distinction	Pass	Not Achieved Yet
Managing Language-enhanced Methods • Activating strategies to promote student language awareness	Using **a range** of methods and activities to enable student critical thinking in a skilful, flexible and creative way. • Different types of questions and tasks which stimulate critical revision of taught content • Group work interaction which deepens student learning • Inclusion of diverse perspectives and questioning of commonly held assumptions about the learning topic	Using **a limited range** of methods and activities to enable student critical thinking. • Different types of questions and tasks which stimulate critical revision of taught content • Group work interaction which deepens student learning • Inclusion of diverse perspectives and questioning of commonly held assumptions about the learning topic	**No evidence** of methods and activities which support student critical thinking
• Scaffolding content learning	Using **a range** of methods and activities to scaffold content learning and build new knowledge. • Anchoring new content to student and teacher prior knowledge and experience • Giving space for student expression of prior knowledge and current learning needs • Enabling common conceptual understanding when new concepts are introduced	Using **a limited range** of methods and activities to scaffold content learning and build new knowledge. • Anchoring new content to student and teacher prior knowledge and experience • Giving space for student expression of prior knowledge and current learning needs • Enabling common conceptual understanding when new concepts are introduced	**No evidence** of methods and activities to scaffold content learning and build new knowledge

MOVI Centre for Multilingual Academic Communication   UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ   EduCluster Finland

Figure 1.4 : The TEHE matrix

PART 2 – THE SURVEY

2.1. The survey on language learning, teaching and assessment in Italy

Letizia Cinganotto

2.1.1. The context

The idea to develop a survey on language learning and teaching was conceived by an Italian team supported by representatives from the European Commission within the current European policy discussion on language learning, teaching and assessment.

The questionnaire was defined and distributed in the summer of 2020. It aimed to investigate Italian teachers' attitudes to a wide range of aspects related to language learning, teaching and assessment.

The questionnaire was completed by 2805 Italian respondents, providing a non-exhaustive, but a relevant overview of perceptions and feelings in different areas correlated to language learning and teaching.

The already mentioned 2019 Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages offered the opportunity to conduct a survey which also aimed to inform Italian teachers about the Recommendation itself and other important reports, such as *Education begins with languages* (European Commission, 2020b)[40].

"Multilingual competence is at the heart of the vision of a European Education Area. With increasing mobility for education, training and work inside the Union, increasing migration from third countries into the Union, and the overall global cooperation, education and training systems need to reconsider the challenges in teaching and learning of languages and the opportunities provided by Europe's linguistic diversity"[41].

"Language-awareness in schools could include awareness and understanding of the literacy and multilingual competences of all pupils, including competences in languages that are not taught in the school. Schools may distinguish between different levels of multilingual competence needed

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[40] https://op.europa.eu/it/publication-detail/-/publication/6b7e2851-b5fb-11ea-bb7a-01aa75ed71a1/language-en
[41] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605(02)&from=EN (p. C189/15)

depending on context and purpose and corresponding to every learner's circumstances, needs, abilities and interests"[42].

This is what the Council Recommendation states, embracing the concept of "language-awareness in schools", in the context of increased diversity in the multilingual classes of our schools.

The Recommendation also contributes to ensuring the realisation of the European Commission's vision for a European Education Area by 2025 in which "learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders".

The Council Recommendation focused also on improving the quality of the learning pathways and language learning outcomes and re-launched the Barcelona objectives (two languages plus the mother tongue).

Within this context the survey was planned and delivered anonymously in cooperation with the Italian Ministry of Education and with the supervision of Kristina Cunningham, Senior Expert at the European Commission.

In the Editorial[43] by Kristina Cunningham (Cunningham, 2019) of a Special Issue on languages of an international journal, (Jelks, Journal of e-learning and knowledge society) she argues that:

"In spite of the fact that the first foreign language is gradually introduced at an earlier stage (at primary level in a majority of EU Member States), the level reached by the end of secondary education is not always sufficient for further studies or professional use. The first (foreign) language learned is generally English, even if it is not compulsory as a first choice in all countries. If a second foreign language is taught in school, the level of ambition is even lower. Few countries have provisions for mother tongue support for learners with a different first language than the language of schooling. Therefore, a lack of multilingual competences is still an obstacle to further learning, as well as to learning mobility for young people".

These statements represented the starting point for the survey on languages which aimed at sensitizing Italian teachers, school leaders and other stakeholders towards the Recommendation. Their perceptions on different aspects related to language learning and teaching were investigated, including some reference to the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In conclusion, the following key lessons from the Council Recommendation, which were also highlighted and further investigated in the related Thematic Report "Education begins with language", provided an important background to the context of the survey:

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[42] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605(02)&from=EN (p. C189/16).

[43] https://www.je-lks.org/ojs/index.php/Je-LKS_EN/article/view/1804

- *Key lessons on reaching adequate competence levels*
  The first key component of the Council Recommendation centres around actions to help all students to reach adequate competence levels of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The ultimate objective is that, by 2025, all young Europeans can speak at least two languages in addition to the language of schooling.

- *Key lessons on promoting language awareness*
  The second key component of the Council Recommendation focuses on actions to promote language-aware policies and practices in schools, including vocational education and training institutions. Language-aware schools adopt inclusive and 'whole school' teaching and learning practices, which embed pupils' literacy development in all subjects of the school curriculum.

- *Key lessons on supporting teachers*
  The third key component of the Council Recommendation includes actions to support teachers, trainers and school leaders to develop language awareness and adopt inclusive, innovative and multilingual classroom practices.

2.1.2. Research Questions and Methodology

The following research questions were the basis of the research:

RQ1: Are Italian teachers of foreign languages and CLIL teachers familiar with the Italian language policies, norms and reforms, as per the 2019 Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages?

RQ2: What are the teachers' levels of knowledge, attitudes and reactions towards language learning, teaching and assessment?

RQ3: How did foreign language and CLIL teachers deal with the challenge of online, remote and blended language teaching, learning and assessment during the pandemic?

An online questionnaire was circulated all over Europe, but only Italian respondents were selected for this report, as a case study on Italy.

The data were analysed using a mixed approach: quantitative and qualitative taking inspiration from Braun and Clarke's (2006) qualitative approach, according to the following phases:

- Getting familiar with the data
- Generating initial codes and themes
- Looking for themes or main ideas
- Discussing in deeper and refining themes

- Identifying and naming themes
- Writing the research report.

Guided by the above methodology, the research team created a conceptual framework on the basis of which 76 questions were posed to participants (see APPENDIX).

This final report is based on the main findings from the survey. It analyses and comments on the most relevant questions and answers.
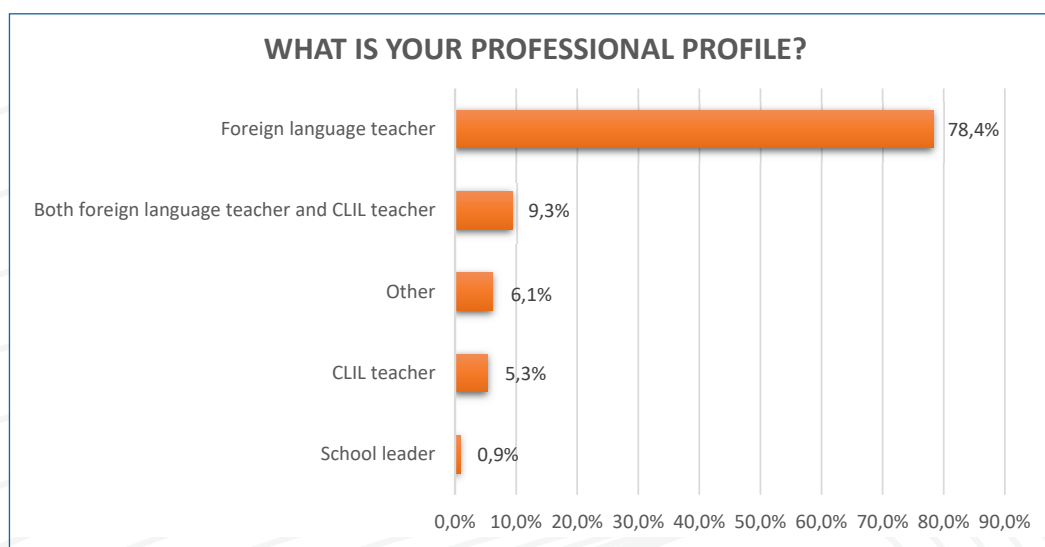
2.1.3. The respondents

A wide variety of respondents completed the survey thus fulfilling the main aims of the survey to target the perceptions and awareness of teachers about different areas related to language learning and teaching.

Prior to completing the survey respondents were requested to read the 2019 Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages.

According to Figure 2.1 of the 2805 respondents 78,4% were foreign language teachers, 5,3% CLIL teachers, 9,3% both CLIL and language teachers, 0,9% school leaders, 6,1% others. Teachers taught mainly at upper secondary level (41,3%) and lower secondary level (31,9%), but also primary teachers were well represented (25,1%), as shown in the tables below.

It is worth noting that the majority of respondents were foreign language teachers (78,4%) and a small percentage (9,3%) were both CLIL and foreign language teachers: these may be teachers in Italian primary schools, where the teacher teaches all the subjects including English and CLIL. In Italian upper secondary school, on the other hand, the CLIL teacher is the subject teacher (STEM or humanities).

WHAT IS YOUR PROFESSIONAL PROFILE?

Profile	Percentage
Foreign language teacher	78,4%
Both foreign language teacher and CLIL teacher	9,3%
Other	6,1%
CLIL teacher	5,3%
School leader	0,9%

School leader	24
CLIL teacher	149
Other	172
Both foreign language teacher and CLIL teacher	262
Foreign language teacher	2198
Total number of respondents	2805

Figure 2.1: Respondents' professional profiles

Percentages in Figure 2.2 suggest that the majority of respondents were from upper secondary schools (41,3%), but lower secondary schools and primary teachers played an important role in the survey as well. A limited number of adult educators and university professors also answered the questionnaire.
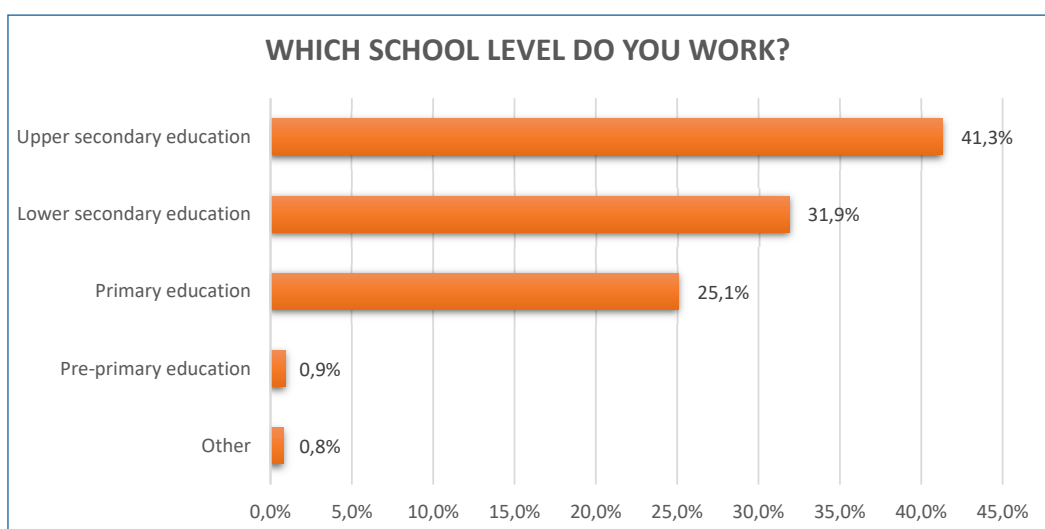
WHICH SCHOOL LEVEL DO YOU WORK?

Upper secondary education	41,3%
Lower secondary education	31,9%
Primary education	25,1%
Pre-primary education	0,9%
Other	0,8%

Figure 2.2: Respondents'school/education level

2.1.4. Awareness of Language Policy

2.1.4.1. What is Language Awareness?

According to the 2019 Council Recommendation, by 2025 all young Europeans should speak at least two languages in addition to the language of schooling. To achieve this objective, Member States should endeavour to expose children as early as possible to multiple foreign languages and promote mobility.

The Council Recommendation also focuses on actions to promote language-aware policies and practices in schools, including vocational education and training institutions. Schools should adopt inclusive and 'whole school' teaching and learning practices, fostering students' language competences and enhancing language diversity.

Fifty years ago, Language Awareness (LA) was put forward, primarily by modern linguists, as a new "bridging" element in the UK school curriculum. It was viewed as a solution to several of the failures in UK schools: illiteracy in English, failure to learn foreign languages, and divisive prejudices (The Bullock Report, 1975). The following years have inevitably seen a number of developments leading to reflect further on the need for foreign language teachers and other teachers to cooperate.

Eric Hawkins, called 'the father of language awareness', had been advocating since the 1960s for explicit reflection on both native and foreign languages as an integral part of the school curriculum. He proposed a 'trivium' of language studies, consisting of mother tongue study, foreign language study and language awareness work (Hawkins, 2010). In this model, learners would be assisted to develop skills and linguistic intuitions to be applied both to their mother tongue and to the language(s) they learn.

A current definition of LA is that of the Association for Language Awareness (ALA), which states that LA can be defined as "explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use" (ALA, 2012). Their definition continues: "[i]t covers a wide spectrum of fields. For example, Language Awareness issues include exploring the benefits that can be derived from developing a good knowledge about language, a conscious understanding of how languages work, of how people learn them and use them…". Language awareness, according to ALA, is relevant for the learner, the teacher, the teacher-learner, the bilingual and the layperson.

The approach has been developed in contexts of both second and foreign language learning and in mother-tongue language education.

2.1.4.2. Background information on language provision in Italy

As already mentioned, the Council Recommendation fosters the learning of at least two languages apart from one's own home language/s. Learning more than one language can have a huge positive impact on working memory, selective attention, processing information, and mental flexibility. The ability to use more than one language means we can communicate with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Knowledge of other languages encourages new ways of thinking and of perceiving the world. We live in an increasingly global world and language skills improve communication, career prospects, make travel easier and provide opportunities to study abroad.

In Italy English is the only compulsory foreign language taught from primary school onwards and the target level of students' competence at the end of primary school is A1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRCV, Council of Europe, 2020[44]), according to the National Guidelines (Indicazioni Nazionali per il curricolo della scuola d'infanzia e

[44] https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages

per il primo ciclo d'istruzione, Ministero dell'Istruzione, 2012[45], Indicazioni Nazionali e Nuovi Scenari, 2018[46]).

The primary English teacher is a "specialized teacher", teaching English as well as other curricular subjects.
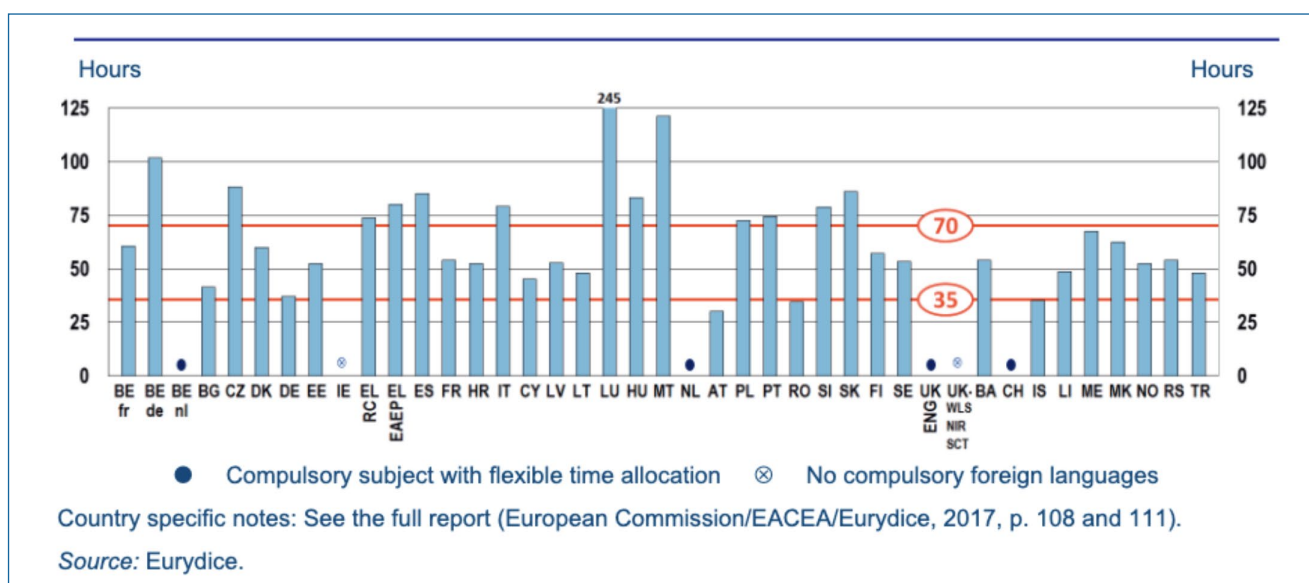

Figure 2.3: Graph from Eurydice Brief, 2017, p. 7
Average recommended minimum number of hours per year of teaching for the first foreign language as a compulsory subject in primary education, 2015/16

At primary level English is usually taught for one hour in the first year, two hours in the second year and three hours in the last three years which represent an encouraging figure considering the average recommended minimum of hours per year for the first foreign language in primary education, as shown in the figure 2.3 from Eurydice Brief, 2017 (Eurydice, 2017b)[47].

With reference to lower secondary school, English is the first foreign language and the target level of language competence at the end of lower secondary school is A2 (CEFRCV, 2020). A second foreign language can be chosen among French, German and Spanish and the target language level is A1. The second foreign language at lower secondary school is compulsory, and this is not common among the other European countries, as shown in the figure from Eurydice Brief (2017) below:

[45] http://www.indicazioninazionali.it/2018/08/26/indicazioni-2012/
[46] http://www.indicazioninazionali.it/2018/02/18/documento-indicazioni-nazionali-e-nuovi-scenari/
[47] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/key-data-teaching-languages-school-europe-%E2%80%93-2017-edition_en
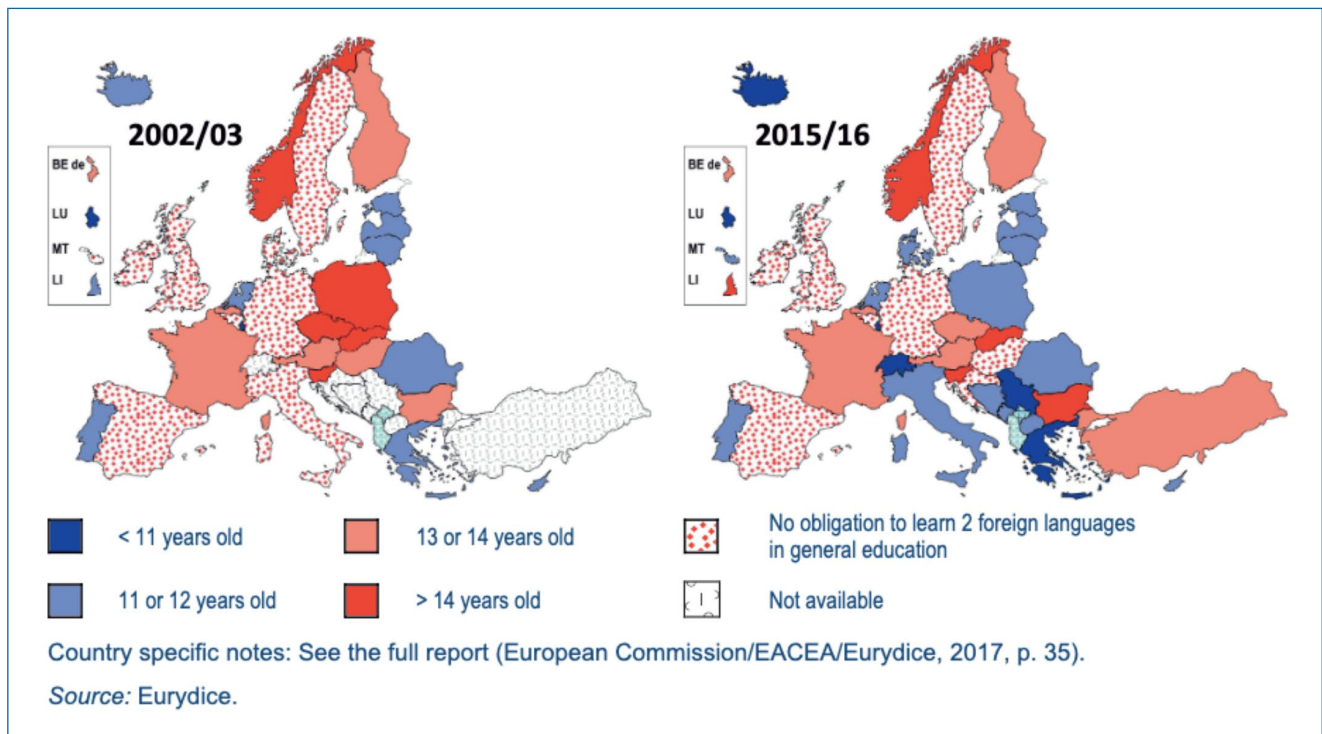
Figure 2.4: Starting age of the second foreign language as a compulsory subject, 2002/03 and 2015/16 Eurydice Brief, 2017, p. 7

2.1.4.3. Awareness of Language Policy: survey results

This section of the survey was designed to investigate the respondents' knowledge and awareness of language policies governing the school curriculum, with particular reference to the provision of different languages at school.

The majority of the respondents to the survey (68,1%) mentioned one language taught at primary level and 22,9% mentioned two languages.

HOW MANY LANGUAGES ARE OFFERED IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN YOUR COUNTRY, INCLUDING THE FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

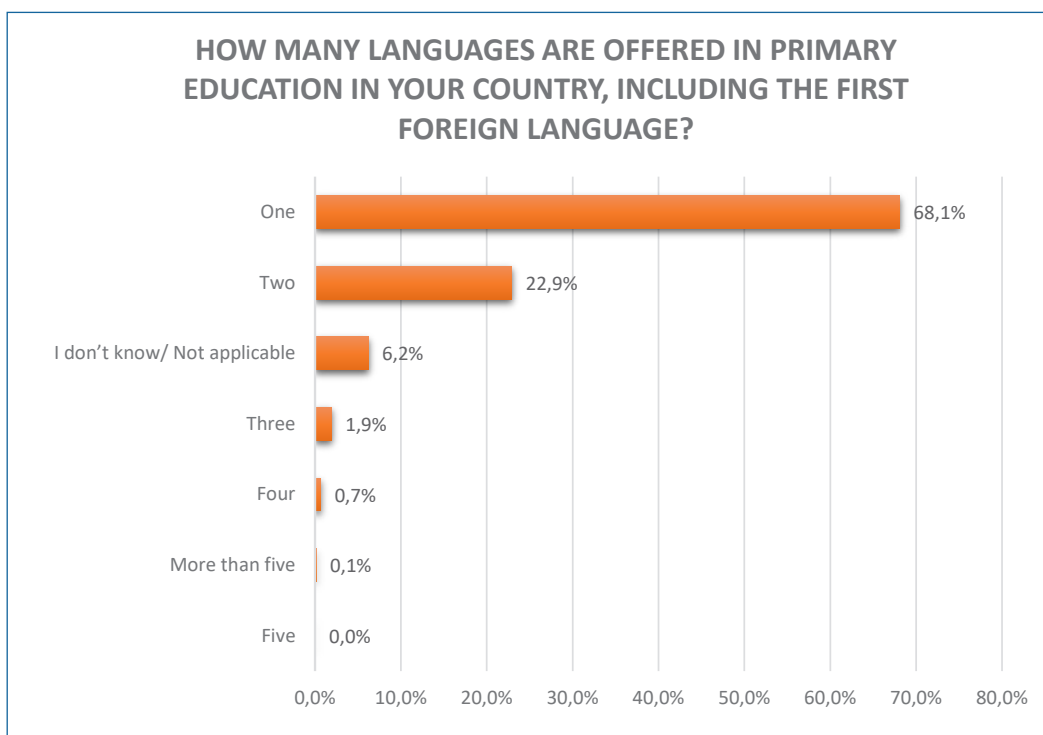|	
One	68,1%
Two	22,9%
I don't know/ Not applicable	6,2%
Three	1,9%
Four	0,7%
More than five	0,1%
Five	0,0%

Figure 2.5: Languages offered in primary education

According to the Italian law on school autonomy (DPR 275/1999), each school can autonomously offer additional languages in their curricula.

It is significant that, in addition to English, other languages are taught at primary level, even with limited percentages, as shown in the table below.

It is surprising that only 83,3% of the respondents were aware of the fact that English is the only compulsory foreign language at primary school level.
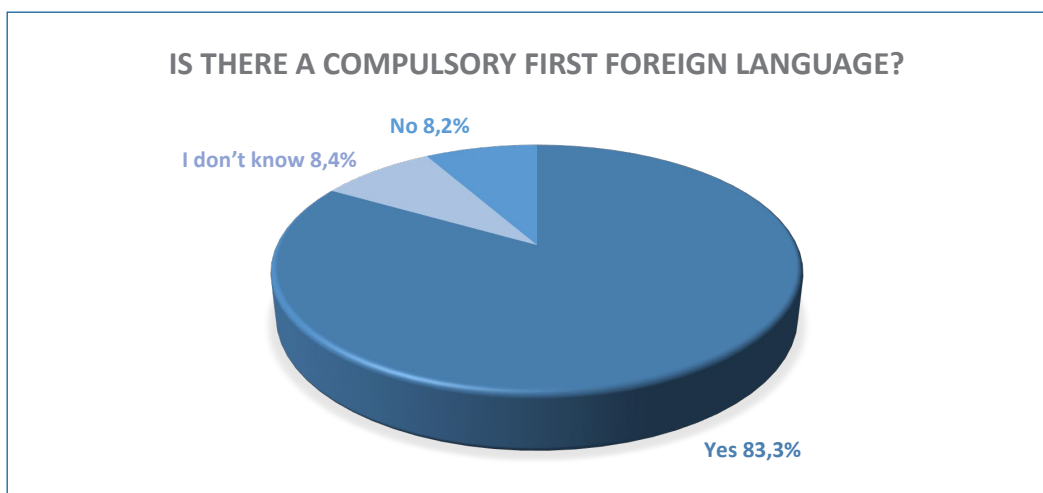
IS THERE A COMPULSORY FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

No 8,2%

I don't know 8,4%

Yes 83,3%

Figure 2.6: Compulsory first foreign language at primary level

When asked to specify compulsory languages, a higher percentage of the respondents (92,6 %) seemed aware that English is mandatory.

If yes, can you specify the languages which are compulsory?	N	%
English	2165	92,6%
English and Italian	54	2,3%
Missing	52	2,2%
Italian	20	0,9%
English and French	15	0,6%
English and French or German	5	0,2%
English and French, Spanish or German	4	0,2%
English and German	4	0,2%
English, French or Spanish	4	0,2%
English and French or Spanish	3	0,1%
English and Spanish	2	0,1%
English or French	2	0,1%
French	2	0,1%
German	2	0,1%
English and Italian, French or German	1	0,0%
English, Italian and Slovenian	1	0,0%
French and Spanish	1	0,0%
Total	2337	100,0%

Figure 2.7: English and other compulsory languages at primary level

At lower secondary school level, apart from the provision of the first and the second compulsory foreign language, the language learning offer can vary, thanks to the law on school autonomy, as highlighted in the percentages below:
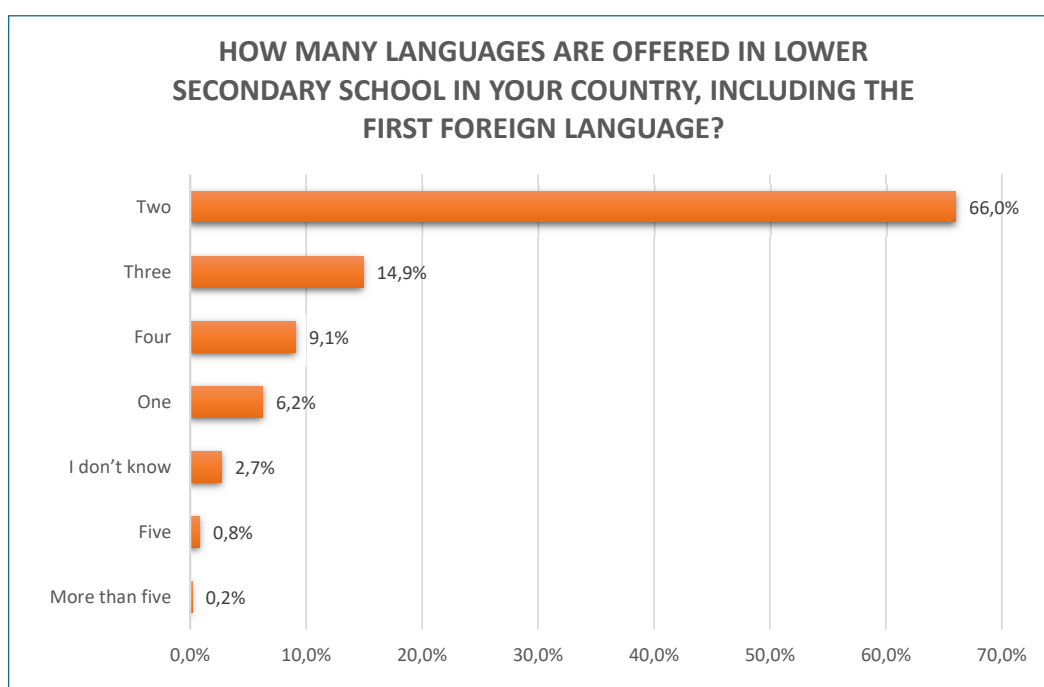
HOW MANY LANGUAGES ARE OFFERED IN LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL IN YOUR COUNTRY, INCLUDING THE FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

Category	Percentage
Two	66,0%
Three	14,9%
Four	9,1%
One	6,2%
I don't know	2,7%
Five	0,8%
More than five	0,2%

Figure 2.8: Foreign languages offered in lower secondary school

With reference to lower secondary school, it is surprising that only 61,8% of the respondents are aware that two foreign languages are compulsory.

HOW MANY ARE COMPULSORY?

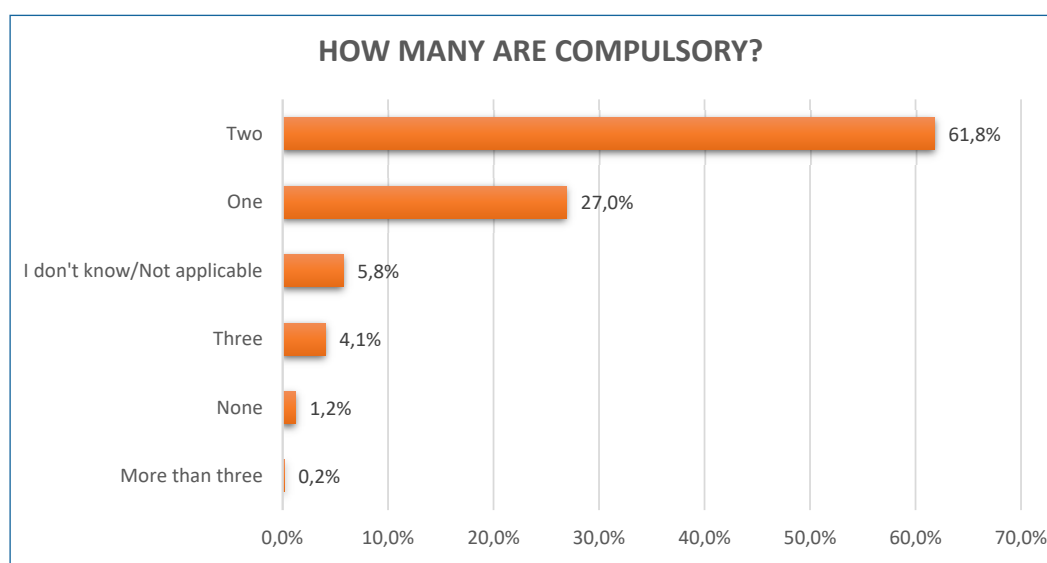| Category	Percentage
Two	61,8%
One	27,0%
I don't know/Not applicable	5,8%
Three	4,1%
None	1,2%
More than three	0,2%

Figure 2.9: Number of compulsory languages

Respondents answered that English, French, Spanish, German are the languages offered in lower secondary schools. Below are some comments from the teachers which highlight opinions on language provision at lower secondary level where English is taught for three hours a week, while the second language is taught for two hours a week. The fact that some teachers stress "only" two hours probably means that this provision is not considered adequate to teach a second foreign language.

It is important to underline that the second foreign language is partly based on the students' family choice and in some geographical areas the option is linked to cultural and historical reasons, as stated in one of the comments made by the respondents.

In Question 13 teachers were asked:

Can you specify the languages offered in lower secondary school?

These are some of their responses:

"English (as the first language)".

"Spanish, French or German (as the second one)".

"English + 1 among German French Spanish".

"First language: 3h a week – ENGLISH".

"Second language: ONLY 2h a week - FRENCH or GERMANY or SPANISH".

"Both the languages chosen by the school's Collegio dei Docenti (the board of all the teaching staff)".

"English + French

English + Spanish

It depends on students' choice".

"English, first of all. It is worth noting that parents can ask to replace the hours of lessons devoted to the study of a second language, with activities aimed at reinforcing the study of English".

"Some schools offer a different option to English while providing more tuition".

"English is compulsory and is taught 3 hours a week, then students can choose from German, Spanish and French. The second language is taught 2 hours/week and is compulsory too. The choice of the second language depends on the schools. Some schools offer only one second language for example German or French or Spanish, others offer all 3 languages: German, Spanish and French, however sometimes it is not possible for students to choose their second compulsory foreign language".

"A second foreign language is also compulsory, but its choice is determined by a number of different factors. For example, German is commonly taught in north-eastern Italy because of the geographical proximity to German speaking countries like Austria and because of the historical and cultural contacts between the German speaking areas and the north-eastern Italian regions".

"English is compulsory, 3 hours per week, then there are two possible choices: studying a second EU language depending on those offered by the local school (which can be chosen among French, Spanish and German, either just one, two or three of them), two hours per week, or opting for two more hours of English. This alternative is a possibility that was given after the school reform, in 2009, and was harshly criticized and not very popular among families (as a matter of fact, it's far more popular among lower social classes)".

Question 16 investigated the flexibility of language provision at school: 89,2% of the respondents stated that the first foreign language cannot be substituted for another non-language subject because English is mandatory and therefore cannot be replaced by other subjects.
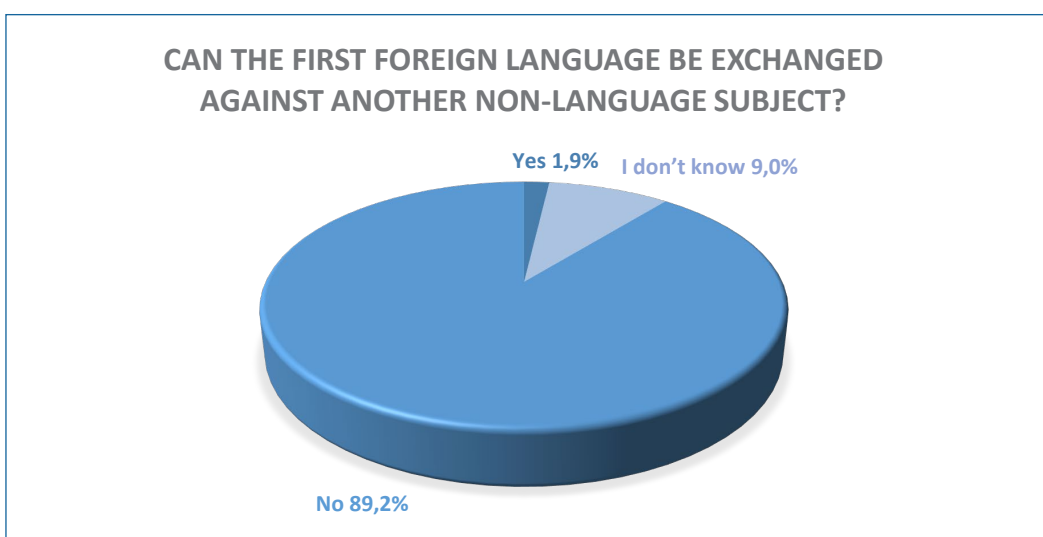

CAN THE FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE BE EXCHANGED AGAINST ANOTHER NON-LANGUAGE SUBJECT?

Yes 1,9% I don't know 9,0%

No 89,2%

Figure 2.10: Option to exchange subjects in lower secondary school

84% of the respondents answered that the first foreign language cannot be dropped and substituted for another language: English as the first foreign language cannot be substituted or dropped.
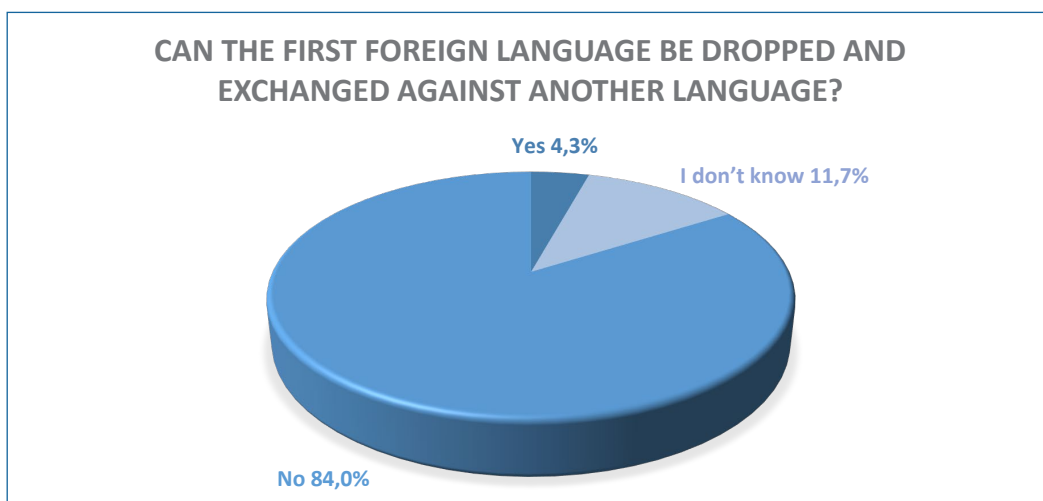
CAN THE FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE BE DROPPED AND EXCHANGED AGAINST ANOTHER LANGUAGE?

Yes 4,3%

I don't know 11,7%

No 84,0%

Figure 2.11: Option to exchange languages in lower secondary school

At upper secondary school level, 22,5% of the respondents stated that two languages are offered at this school level where English is compulsory for five years. The target language level is B1 at the end of the first two years and B2 at the end of upper secondary school.

Other foreign languages can be offered through extra-curricular activities or within the curriculum, according to specific learning pathways.

It is important to underline that the language provision can vary from three foreign languages (17,5%) to more than five (4,4%).
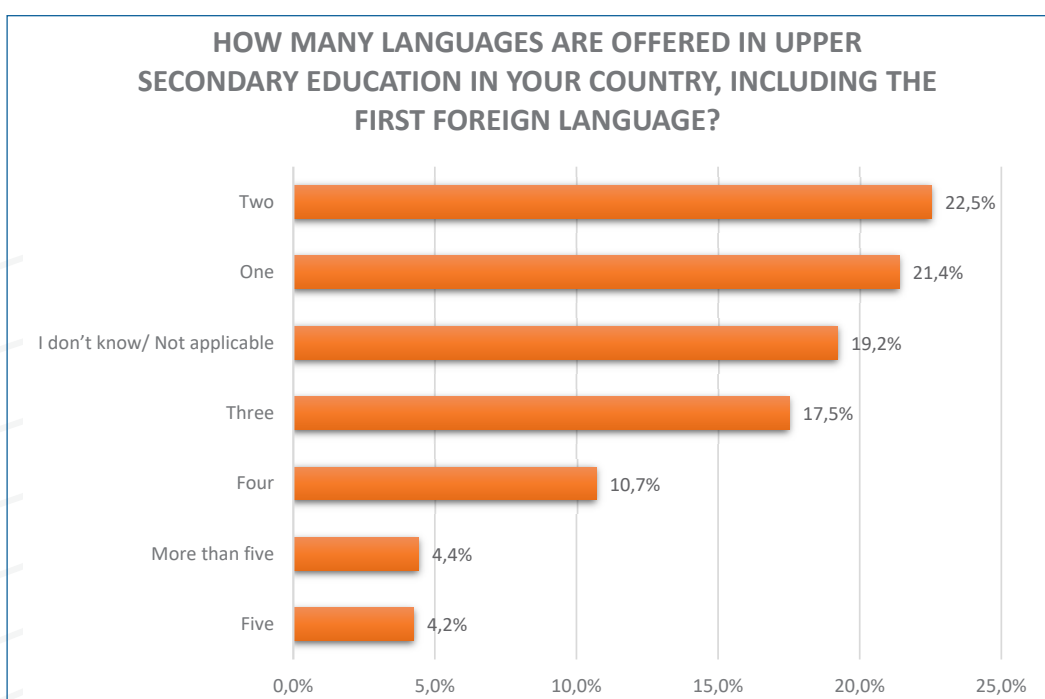
HOW MANY LANGUAGES ARE OFFERED IN UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION IN YOUR COUNTRY, INCLUDING THE FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

Category	Percentage
Two	22,5%
One	21,4%
I don't know/ Not applicable	19,2%
Three	17,5%
Four	10,7%
More than five	4,4%
Five	4,2%

Figure 2.12: Number of languages offered in upper secondary school

Some comments from the respondents reported below show the wide range of language provision at upper secondary school level. "Licei linguistici", grammar schools with specialization in languages, provide three or more foreign languages. Note that more and more schools are opting for non-European foreign languages, such as Chinese and Russian. In particular, recently there has been a real boom in the provision of Chinese, as highlighted in different comments of the respondents below.

In question 19 teachers were asked:

Which are the foreign languages taught in upper secondary school in your country?

These are some of the replies:

"Although it actually depends on the type of school, generally French, Spanish, English, German and Chinese can be taught at school".

"Ancient Greek, Latin, English, German, French, Spanish, Arabian, Russian, Chinese, Albanian, Slovenian".

"Apart from English, which is compulsory, depending on the kind of school,

- you can choose between Spanish, French, German;

- you can choose between Spanish, French, Chinese".

"As happens in lower secondary school, there are some upper secondary schools which offer one, while offer some two, others three".

"Depending on the school choice: only English is offered in non-specialized secondary schools, while English (and/or) Spanish (and/or) French may be offered in Tourism schools, English (and/or) Spanish (and/or) French (and/or) German (and/or) Russian (and/or) Chinese (and/or) Arabic in schools with a specialization in languages (this information is based on the schools in my area)".

"Depending on the school. Some have just one language (English), others two or three (generally French or German or Spanish). Some schools have a fourth language offered on courses in the afternoon (not compulsory). Some schools have dropped traditional European languages as a second or third language and teach Chinese or Russian in their place".

"Depending on the type of school, a further language can be taught, usually Spanish, German or French. At Science Lyceum only English is offered.

A growing number of schools with a specialization in languages are now offering Chinese as optional".

"English, French, German, Spanish is found everywhere. Some schools offer Chinese or other languages, for instance Slovenian in my area".

"English, two languages in technical schools, three languages in schools with a specialization in languages".

"English (1st language), French (2nd language), Spanish, German or Russian (3rd language). In some schools only English is compulsory".

"English and a second EU language (either French, Spanish, or German), depending on the kind of school (e.g. at licei linguistici, i.e. language upper secondary schools, three languages are taught, namely English + a combination of French, Spanish, or German; the same holds true for the last three years of Istituti Tecnici per il turismo, i.e. tourism upper secondary schools)".

"English and French are taught in upper secondary schools of various types. In Lyceum (Linguistic High School) the languages taught are three, they are compulsory and may be chosen from English, French, Spanish, German, Russian, Chinese, Japanese".

"English and French, Spanish, German, Arabic, Russian, Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese, Latin, Ancient Greek, etc. (depending on the kind of school, the number of languages taught may vary: in liceo linguistico, you have to choose three of them, from the ones mentioned above)".

"English and French. In licei linguistici the languages offered are: English, French, Spanish, German. Chinese and Russian are taught in few schools".

56,4% of the respondents stated that one language (English) is compulsory at upper secondary school level. The other languages can be taught as compulsory in other specific types of schools, such as "licei linguistici".
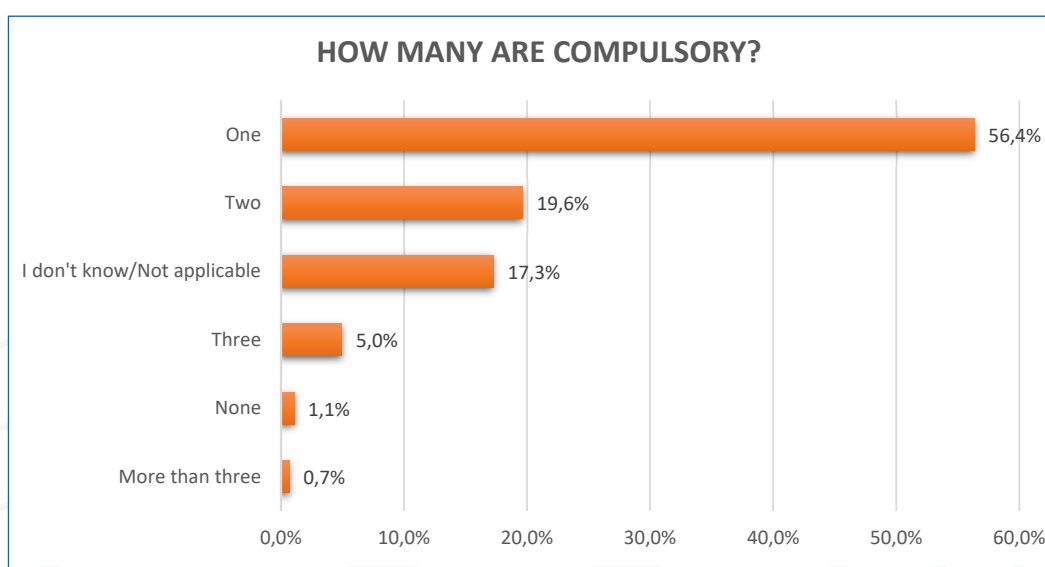

Figure 2.13: Number of compulsory languages at upper secondary school

Here are some of the teachers' comments about language provision at upper secondary school level in answer to Question 21:

Can you specify the languages which are compulsory?

"All of them are compulsory. If a specific course of studies embraces one or more languages, all the other subjects are obligatory".

"At Foreign Language High School the compulsory languages are English, German and Spanish or French".

"Only English is compulsory, however for liceo linguistico and Istituto alberghiero students have to choose an additional two languages".

"Depending on the upper secondary school. In the linguistic high school: three languages: English and two languages choosing between French, Spanish and German".

"Depending on the school one talks about, as many as three foreign languages can be compulsory. English tends to be the language that is always compulsory".

"English (1st language), French (2nd language), Spanish, German or Russian (3rd language). In some schools only English is compulsory".

"English (in any kind of school); 3 foreign languages in language schools (English compulsory and other 2 languages chosen by the student)".

"English and a second EU language (either French, Spanish, or German), depending on the kind of school (e.g. at Licei linguistici, i.e. language upper secondary schools, three languages are mandatory, namely English + a combination of French, Spanish, or German; the same holds true for the last three years of Istituti Tecnici per il turismo, i.e. tourism upper secondary schools)".

About 80% of the respondents are aware that the first foreign language cannot be dropped and substituted by either another language or another non-language subject.
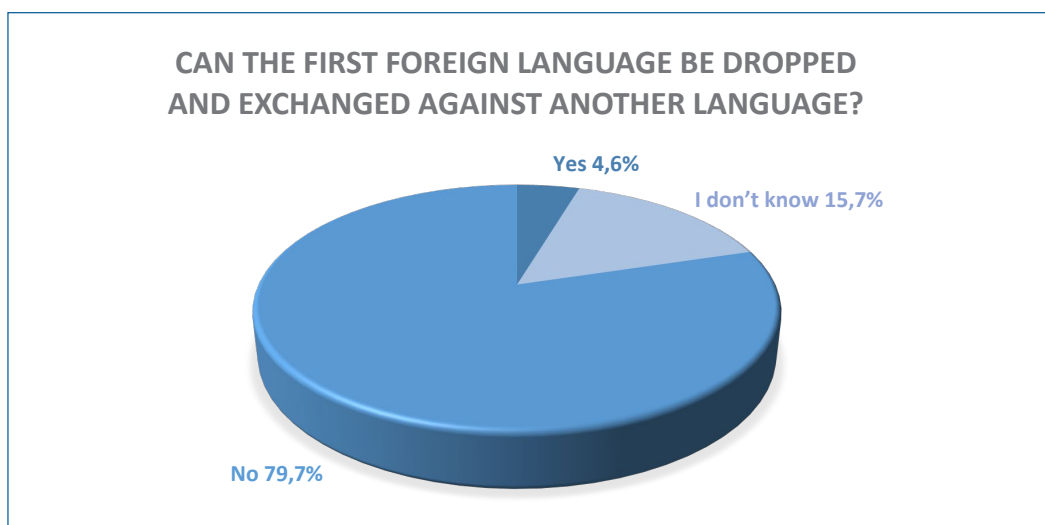

CAN THE FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE BE DROPPED AND EXCHANGED AGAINST ANOTHER LANGUAGE?

Yes 4,6%

I don't know 15,7%

No 79,7%

Figure 2.14: Options to exchange the first foreign language against another language at upper secondary school

The majority of respondents are clearly aware that it is not possible to substitute the first foreign language for a non-language subject.
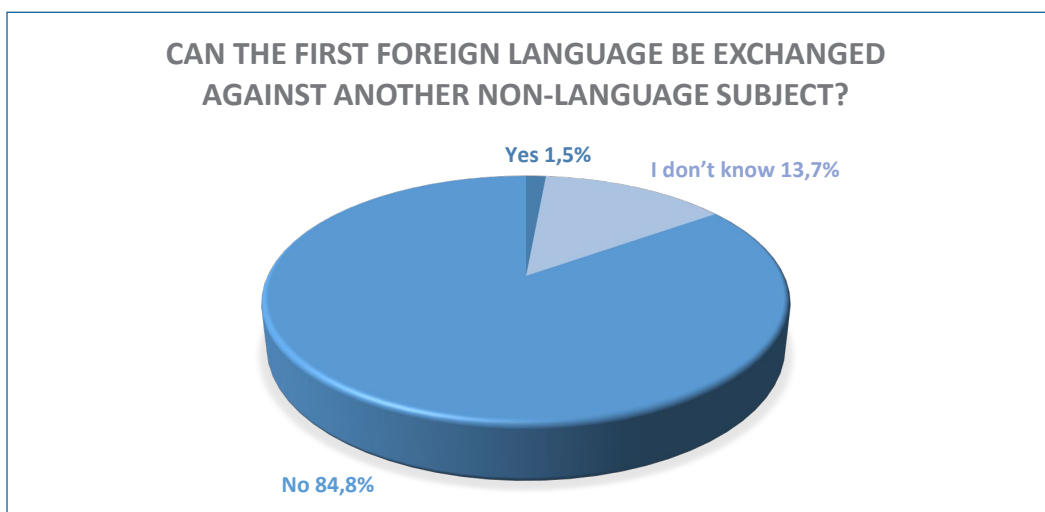

Figure 2.15: Option to exchange the first foreign language against another non-language subject at upper secondary school

The perception about the second foreign language is more evenly balanced: 36% of the respondents think it is possible it can be substituted with another language and 36% think it is not possible.
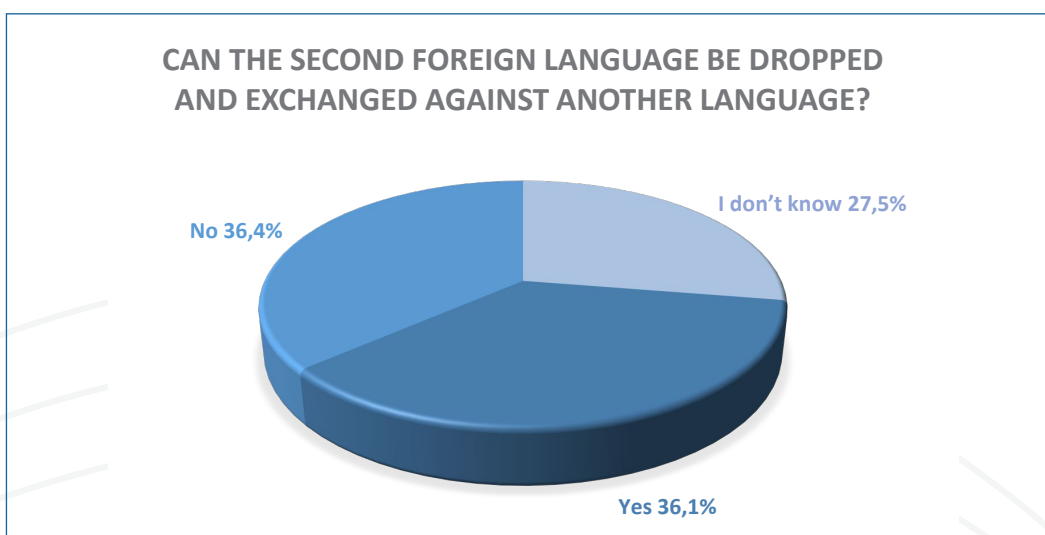

Figure 2.16: Option to exchange the second foreign language against another language at upper secondary school

According to the following Figure 2.17 respondents seem more aware that it is not possible to substitute the second foreign language for another NON-language subject.
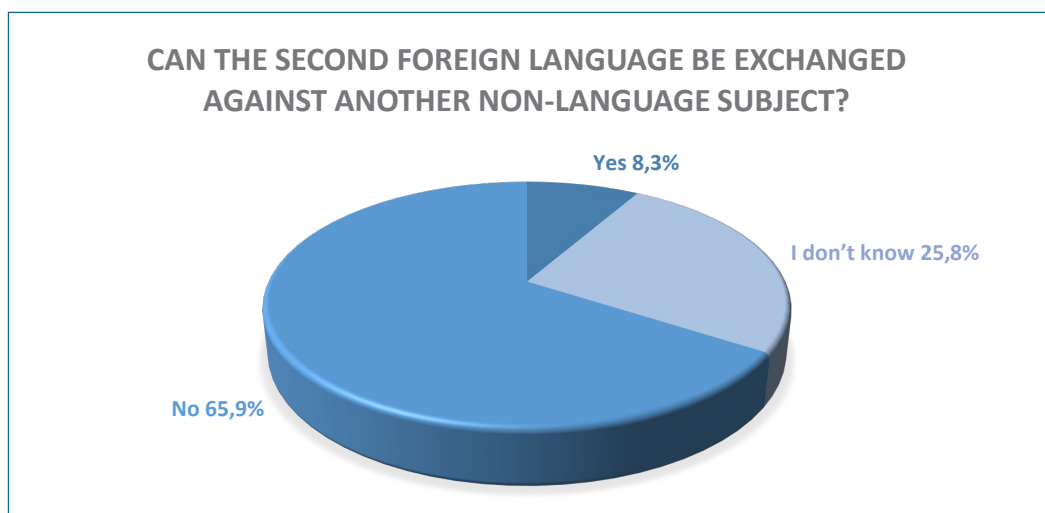
**CAN THE SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE BE EXCHANGED
AGAINST ANOTHER NON-LANGUAGE SUBJECT?**

Yes 8,3%

I don't know 25,8%

No 65,9%

Figure 2.17: Option to exchange the second foreign language against another non-language subject at upper secondary school

Question 26 investigated the provision of language courses in upper secondary school. 52,8% of the respondents stated that specific pathways on languages are offered.

It should be noted that a wide range of initiatives and projects, both curricular and extra-curricular can be provided by the school as a part of the "PTOF" ("Piano Triennale dell'Offerta Formativa"), the three-year school plan.

**ARE SPECIFIC PATHWAYS FOCUSED ON LANGUAGES
PROVIDED IN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL?**
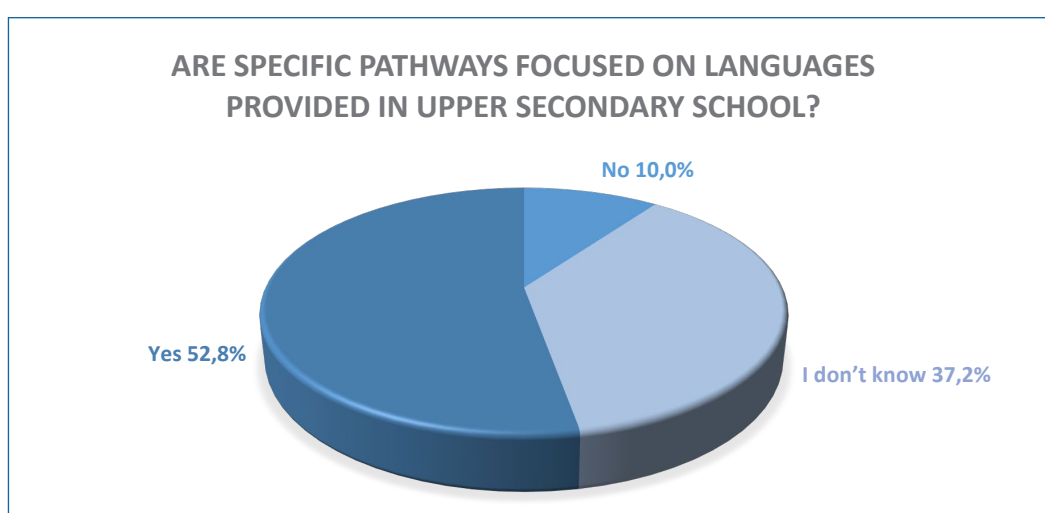
No 10,0%

I don't know 37,2%

Yes 52,8%

Figure 2.18: Specific language pathways in upper secondary school

43% of the respondents stated that three languages can be offered at school, indicating the recognition of the importance of languages and language awareness.
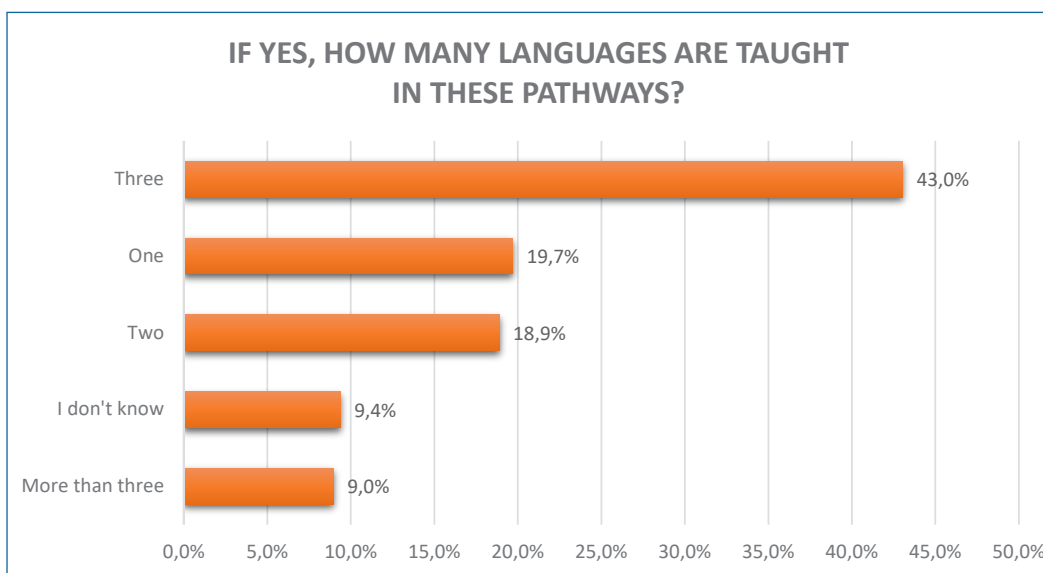
Figure 2.19: Number of languages taught in specific language pathways in upper secondary school

Question 29 focused on the teachers' knowledge of the foreign language mentioned in the school leaving certificate from secondary school: 60,9% stated that it is necessary to have at least one foreign language. It is worth mentioning that at the end of upper secondary school, it is usually English as the first foreign language which is tested during the school leaving exam, known as the "State exam".
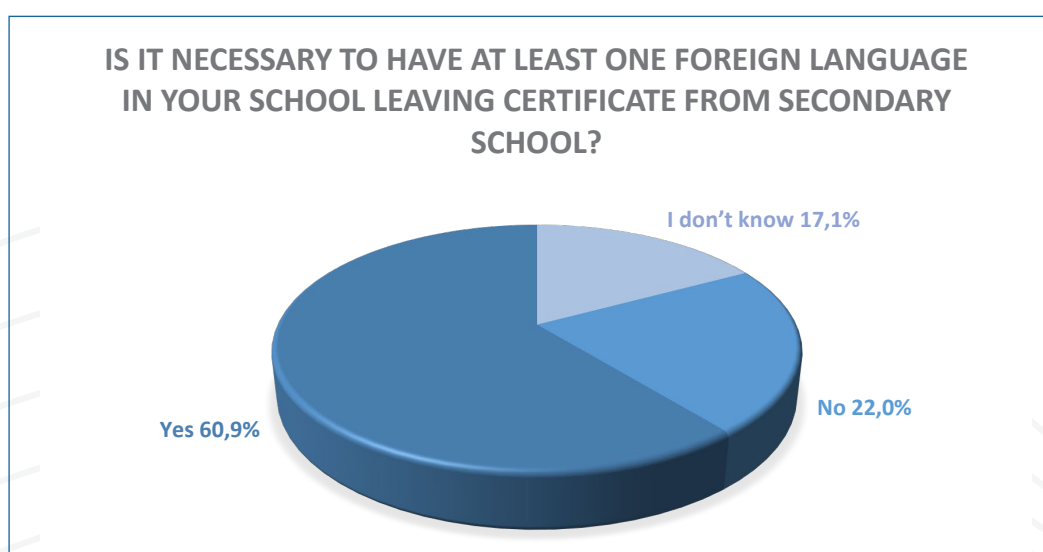

Figure 2.20: Foreign language in the school leaving certificate from secondary school

Question 30 highlighted the difference between vocationally oriented and general upper secondary education.

49,1% of the respondents stated there is difference between the two: the school curricula are quite different, although language provision can be enriched through curricular or extra-curricular initiatives both at vocationally oriented and general upper secondary education.
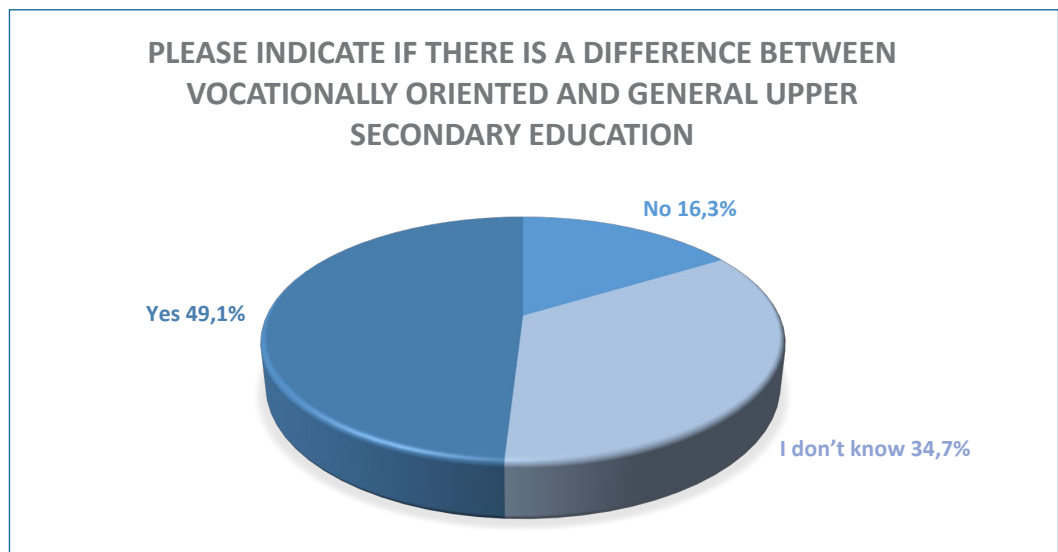
PLEASE INDICATE IF THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VOCATIONALLY ORIENTED AND GENERAL UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

No 16,3%

Yes 49,1%

I don't know 34,7%

Figure 2.21: Difference between vocationally oriented and general upper secondary education

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KEY FINDINGS

In Italy, English is taught as a compulsory subject starting at primary level and continuing until students leave upper secondary school.

At lower secondary school two foreign languages are compulsory. NB: this is not common in most European countries.

Italian school curricula are generally not flexible in terms of language provision as only one foreign language is mandatory in upper secondary school. There are only a few exceptions including "licei linguistici", where three foreign languages are taught and students can choose from a variety of languages.

Italian teachers are generally aware of the language provision in the school curricula at the different school levels.

2.1.5. Home languages

2.1.5.1. The importance of home languages

Enhancing and supporting students' home languages represents an important target of the 2019 Council Recommendation. The project "Healthy Linguistic Diet" (HLD) (Bak, Mehmedbegovic-Smith, 2017) is mentioned as an example of best practice to protect students' home languages. Suggested strategies include: fostering translanguaging, code-switching, code-mixing and other practices, aimed at activating the students' linguistic repertoire, also encouraging the help and collaboration from the families.

As already mentioned earlier in this report, taking inspiration from this input, INDIRE carried out a pilot project with a sample of Italian schools, implementing HLD in their school curricula. The project is aimed at spreading this model more widely among Italian schools.

There are some other significant projects on plurilingualism and home languages which have been carried out in Italy (Carbonara, Scibetta, 2021; Cognigni, 2020), however it is recommended that more activities and projects should be organized as outlined in the National Guidelines issued in 2012 for primary and lower secondary school.

Plurilingualism favours integration of languages in the language curriculum and Figure 2.22 from Eurydice Brief, 2017, highlights the measures for migrant students in mainstream education adopted by the different European countries to foster their integration in class and to protect their linguistic repertoire and their cultural background.

Strategies to support migrant students in the Italian school system include additional classes,

		Number of education systems
A	Additional classes	31
B	Individual teaching	18
C	Teaching assistant in class	9
D	Classes in mother tongue	8
E	Bilingual subject teaching	3

Country specific notes: See the full report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017, p. 137).
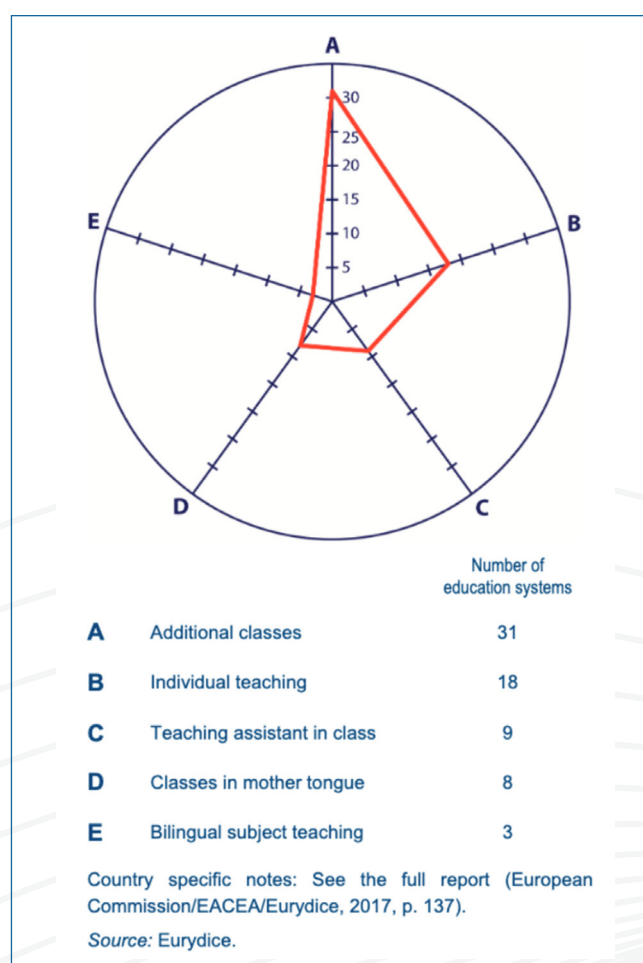
Source: Eurydice.

Fig. 2.22: Figure from Eurydice Brief, 2017, p. 19

individual teaching and bilingual subject teaching. These are the most common measures adopted, but much depends on the different initiatives and projects carried out by individual schools.

It is worth mentioning that the Companion Volume of the CEFR (CEFRCV, Council of Europe, 2020) highlights the concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence and emphasizes the importance of building on a pluricultural and plurilingual repertoire, as shown in Figure 2.23. In order to enhance each student's plurilingual and pluricultural competence it is essential to start from protecting the students' home languages, conveying the message of the equal importance of all languages, with no priority given to any language.
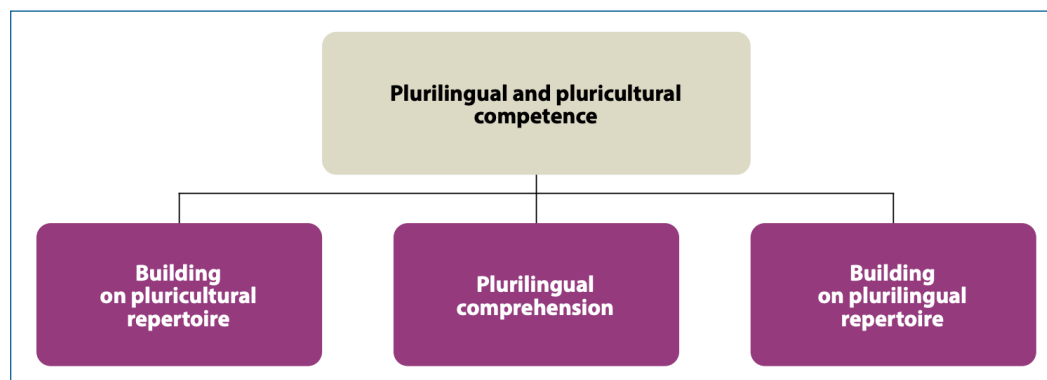

Figure 2.23: Plurilingual and pluricultural competence, CEFRCV, 2020 p. 123

2.1.5.2. Home languages survey results

In answer to question 31 of the survey about specific provisions for supporting students' home languages, 49,4% of the respondents stated they did not know what support was provided, 40,6% stated there were no provisions for enhancing students' home languages; only 10% stated that some provisions were offered.

It is expected this low figure (10%) will improve in the near future and this will also be thanks to the HLD project and other similar projects implemented as a result of Italian ministerial language policies.
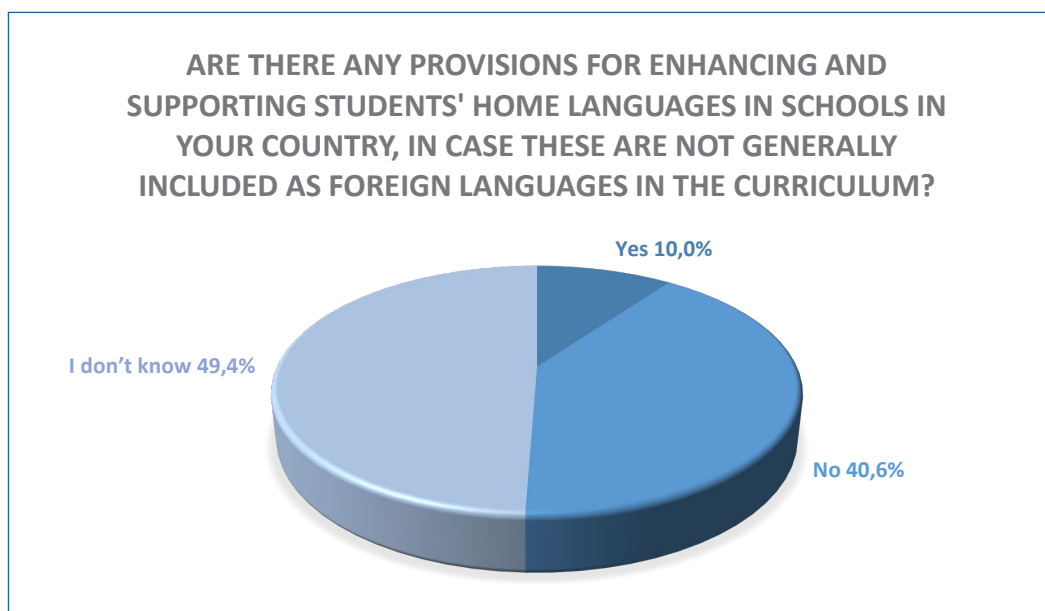
INDIRE
ISTITUTO
NAZIONALE
DOCUMENTAZIONE
INNOVAZIONE
RICERCA EDUCATIVA

2.1. The survey on language learning, teaching and assessment in Italy

ARE THERE ANY PROVISIONS FOR ENHANCING AND
SUPPORTING STUDENTS' HOME LANGUAGES IN SCHOOLS IN
YOUR COUNTRY, IN CASE THESE ARE NOT GENERALLY
INCLUDED AS FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE CURRICULUM?

Yes 10,0%

I don't know 49,4%

No 40,6%

Figure 2.24: Provisions for supporting students' home languages

KEY FINDINGS

A range of projects on plurilingualism and home languages have been carried out in Italy, however it is recommended that more activities and projects should be organized in line with the National Guidelines issued in 2012 for both primary and lower secondary schools.

Language initiatives enhancing students' home languages organized autonomously by schools should be increased.

2.1.6. Standardized Language Tests

2.1.6.1. Standardized Language tests and the impact of COVID-19

OECD PISA 2025 will provide a language test for English[48]: the Framework for the PISA 2025 Foreign Language Assessment (OECD, 2021)[49] will be used to guide the development of the questionnaire the students will complete. The Framework will also guide the interpretation of the results and policy-relevant analyses based on the data collected on 15-year-old students' proficiency in English.

PISA 2025 Foreign Language Assessment will include key language competences that are needed to study and work in a globalised world and will focus on three skills: Reading, Listening and Speaking.

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[48] https://www.oecd.org/pisa/foreign-language/
[49] https://www.oecd.org/pisa/foreign-language/PISA-2025-FLA-Framework.pdf

Figure 2.25 of OECD Education Working Papers No. 234 "What matters for language learning? The questionnaire framework for the PISA 2025 Foreign Language Assessment" (OECD, 2020) [50] provides a list of comparative studies on previous language tests carried out at European level.

Survey	Data collection years	Institution	Participating systems	Age group	Languages assessed	Type of instruments
The survey of English as a foreign language (The IEA Six-subject survey) (Lewis and Massad, 1975[22])	1970-1971	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)	10	14-year-old students and students in the final year of lower secondary school	English*	Proficiency test (reading, listening, writing, speaking) Questionnaires (students, teachers, school principals)
The Language Education Study (Peter Dickson and Alister Cumming, 1996[23]; IEA, 1993[24])	1990 (partial execution)	IEA	25	15-18 year-old students (planned)	English, French, German and Spanish	Proficiency test (never conducted) Questionnaire (system-level)
The European Survey on Language Competences (SurveyLang) (European Commission, 2012[21])	2011	European Commission	16	Lower (final year) or upper (second year) secondary students	English, French, German, Italian and Spanish	Proficiency test (reading, listening, writing) Questionnaires (students; teachers; school principals; system-level)
The Early Language Learning in Europe (ELLiE) (Enever, 2011[25])	2007-2010	British Council	7	7-8 year-old students in primary education	English, French and Spanish	Qualitative interviews (students; teachers; school principals) Questionnaire (students; parents; system-level)
The Eurydice Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017[26])	2017	European Commission	34	Primary to upper secondary education (ISCED1 to ISCED3)	All languages	Questionnaire (system-level)

Figure 2.25: International comparative studies of foreign language learning, p. 13 - OECD Education Working Papers No. 234

Among all the surveys, it is worth mentioning SurveyLang, co-ordinated and managed by Cambridge English, in cooperation with Centre International d'Études Pédagogiques (CIEP), Gallup, Goethe-Institut, Instituto Cervantes, National Institute for Educational Measurement (Cito), Universidad de Salamanca and Università per Stranieri di Perugia. It was delivered in 2012 in 16 countries (Italy did not take part) and the results helped improve the understanding on how languages are taught and learnt throughout Europe, becoming a key tool for European governments to use when developing language-learning policies.

In Italy a standardized national test on English language competence was introduced by INVALSI alongside national tests of Italian and Maths in

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[50] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/5e06e820-en.pdf?expires=1634488973&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=C133FDB1A699216793B664E20F568B4A

primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels (grade 5, grade 8, grade 13), addressing listening and reading skills. As a result, Italian teachers and students are now familiar with the concept of standardized tests.

In the school year 2020-21 INVALSI tests[51] were delivered again, after a one year break due to the pandemic. The results as far as English is concerned are better than expected, especially for primary school students.

According to the INVALSI test, 92% of grade 5 students attained CEFR level A1 (as outlined in the National Guidelines) in reading and 82% achieved level A1 in listening.

At grade 8, where the target level of competence is A2, 76% of the students achieved level A2 in reading and 59% in listening.

These results are quite stable when compared to the same INVALSI test results from the two school years prior to the pandemic. This shows that remote and blended teaching and learning did not have such a negative effect on Italian students' language competences as had been expected.

At grade 13, at the end of upper secondary school, where a B2 level of competence is the target level in the National Guidelines, the results were more disappointing. However, the results are still in line with the previous national tests results from 2018 and 2019 with 49% of the students attaining B2 level in reading and 37% in listening.

2.1.6.2. Attitudes to Standardized Language Tests

Question 33 explored attitudes towards a future European language test to assess language competences of students to facilitate comparison across

EU Member States. 87,2% of the respondents stated they were in favour of a European language test to be used to compare performance across EU Member States. The results in Figure 2.26 show Italian teachers' positive attitudes to taking a European wide test.
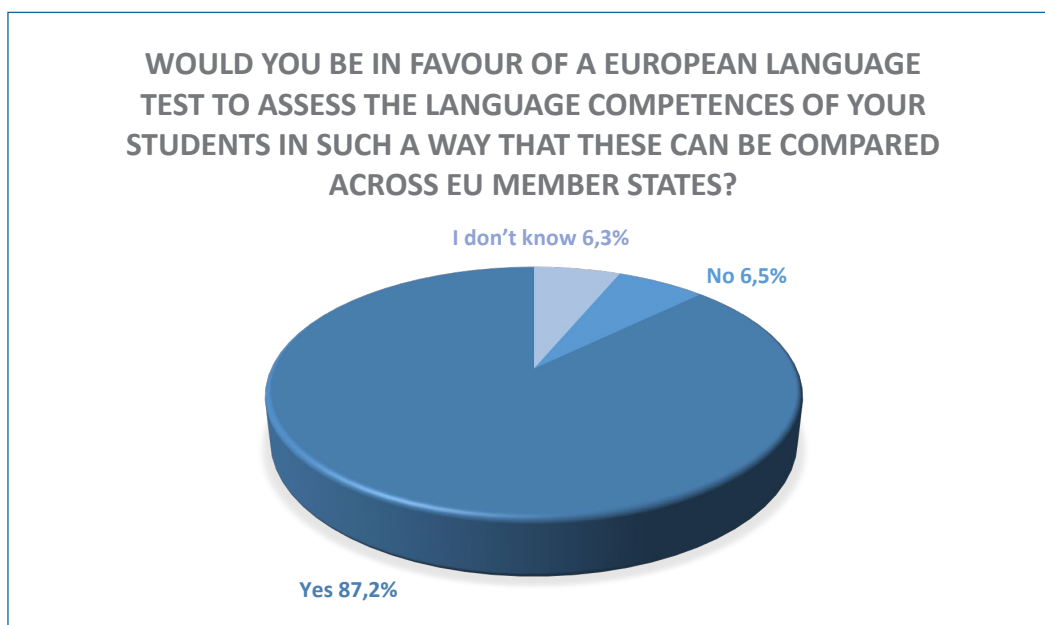
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[51] https://www.invalsiopen.it/presentazione-risultati-prove-invalsi-2021/

WOULD YOU BE IN FAVOUR OF A EUROPEAN LANGUAGE TEST TO ASSESS THE LANGUAGE COMPETENCES OF YOUR STUDENTS IN SUCH A WAY THAT THESE CAN BE COMPARED ACROSS EU MEMBER STATES?

I don't know 6,3%

No 6,5%

Yes 87,2%

Figure 2.26: Attitudes to a European language test

53% of the respondents believe it would be better to deliver the test at the end of upper secondary school.

Question 34 (Respondents who answered YES to question 33):

If yes, which school level would you like to be tested?	N	%
at the end of primary	270	11,0%
at the end of lower secondary	880	36,0%
at the end of upper secondary	1297	53,0%
Total	2447	100,0%

Figure 2.27: School level to deliver the test

86,2% of the respondents would prefer the test to be computer-based. INVALSI tests are computer-based, therefore Italian teachers and students are already familiar with this format.

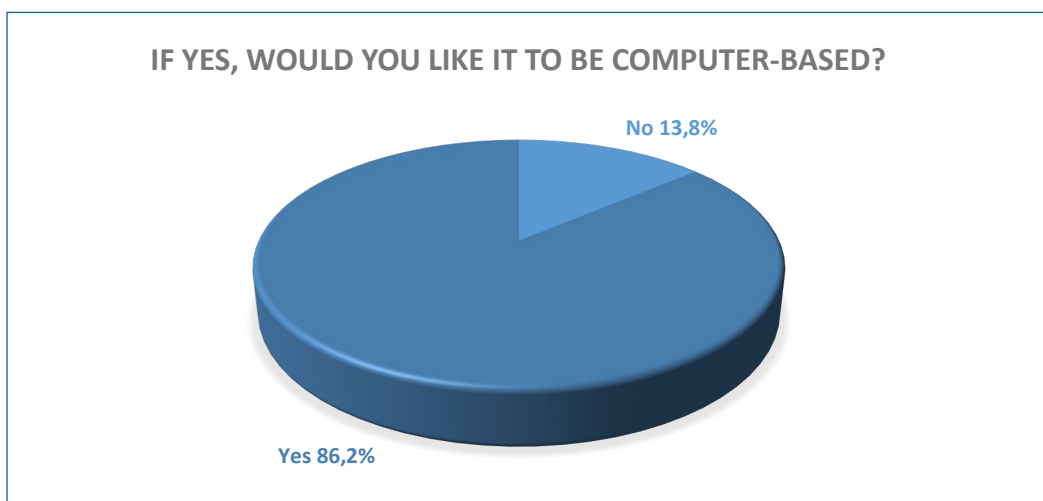NB: currently INVALSI tests of English only assess receptive skills, reading and listening.

IF YES, WOULD YOU LIKE IT TO BE COMPUTER-BASED?

Figure 2.28: Attitudes to computer-based tests

For the respondents who answered YES to question 33 on the language skills to be tested, in answering question 36 gave the following responses: 79,3% opted for listening, 48,8% for oral production, 49,2% for writing, 54,1% for reading. 72,3% opted for oral interaction, however the latter poses particular challenges in a standardized computer-based test.

Oral interaction is generally the most challenging skill to develop in a language class and the constraints of remote teaching and learning during the pandemic have highlighted this. It is interesting to note however, that such a high percentage of teachers would like to see oral interaction being tested.
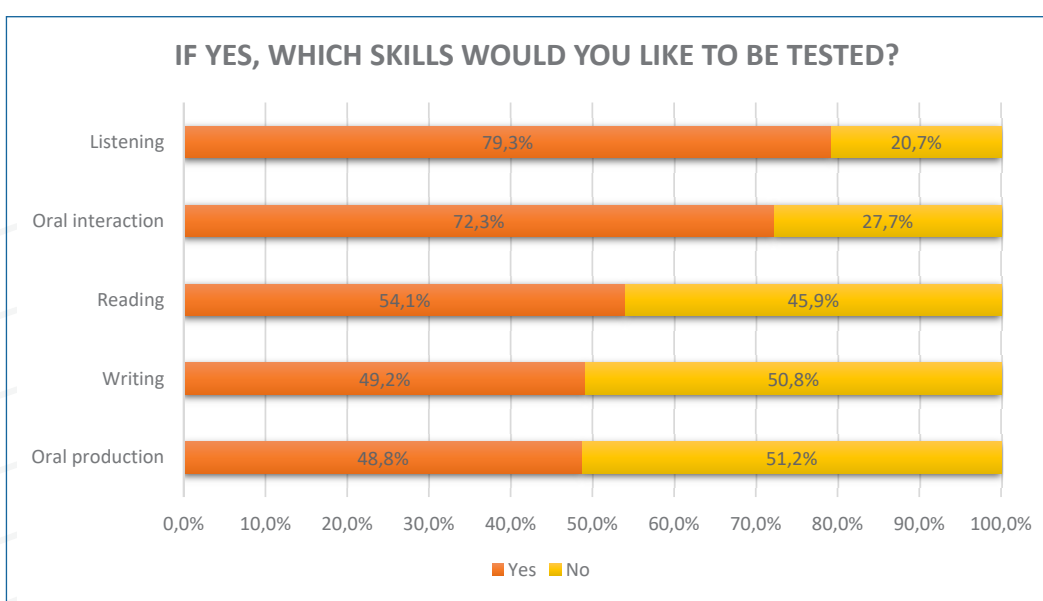
IF YES, WHICH SKILLS WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE TESTED?

Figure 2.29: Attitudes to the language skills to be tested

Question 37 refers to the INVALSI test of English: 67,5% of the respondents were aware that there is a target CEFR level of competence at the end of lower secondary. 61,8% stated that the level is A2, which is thought to be appropriate and realistic by 54,9 of the respondents. As already mentioned, in Italy the INVALSI test of English is also delivered to students at the end of lower secondary school (grade 8) where the set target level is A2.
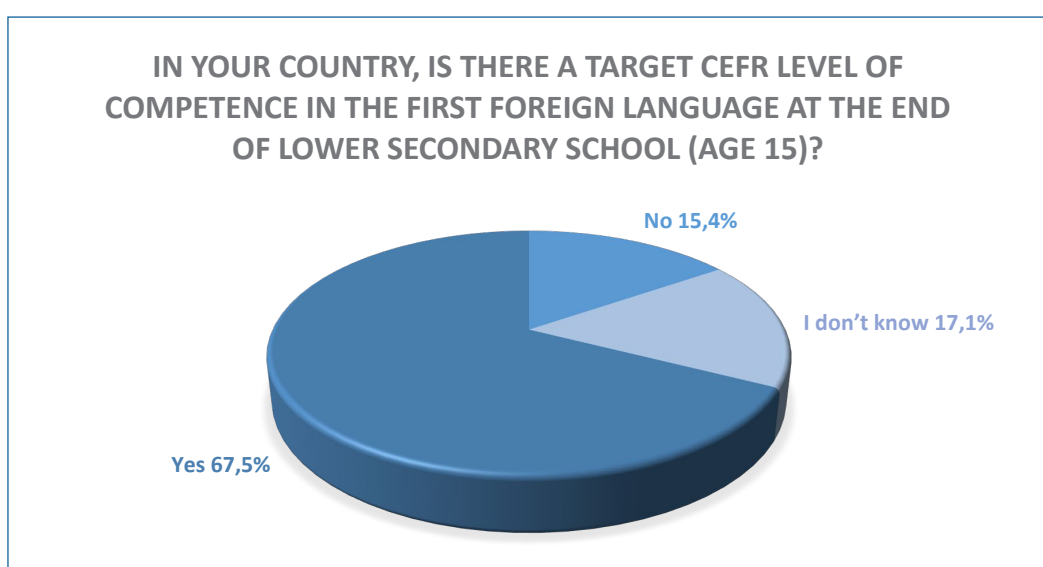

IN YOUR COUNTRY, IS THERE A TARGET CEFR LEVEL OF COMPETENCE IN THE FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT THE END OF LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL (AGE 15)?

No 15,4%

I don't know 17,1%

Yes 67,5%

Figure 2.30: Presence of a target CEFR level in the first foreign language at the end of lower secondary school

The following figures provide more details:

Respondents who answered YES to question 37:

If yes, specify	N	%
C2	3	0,2%
C1	8	0,4%
B2	83	4,4%
B1	630	33,3%
A2	1169	61,8%
Total	1893	100,0%

Figure 2.31: Target CEFR level in the first foreign language at the end of lower secondary school

DO YOU THINK THIS TARGET IS:

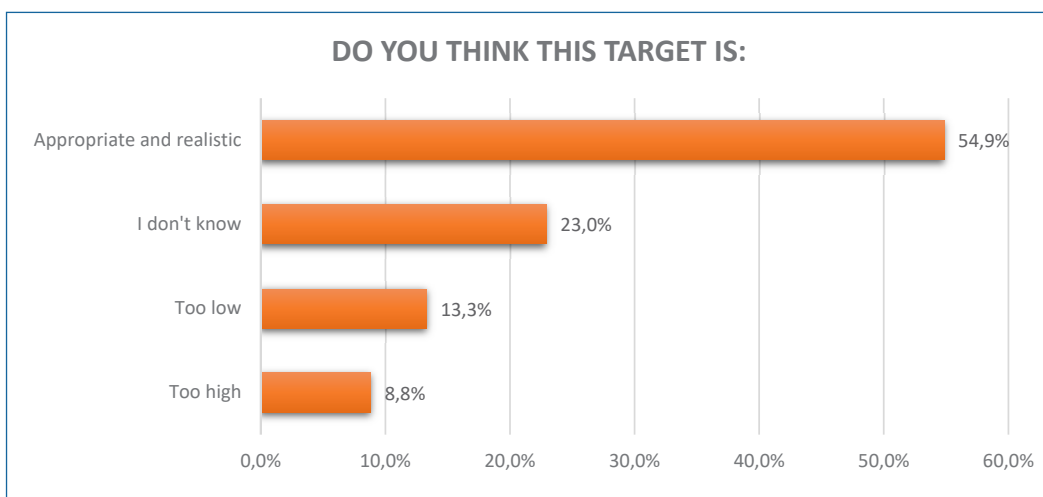|	
Appropriate and realistic	54,9%
I don't know	23,0%
Too low	13,3%
Too high	8,8%

Figure 2.32: Appropriateness of the target

Question 40 refers to the national test of English carried out by INVALSI at the end of upper secondary school: 68,8% of the respondents were aware that there is a target CEFR level of competence. 76,1% stated that the level is B2, which is thought to be appropriate and realistic by 49,6% of the respondents. As already mentioned, in Italy the INVALSI test of English is also delivered to students at the end of upper secondary school (grade 13) and the expected target level is B2 for English as the first foreign language.
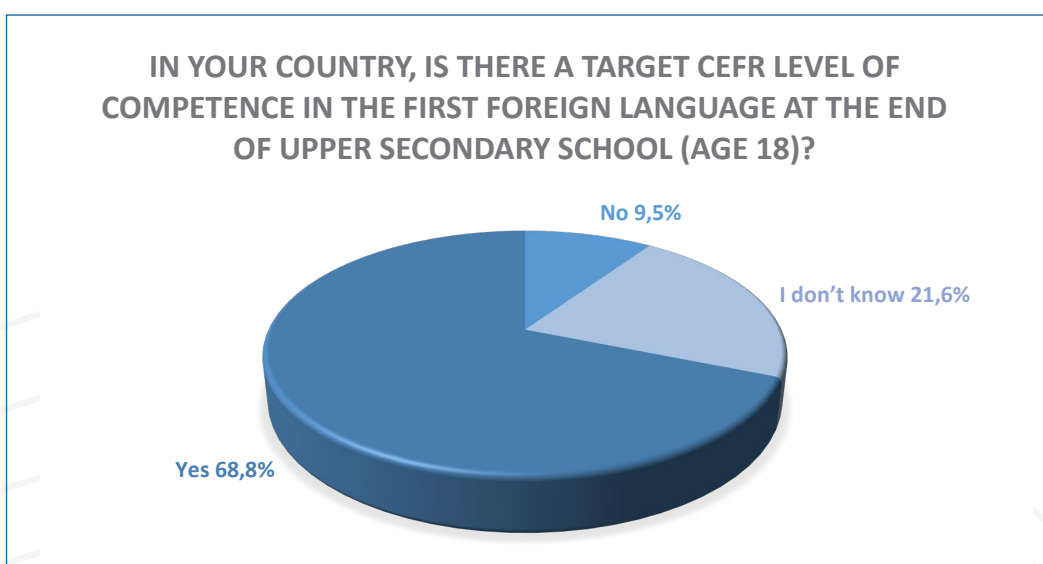
IN YOUR COUNTRY, IS THERE A TARGET CEFR LEVEL OF COMPETENCE IN THE FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT THE END OF UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL (AGE 18)?

No 9,5%
I don't know 21,6%
Yes 68,8%

Figure 2.33: Presence of a target CEFR level in the first foreign language at the end of upper secondary school

The following figures provide more details for respondents who answered YES to question 40 and considered the target level appropriate.
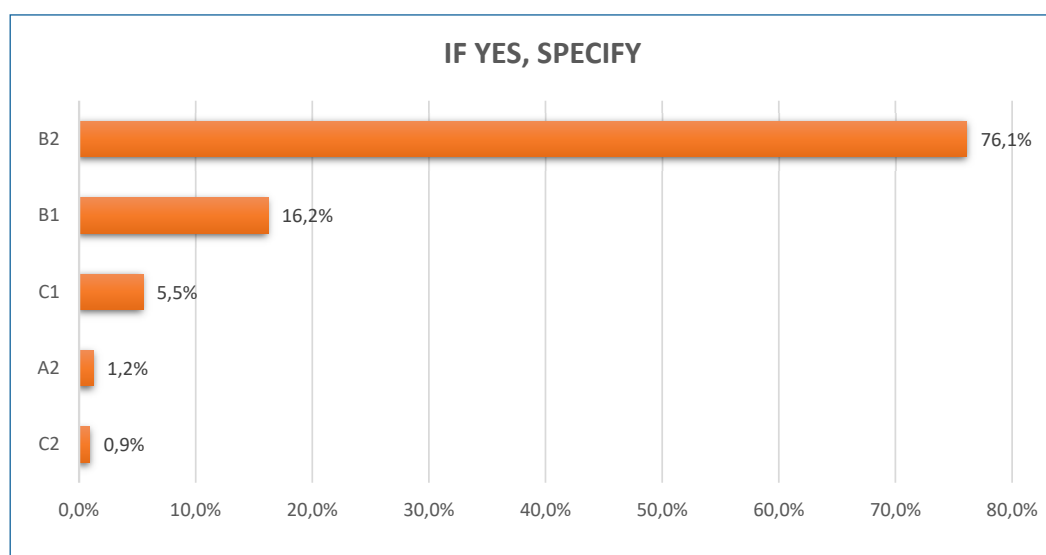

Figure 2.34: Target CEFR level in the first foreign language at the end of upper secondary school
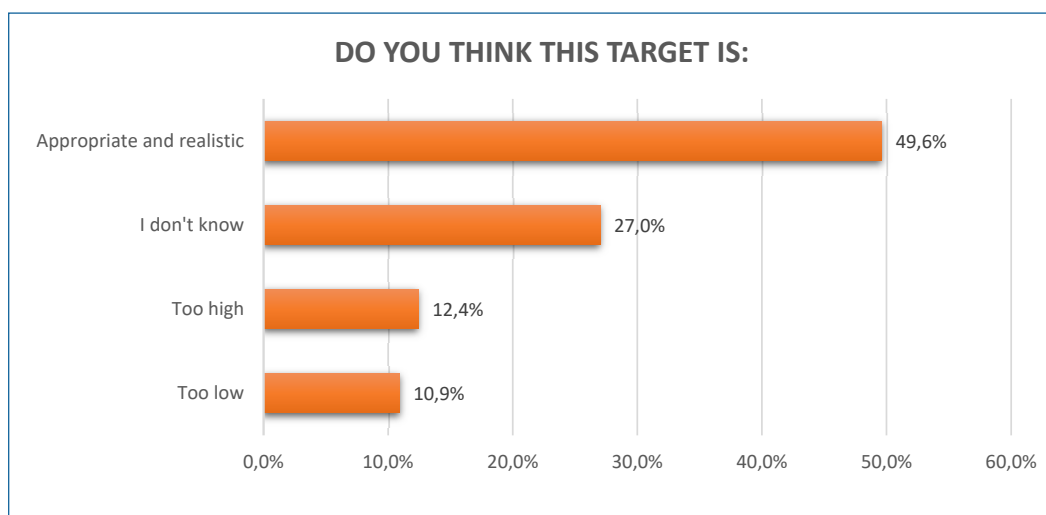

Figure 2.35: Appropriateness of the target

When asked if they would be in favour of a PISA test of languages to assess 15-year old students, 61,4% of the respondents were in favour.

Italian teachers' positive attitudes to taking international standardized language tests with the aim of providing comparative data on national and international levels would suggest a good reason for Italy to participate in the PISA 2025 test of English.
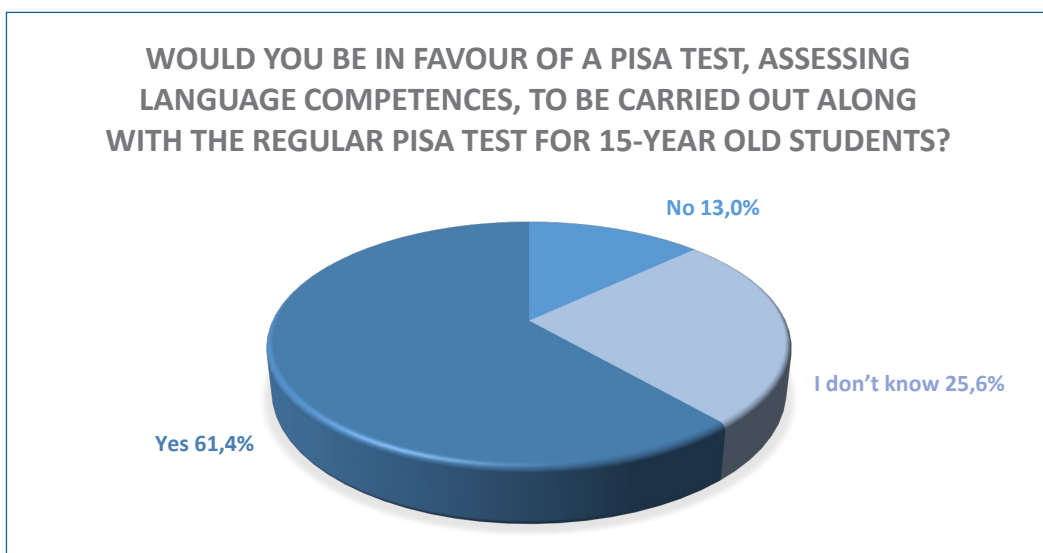
Figure 2.36: Attitudes to a PISA language test

Listening, oral interaction and reading are the skills which the highest percentage of respondents would like to see tested by the PISA test.
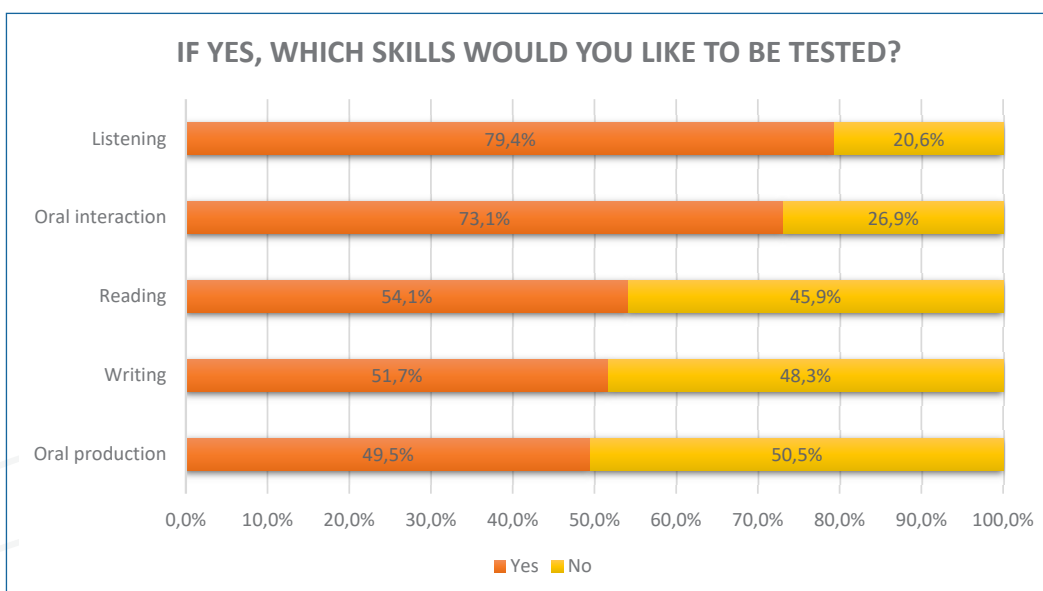

Figure 2.37: Attitudes to the language skills to be tested

KEY FINDINGS

CEFR levels and descriptors provide the basis of the Italian National Guidelines and are used to define the expected attainment targets for different school levels. These are considered appropriate and realistic by respondents as they provide a real framework of reference for learning and assessment.

Italian standardized tests of English (INVALSI tests) are generally regarded positively.

Respondents were largely in favour of a European wide test of language competence and showed a positive attitude towards participating in international tests.

The OECD-PISA tests in 2025 would be welcomed for the assessment of English language skills including listening, oral interaction and reading.

In addition, the results of this section clearly indicate a significant interest in the assessment of oral skills.

2.1.7. CLIL activities

2.1.7.1. CLIL in Italy: an overview and background information

CLIL was introduced into the Italian school system in 2003 through a Reform Law, which made it mandatory for upper secondary schools to teach a subject in another language (Langé, Cinganotto, 2014; Cinganotto, 2016). Italy's CLIL mandate is conceptualized as a national language education policy within the larger European plurilingualism strategy. Pilot projects involving school networks have been organized by the Ministry of Education since 2010-11, these have involved, in particular, "licei linguistici", where two subjects in two languages are taught following CLIL methodology (Cinganotto, 2021b).

As a part of the Italian school strategy, the Reform Law introduced CLIL as mandatory in both "licei" (grammar schools) and "istituti tecnici" (technical schools) based on the following guidelines:

- the teaching of a subject in a foreign language is to be offered in the final (fifth) year at licei; any curricular subject can be chosen;

- the teaching of a subject in a foreign language is to be offered in the final (fifth) year at technical schools; the subject must be one included in the specialist areas offered by the school;

- the teaching of two subjects in two foreign languages is to be offered in the final three years at licei linguistici.

A Decree dated 16 April 2012 defined the national CLIL teacher profile: a subject teacher (DNL or non-linguistic subject) who has attained a C1 level of competence in the target language and has attended a 20 credits university course on CLIL methodology. It is a requirement for participants in these courses to be in-service permanent teachers. It should be noted that participants in initial training are required to complete a 60-credit course.

The CLIL teacher profile at the end of a 20-credit course is summarised in the table below.

Language dimension:

The teacher

- has a C1 level of competence in the foreign language (CEFR)
- is able to manage, adapt and use subject materials in the foreign language
- has a mastery of the specific subject language (specific lexicon, discourse types, text genres and forms) and of the subject concepts in the foreign language.

Subject dimension:

The teacher

- is able to use the subject knowledge according to the national curricula of the relevant school level
- is able to teach the subject content integrating language and content.

Methodological dimension:

The teacher

- is able to plan CLIL learning pathways in cooperation with language teachers and teachers of other subjects
- is able to find, choose, adapt, create materials and resources to enhance CLIL lessons including using ICT
- is able to plan a CLIL learning pathway autonomously, using methodologies and strategies aimed at fostering the learning of content through the foreign language
- is able to identify, create and use assessment tools which are consistent with CLIL methodology.

Figure 2.38: The Italian CLIL teacher profile

The state of the art of CLIL provision in Italy is mentioned in Eurydice Brief, 2017 as a case study. The reason for this important recognition is explained in the following figure.

Case study: Italy – CLIL for all in upper secondary education

The introduction of CLIL was implemented in all Licei and Istituti Tecnici (upper secondary education) in 2014/15 as part of a comprehensive school reform. In practice, one non-language subject must be taught in a foreign language in the final year at Licei and Instituti Tecnici. In the latter, the subject must be chosen from the specialist areas. In the final three years of Licei linguistici, two different nonlanguage subjects must be taught through two different foreign languages.

The Ministry of education has defined the competences and qualifications teachers need to teach CLIL classes. They concern the target languages, the non-language subjects and issues relating to methodology and teaching approaches. In particular, CLIL teachers must have attained a C1 level of competence on the scale defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). In order to help potential CLIL teachers acquire the appropriate knowledge and skills, the education authorities are financing specific continuing professional development activities. For instance, in 2016, within a new school reform, they launched a National Teacher Training Plan which established a wide range of training programmes in CLIL methodology, which also included teachers from primary, lower secondary and vocational schools.

Figure 2.39: Eurydice Brief, 2017, p. 14

2.1.7.2. CLIL in Italy: survey results

The survey aimed to explore teachers' attitudes, experience, knowledge and training regarding CLIL methodology.

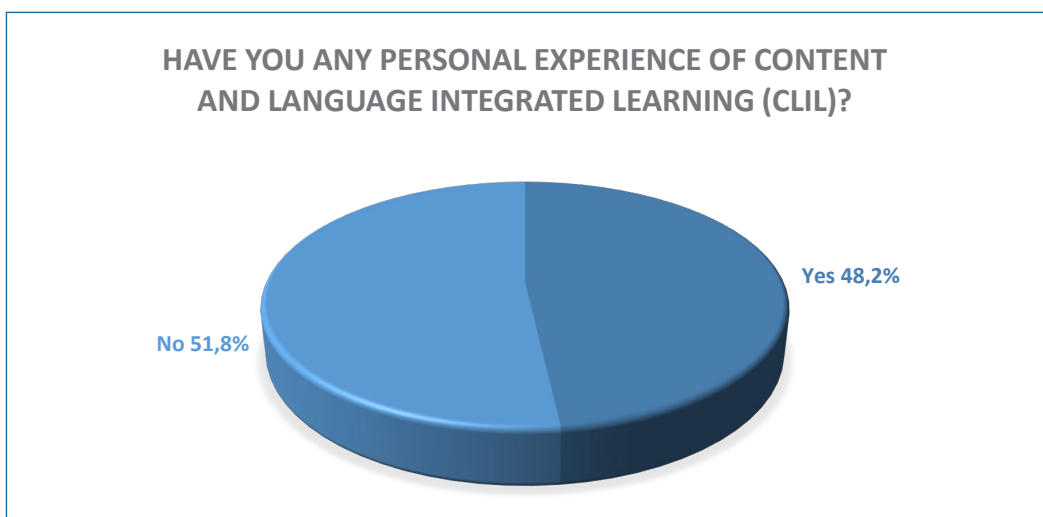48,2% of the respondents had previous experience of CLIL.

HAVE YOU ANY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING (CLIL)?

Yes 48,2%

No 51,8%

Figure 2.40: The respondents' previous experience of CLIL

36,2% of the respondents identified the CLIL teacher as the subject teacher, which is actually as the Reform Law defined it.

WHO IS THE CLIL TEACHER IN YOUR COUNTRY?

Both of them — 35,0%
The subject teacher — 36,2%
The language teacher — 24,0%
Other — 2,9%
I don't know — 1,9%

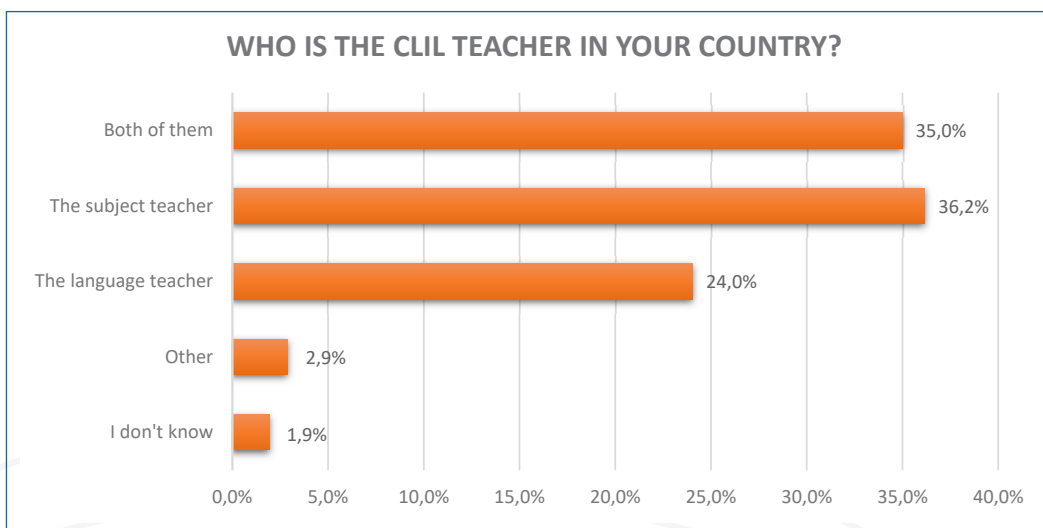0,0% 5,0% 10,0% 15,0% 20,0% 25,0% 30,0% 35,0% 40,0%

Figure 2.41: Knowledge of the CLIL teacher profile in Italy

In line with the Reform Law, 45,9% of the respondents who answered yes to the previous question, were aware that a subject is taught in at least one foreign language using CLIL methodology. NB: 20% of the respondents who mentioned two languages are likely to have come from "licei linguistici".

Almost two thirds of the respondents are aware that CLIL is offered in more than one language, with 10.9 % indicating that CLIL can be taught in "more than three" languages. This is an indication that CLIL provides opportunities for plurilingualism.
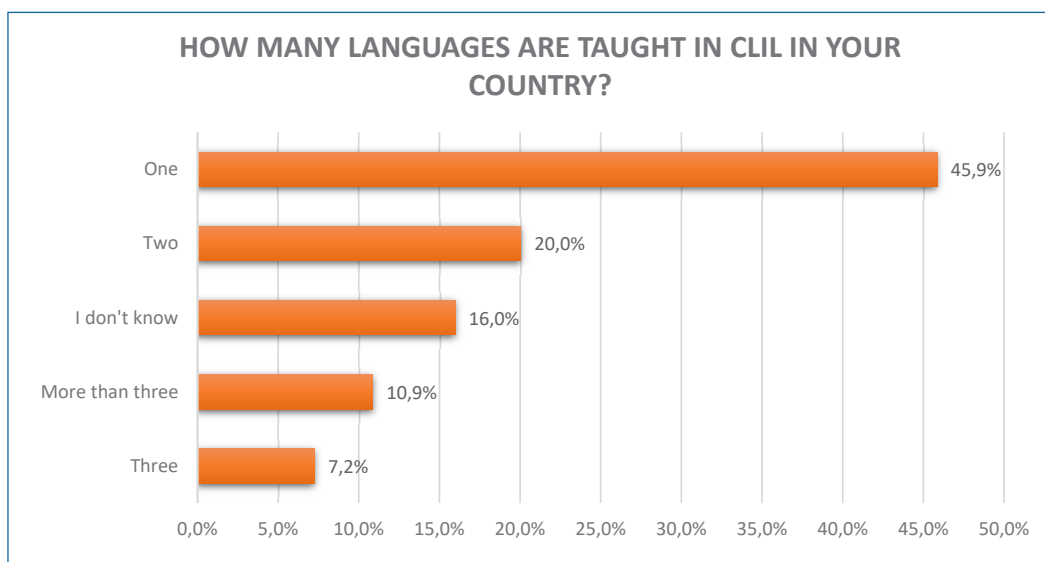
Figure 2.42: Number of languages taught in CLIL

72% of the respondents are aware that CLIL teachers should attend specific training courses: the Regulations set out both language and methodological specifications for course delivery for teacher training to be delivered by Italian universities.
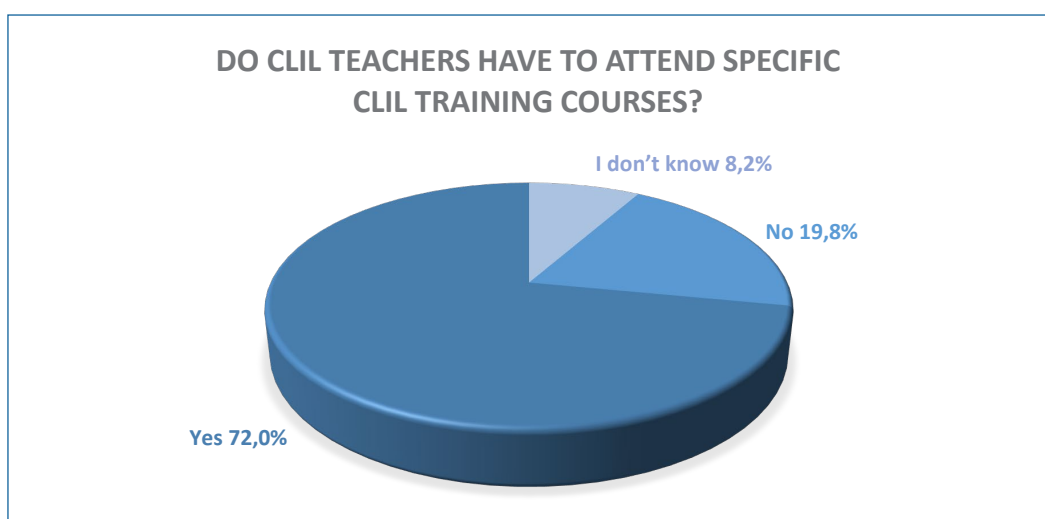

Figure 2.43: Specific CLIL training courses

According to 77,3% of the respondents, CLIL is more popular at upper secondary school, where it is also compulsory. A significant percentage of participants indicate CLIL is also a valuable practice in primary and lower secondary schools.
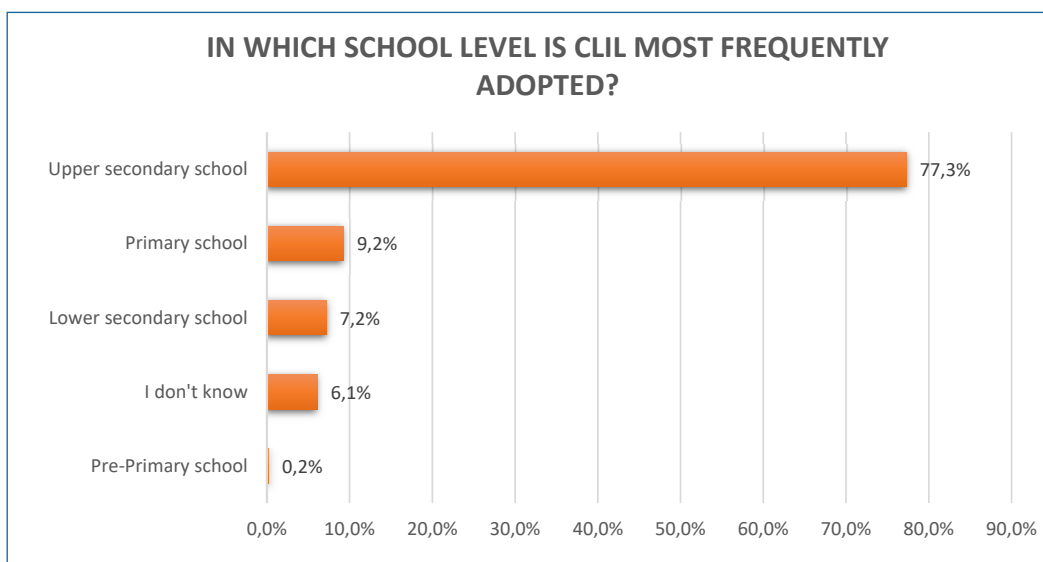
IN WHICH SCHOOL LEVEL IS CLIL MOST FREQUENTLY ADOPTED?

School level	Percentage
Upper secondary school	77,3%
Primary school	9,2%
Lower secondary school	7,2%
I don't know	6,1%
Pre-Primary school	0,2%

Figure 2.44: School level where CLIL is mostly adopted

KEY FINDINGS

CLIL is more common at upper secondary school level. However, this is not surprising considering it should be compulsory in most upper secondary schools in line with the Reform Law.

Italian teachers are generally aware of the CLIL teacher profile and of the CLIL training courses delivered by Italian universities.

It should be noted that in-service permanent teachers are required to follow a 20-credit university course on CLIL methodology, whereas participants in initial teacher training are required to complete a 60-credit course.

2.1.8. Teacher Education

2.1.8.1. Teacher Education in Italy: an overview

The 2019 Council Recommendation on languages considers teacher training a crucial dimension in a country's language policy and emphasizes the importance of gaining teaching or training experiences in other countries as part of any language teacher's professional profile.

The Italian Law 107/2015 established that Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teachers is compulsory, ongoing and systematic, defining it as both a right and a professional obligation for teachers.

Training activities are carried out by the Ministry of Education at a national, regional and local level. According to the legislation, autonomy allows schools to design their own CPD plan, within the PTOF ("Piano Triennale Offerta Formativa"), the three-year school plan. Schools collect the training needs of the school staff, organize relevant activities either directly or by setting up training agreements with universities, research centres and other institutions.

Schools at local level are organised into networks for various purposes, including training, project development and the sharing of best practice. Each region has at least one "scuola polo", a school that coordinates the organization of CDP activities according to the training priorities established by the Ministry of Education and in line with the CPD plan of the individual school.

2.1.8.2. Teacher Education

During their first year of service, 71,7% of the respondents had to attend a compulsory training course for recently recruited teachers ("Neoassunti") which was monitored and carried out by INDIRE on behalf of the Ministry of Education.
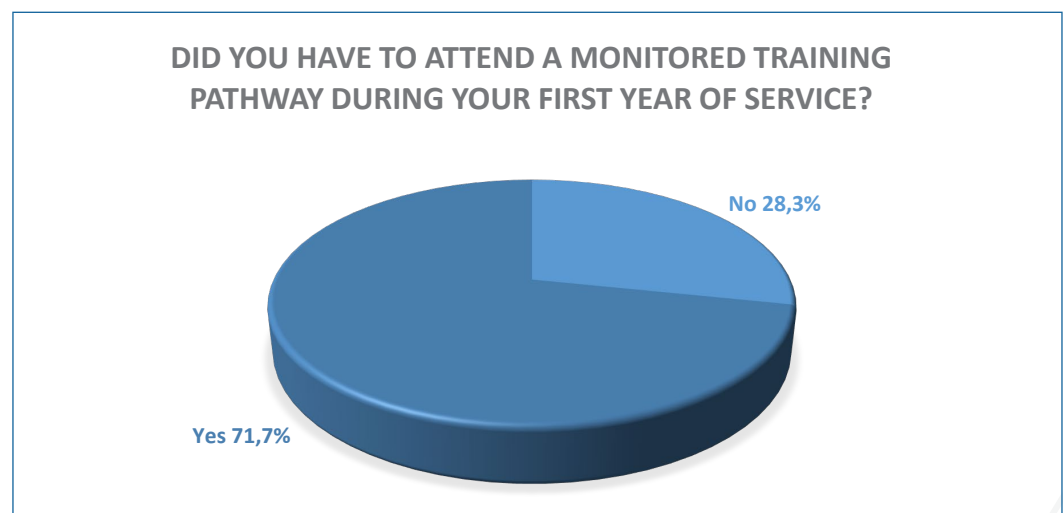

DID YOU HAVE TO ATTEND A MONITORED TRAINING PATHWAY DURING YOUR FIRST YEAR OF SERVICE?

No 28,3%

Yes 71,7%

Figure 2.45: Monitored training pathway during the first year of service

A positive finding is that 64,8% of the teachers declared they had attended continuous professional development activities.

HAVE YOU BEEN OFFERED ANY CONTINOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?
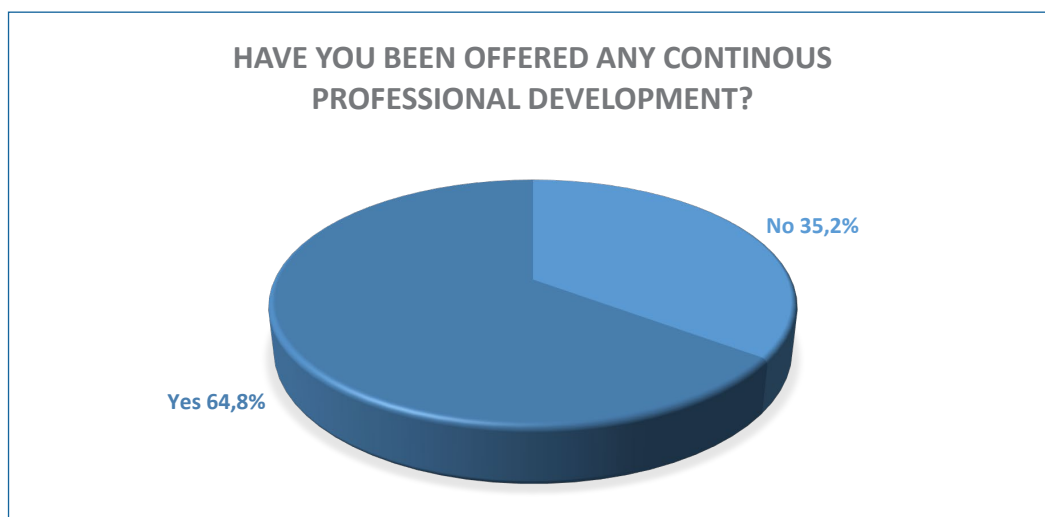
No 35,2%

Yes 64,8%

Figure 2.46: CPD offered or not

67,2% of the respondents were trained abroad either as language or CLIL teachers: this demonstrates that many teachers are aware of the added benefits of the international dimension in continuous professional development.
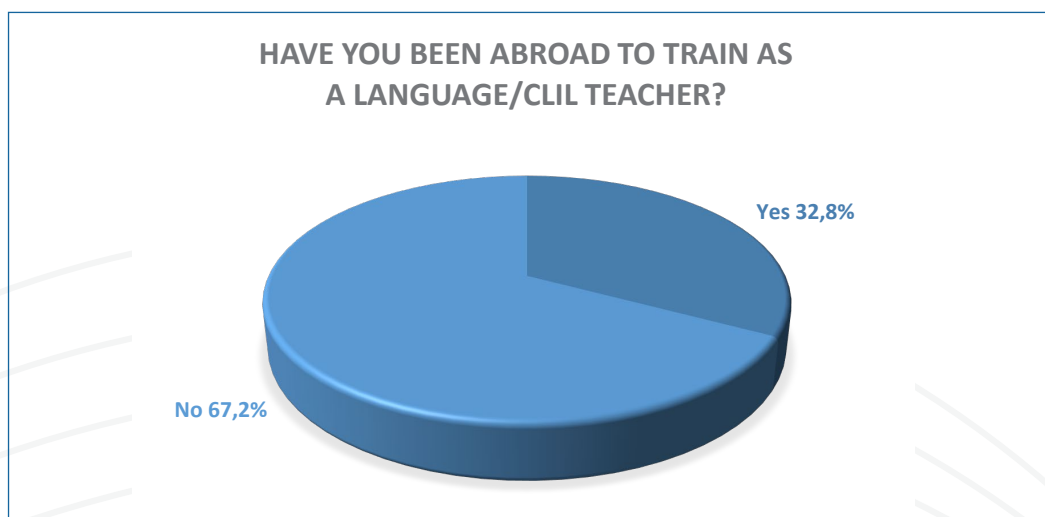
HAVE YOU BEEN ABROAD TO TRAIN AS A LANGUAGE/CLIL TEACHER?

Yes 32,8%

No 67,2%

Figure 2.47: Training abroad as a language/CLIL teacher

The experience abroad was part of their initial teacher training for 64,3% of the respondents.
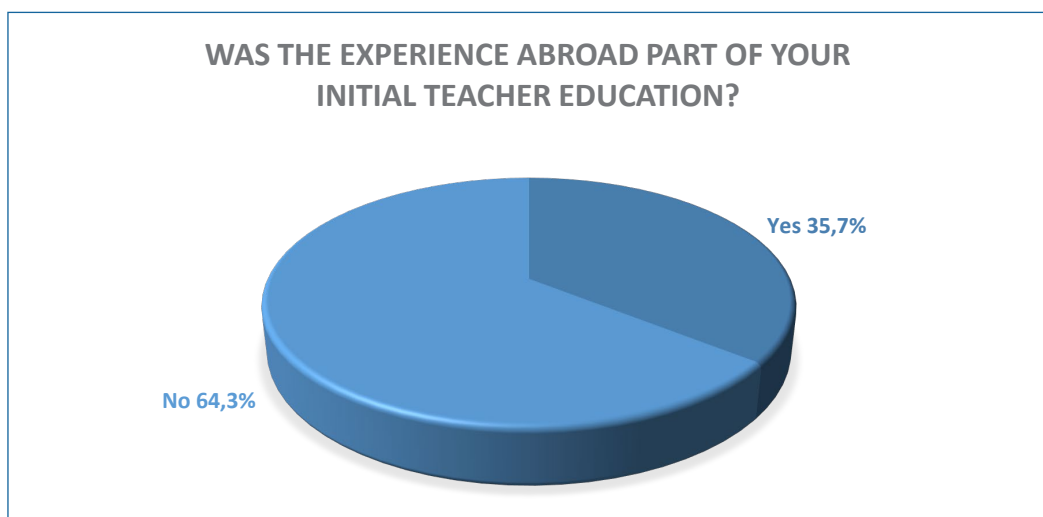
WAS THE EXPERIENCE ABROAD PART OF YOUR INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION?

Yes 35,7%

No 64,3%

Figure 2.48: Experience abroad as a part of the initial teacher education

This experience was funded mainly through "other funding" and only partly through a university with an Erasmus grant (14%). Erasmus does not seem to be popular and the underlining reasons for this need to be explored.

HOW WAS THIS FUNDED?

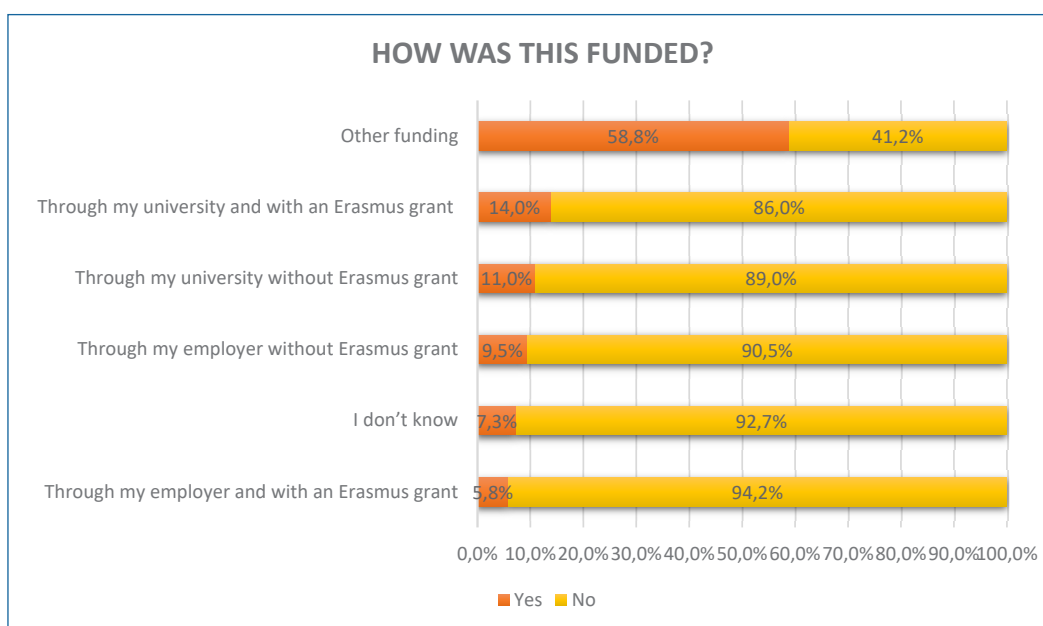|	Yes	No
Other funding	58,8%	41,2%
Through my university and with an Erasmus grant	14,0%	86,0%
Through my university without Erasmus grant	11,0%	89,0%
Through my employer without Erasmus grant	9,5%	90,5%
I don't know	7,3%	92,7%
Through my employer and with an Erasmus grant	5,8%	94,2%

Figure 2.49: Funding of the experience abroad as a part of the initial teacher training

More than half of the respondents had the opportunity to have an experience abroad as part of their CPD.

WAS THE EXPERIENCE ABROAD PART OF YOUR CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

No 41,6%

Yes 58,4%

Figure 2.50: Experience abroad as a part of the CPD

A limited number of respondents (26,3%) indicated that funding for their experience abroad had come from an Erasmus grant. This data would suggest a limited knowledge of how to attain Erasmus funding.
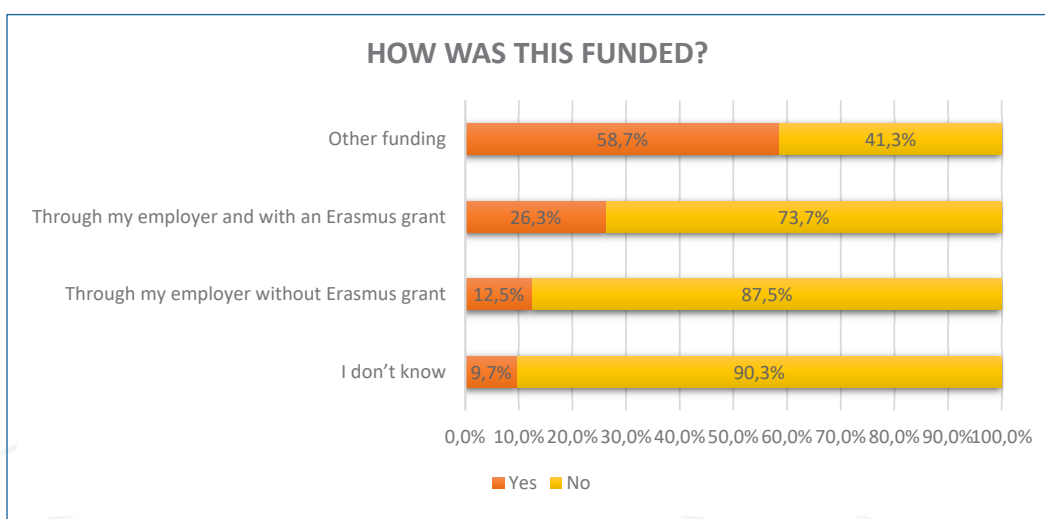
HOW WAS THIS FUNDED?

	Yes	No
Other funding	58,7%	41,3%
Through my employer and with an Erasmus grant	26,3%	73,7%
Through my employer without Erasmus grant	12,5%	87,5%
I don't know	9,7%	90,3%

0,0% 10,0% 20,0% 30,0% 40,0% 50,0% 60,0% 70,0% 80,0% 90,0% 100,0%

■ Yes ■ No

Figure 2.51: Funding of the experience abroad as a part of the CPD

2.1.9. Language learning and teaching in COVID-19 times

2.1.9.1. Learning technologies for language learning and CLIL during the pandemic: an overview

The sudden spread of COVID-19 all over the world at the beginning of 2020 forced the majority of schools and universities to switch to remote, blended or hybrid teaching.

The result was a boom of webtools, platforms and digital content which was shared among communities of practice of foreign language and CLIL teachers.

However, the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) and digital content for language learning had already been strongly recommended by the European Commission and the Council of Europe long before the pandemic (see the Communication on Rethinking Education[52], adopted by the Commission in 2012).

The European Commission report dated 2014 "Improving the effectiveness of language learning: CLIL and computer assisted language learning[53]" (European Commission, 2014), showed how teaching outcomes could be improved through the use of ICT (CALL: Computer Assisted Language Learning) and Open Educational Resources for language learning and CLIL. The report specifically recommended policy makers to enable schools to provide facilities and resources for CALL in both formal and non-formal learning; promote the benefits of specific CALL tools in language learning; provide training for teachers; provide or support teachers to develop communities of practice so that they could share resources and methods for using CALL effectively.

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[52] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52012DC0669
[53] https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/working-group-report-clil-language-learning_en.pdf

The already mentioned 2019 European Recommendation on languages stated that "new ways of learning need to be explored for a society that is becoming increasingly mobile and digital. In particular, digital developments allow for more and more languages to be learned and practiced outside the classroom and curricula. Current assessment procedures do not fully reflect these developments". It is also highlighted that "Digital tools for language learning and professional development of educational staff, in the field of language learning, such as massive open online courses (MOOCs), self-assessment tools, networks, including eTwinning and the School Education Gateway's Teacher Academy" should be adopted.

The use of OERs for curriculum alignment in general and for language learning in particular, has been widely recommended: to foster creation, to facilitate the use, re-use and the sharing of resources among both teachers and students, thus creating communities of practice (Cinganotto, Cuccurullo, 2016).

In particular, student-generated content and videos (Cinganotto, Cuccurullo, 2015; Cinganotto, Cuccurullo, 2019) can represent a very engaging way to carry out meaningful language practice or CLIL tasks and projects (see Task-Based Learning or Project-Based Learning - Nunan, 2004; Thomas, 2017; Cinganotto, 2021b).

Innovative, interactive and student-centered methodologies can make the use of videos and open resources meaningful for an authentic use of the language in context, facilitating deep learning.

Due to the COVID-19 emergency, schools in Italy were closed from March 2020 until the end of the school year. During this period, language teachers were able to take advantage of a wide range of repositories, websites, resources to help them reach their students at home and carry out effective and successful online learning activities.

During the global crisis, a large number of institutions, training centres and associations dealing with languages offered a significant number of OERs, allowing access to teachers/educators, learners as well as parents, with the aim of supporting them with home-schooling. An example is the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), an institution of the Council of Europe: a specific area with OERs for language learning was titled "Treasure chest of resources for learners, parents and teachers in times of COVID-19[54]".

In Italy the promotion of the use of OERs has been a part of the national school policy as a result of the National Digital School Plan promoted by the Ministry of Education since 2015.

In addition, during the pandemic an increasing number of universities started delivering MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses) and free online initiatives, enriching their learning offer and in many cases supporting teachers.

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[54] https://www.ecml.at/Resources/TreasureChestofResources/tabid/4397/language/en-GB/Default.aspx

As already mentioned in this report, INDIRE also organized different initiatives to support teachers and school leaders during the emergency remote teaching. These included a collection of open resources and webtools for different subjects and different school grades and a series of webinars run by teachers, school leaders, researchers and experts on a wide range of topics.

With reference to languages, webinars were delivered by teachers and offered examples of open resources and webtools which could be adapted and used in remote teaching. These included digital content and innovative methodologies for remote, blended or hybrid scenarios, such as Task-Based Learning, Project-Based Learning, debate (Cinganotto, 2019), and Flipped Learning.

2.1.9.2. Remote and blended teaching during the pandemic

According to question 62, almost all the respondents taught remotely during the COVID-19 emergency.
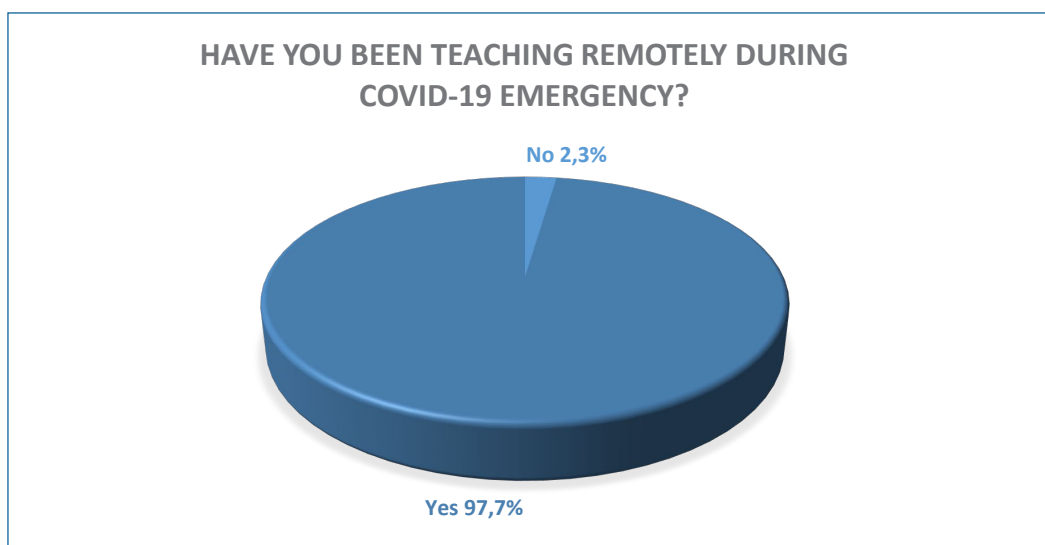

Figure 2.52: Remote teaching during the pandemic

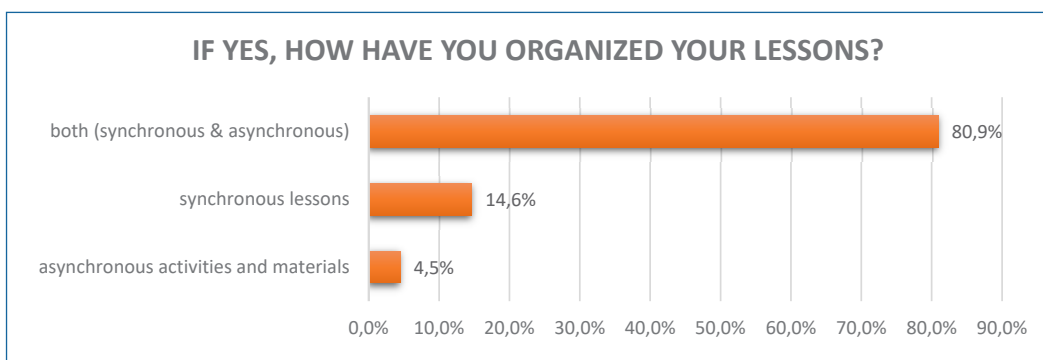The vast majority of the respondents organized their lessons both synchronously and asynchronously.

IF YES, HOW HAVE YOU ORGANIZED YOUR LESSONS?

both (synchronous & asynchronous)	80,9%
synchronous lessons	14,6%
asynchronous activities and materials	4,5%

Figure 2.53: Organization of the lessons

They all (97,7%) used digital platforms for their remote teaching.

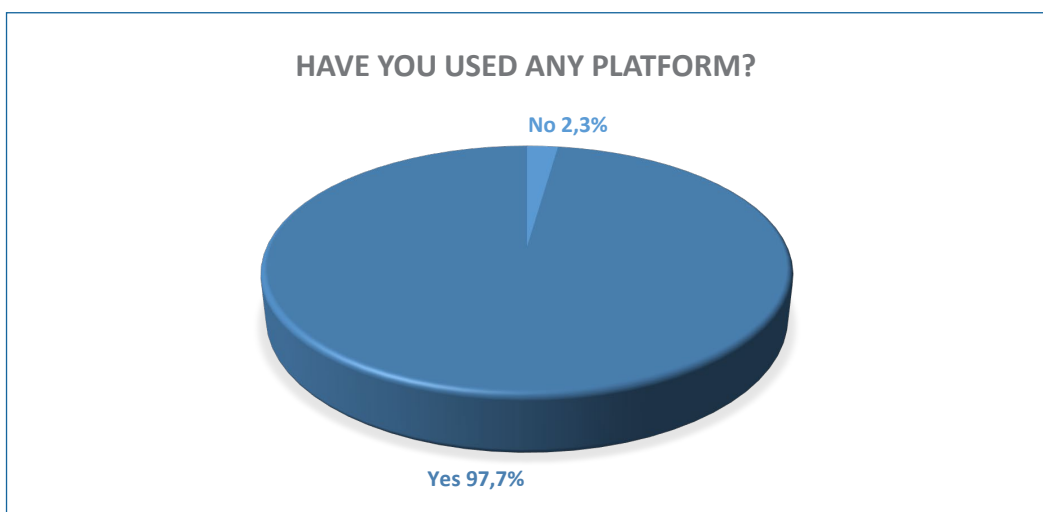**HAVE YOU USED ANY PLATFORM?**

No 2,3%

Yes 97,7%

Figure 2.54: Use of digital platforms

The majority of respondents used the platform provided by the school (85,8%).

IF YES, WHAT KIND OF PLATFORM HAVE YOU USED?

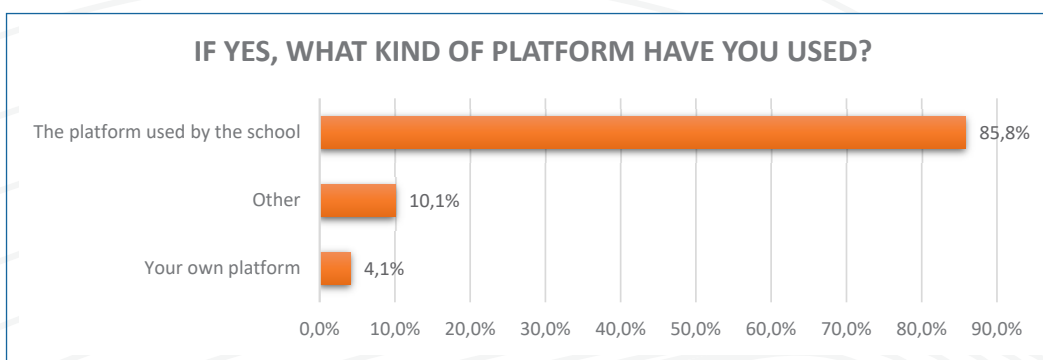|	
The platform used by the school	85,8%
Other	10,1%
Your own platform	4,1%

Figure 2.55: Kind of platform adopted

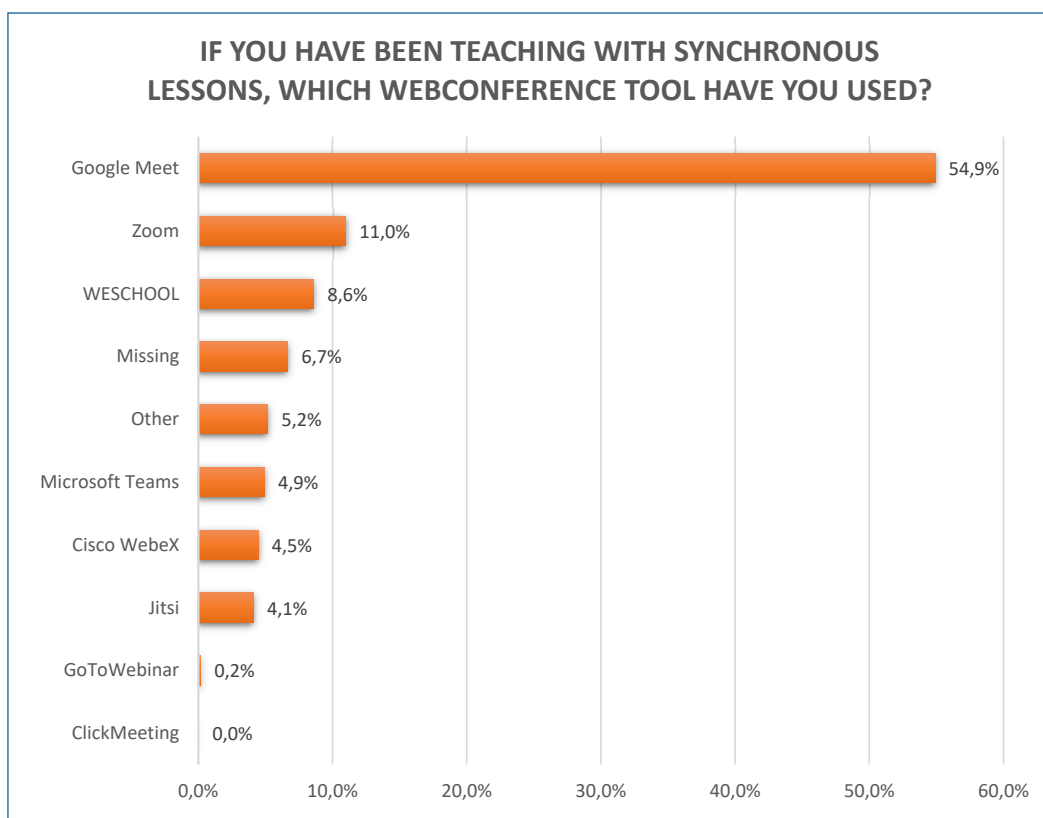The most popular webconference tool was Google Meet (54,9%).

Figure 2.56: Webconference tool adopted

GSuite is the most popular "education workspace" platform (47,3%) adopted by the schools for learning and collaboration.
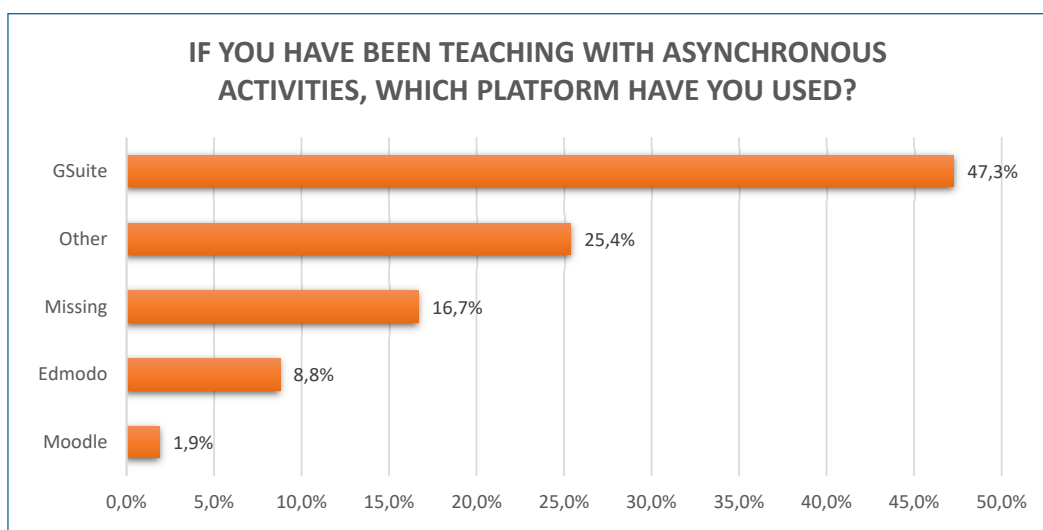
Figure 2.57: Most common platforms adopted for learning and collaboration

Nearly half of the respondents (47,2%) used specific webtools for languages.
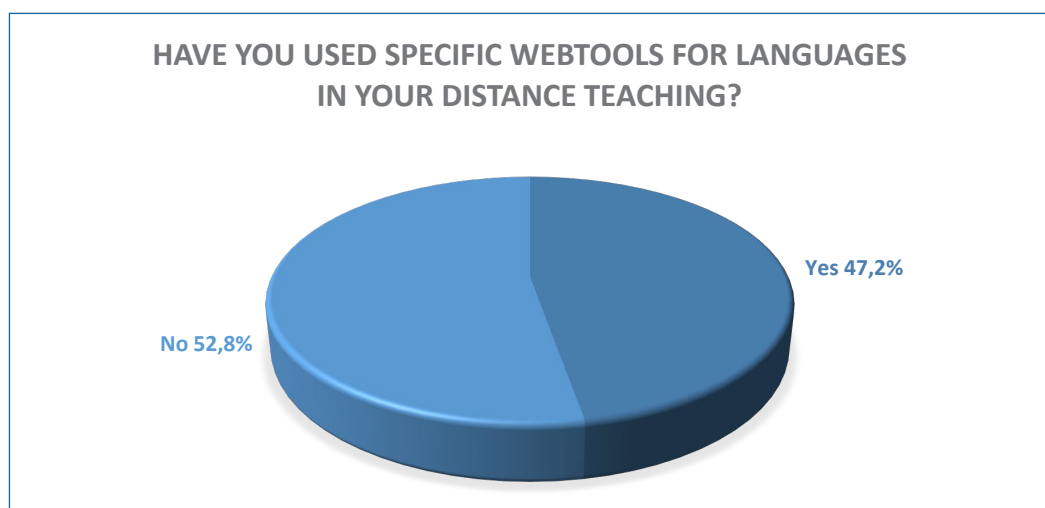
Figure 2.58: Use of specific webtools for languages

The language skills considered to be the most challenging in remote teaching contexts are oral interaction (60,5%), listening (57,4%) and oral production (44,6%).

Oral skills, in particular oral production and oral interaction were difficult to foster in remote teaching contexts, as a result of the limitations and constraints of the digital infrastructure, the students' anxiety, the lack of non-verbal and proxemic communication, plus the lack of eye contact, etc.
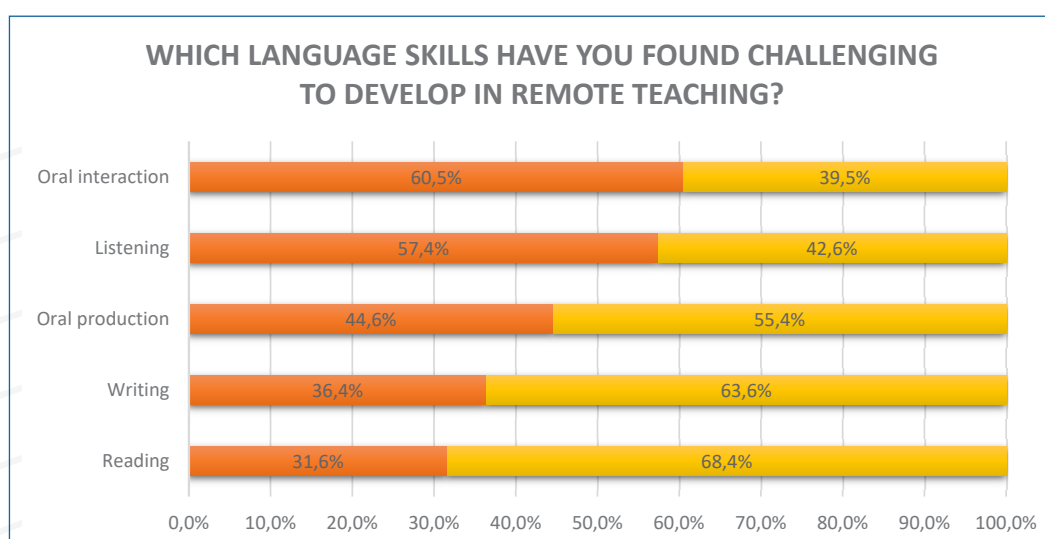
Figure 2.59: Most challenging skills to develop remotely

The language skills found to be the easiest to develop in remote teaching are reading (50,2%) and listening (49,1), both receptive skills.
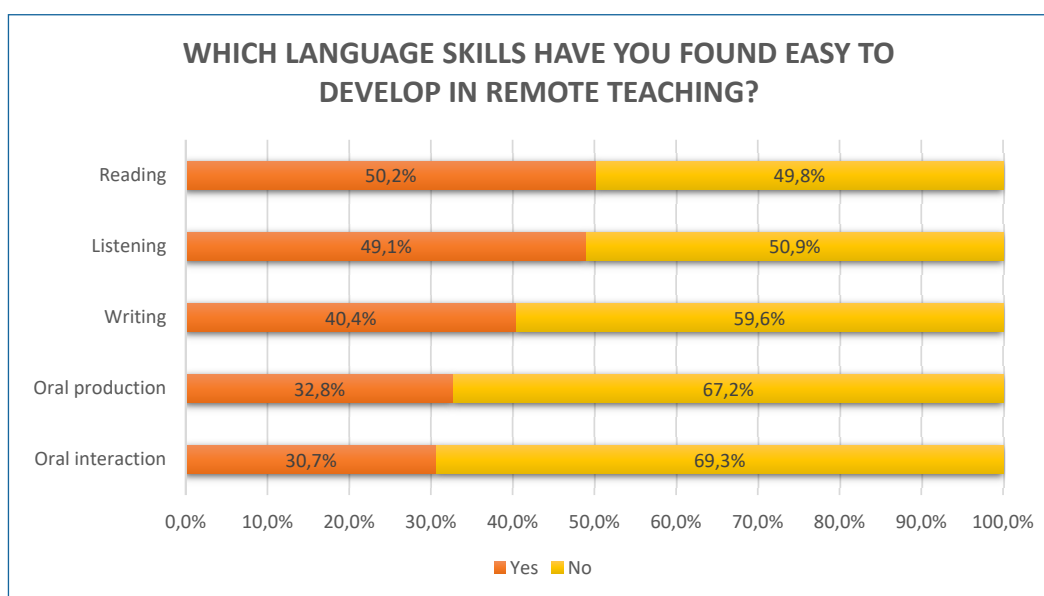
Figure 2.60: Easiest skills to develop in remote teaching

Students seem to be generally satisfied (36,3%) and quite satisfied (31,9%) with their experience of distance learning.
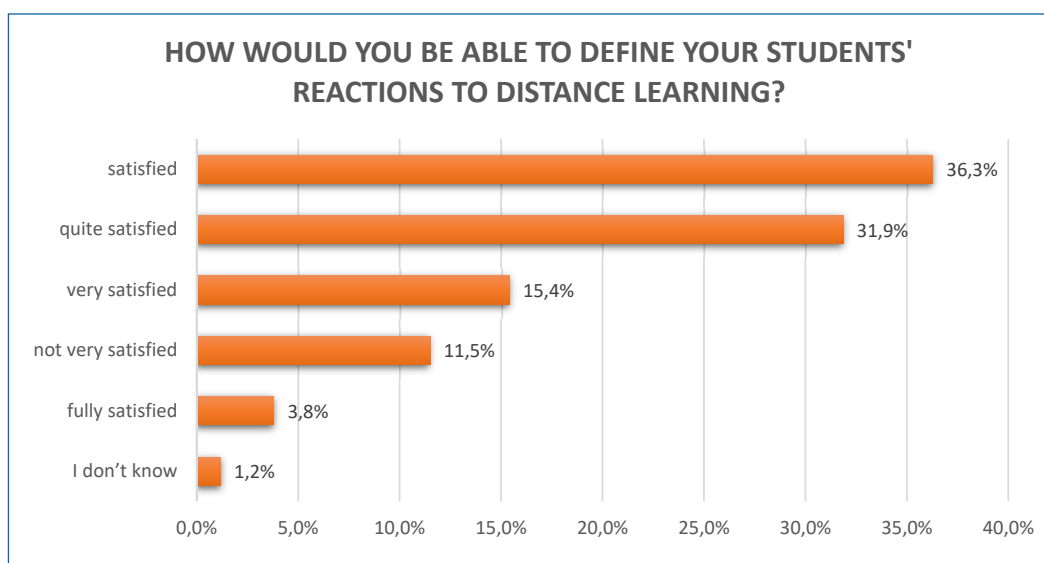
Figure 2.61: Students' reactions to distance learning

Students' parents also seem to be quite satisfied (34,9%) and reasonably satisfied (27%) with distance learning.

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE YOUR STUDENTS' PARENTS' REACTIONS TO DISTANCE LEARNING?

satisfied	34,9%
quite satisfied	27,0%
very satisfied	16,7%
not very satisfied	10,6%
I don't know	5,9%
fully satisfied	4,9%
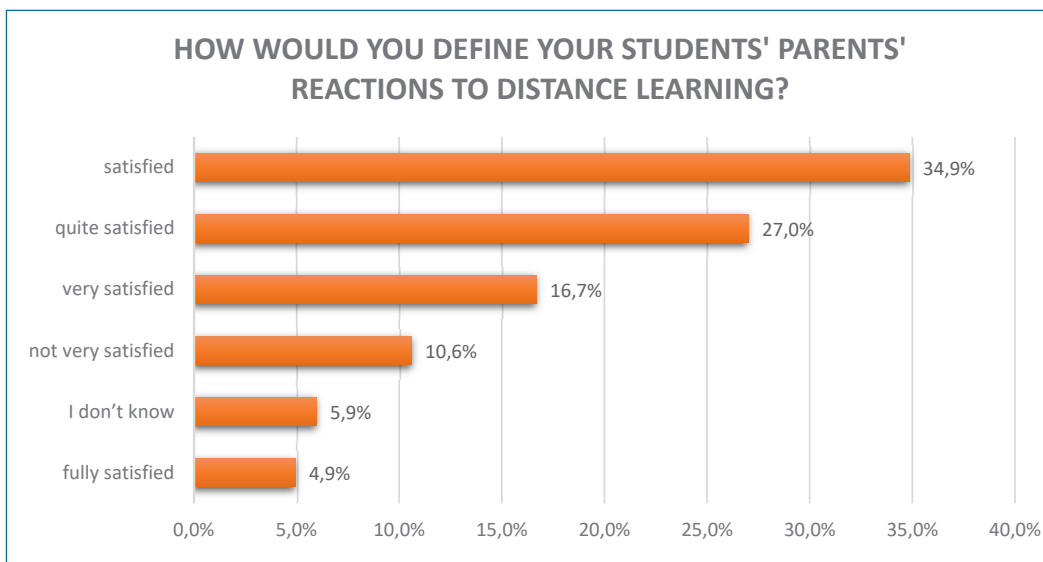
Figure 2.62: Parents' reactions to distance learning

During the COVID-19 emergency 86,8% of teachers stated they assessed their students' progress in foreign languages.

HAVE YOU ASSESSED YOUR STUDENTS' PROGRESS IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGES DURING COVID-19 EMERGENCY?

No 13,2%

Yes 86,8%
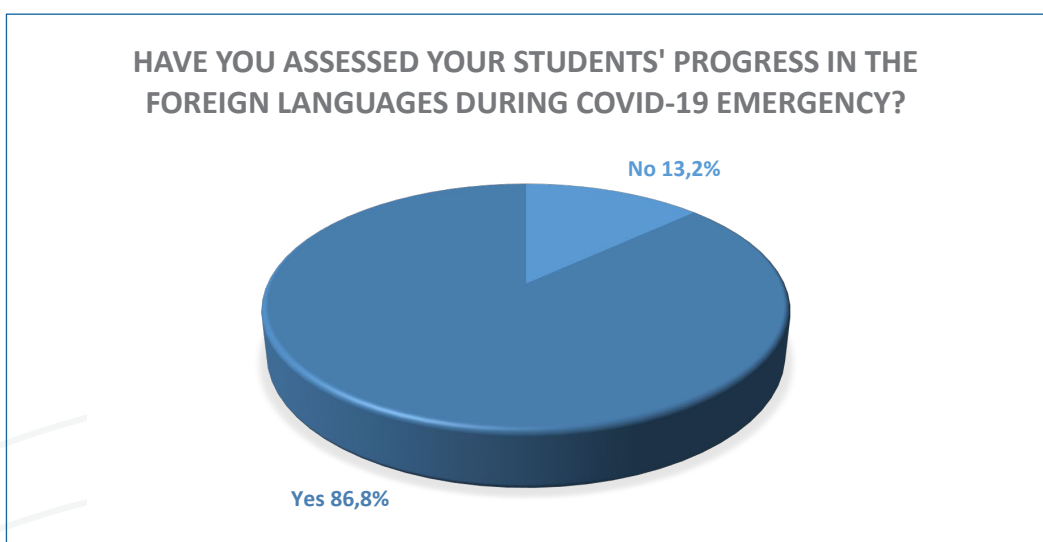
Figure 2.63: Assessment in the foreign languages during the pandemic

For those students whose progress was assessed, progress was considered quite good (48,4%) and good (27,1%).

IF YES, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THEIR PROGRESS?

quite good progress	48,4%
good progress	27,1%
weak progress	19,7%
very good progress	2,5%
no progress at all	1,1%
I don't know	0,9%
Missing	0,3%

Figure 2.64: Students' progress

61,2% of teachers found there were lessons to be learnt from this emergency that may be useful in the future. Some of them are highlighted in the comments below.

IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, ARE THERE ANY LESSONS LEARNT FROM THIS EMERGENCY THAT MAY BE USEFUL IN THE FUTURE?

No 11,5%

I don't know 27,3%

Yes 61,2%

Figure 2.65: Lessons learnt from the emergency

Valuable comments were collected in the questionnaire about remote teaching: respondents expressed their reactions about the strengths and weaknesses of open resources and digital tools.

The use of videos to convey content in a foreign language was considered particularly effective, as well as the exploitation of different webtools to create and adapt learning content to make it relevant for specific learners.

Here are some of the comments about the main lessons learnt from emergency remote teaching:
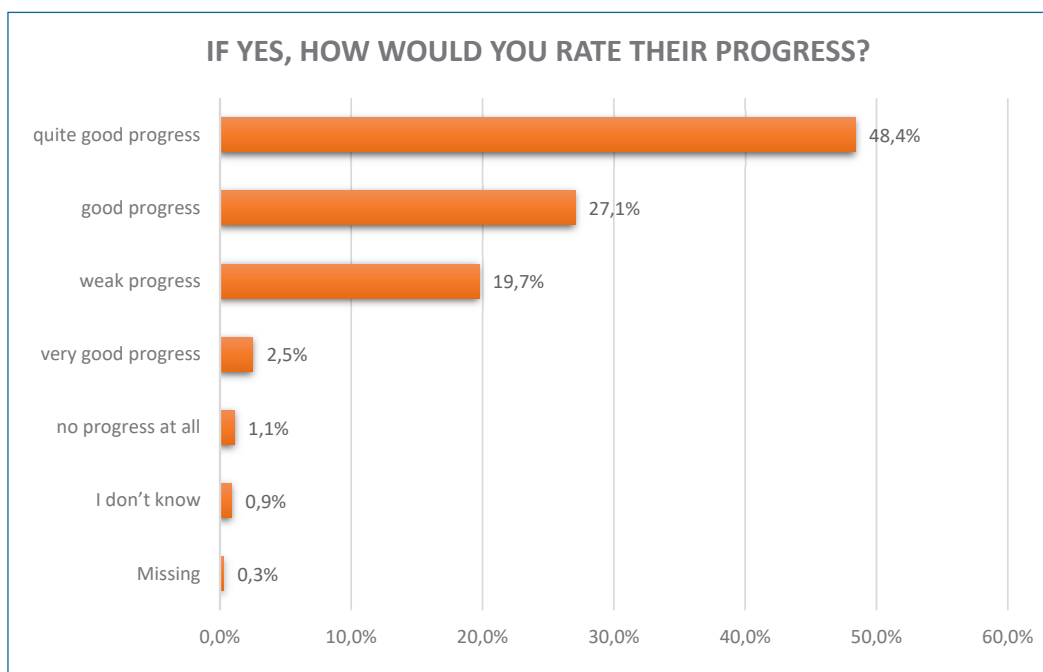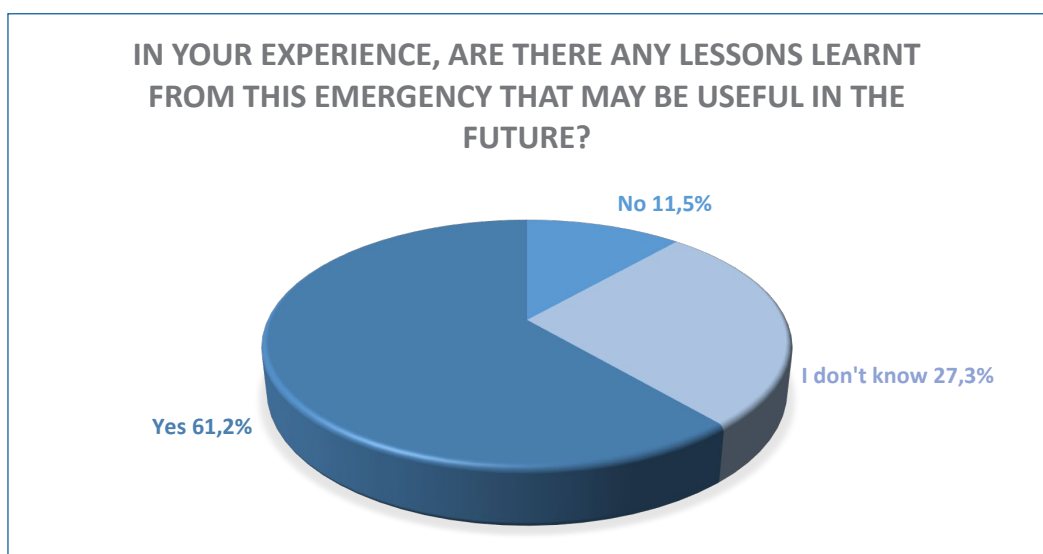
"I can use more webtools and video also in the classroom to practise listening and writing".

"I can simplify my teaching using webtools, choosing specific materials, motivating my students with nice resources".

"Important that students are introduced to the online platforms when in school and support can be given. They need to be competent. Should be part of the school induction".

"During this emergency I learnt to organize my lessons better and to make my materials fully accessible and always available for my students. Despite the problems and the difficulties that I faced, I managed to learn more about the use of internet tools and platforms. To conclude I'm proud of what I learnt and I think this represents a very valuable experience".

"The need to use more innovative web-based methodologies".

"I think I will go on using online tools to monitor the students' work at home and to get quick feedback on their learning experience and progress".

"It was amazing to discover so many new tools I could exploit for Foreign Language teaching. It made me change my way of preparing lessons and interacting with my students. It was challenging and rewarding at the same time".

"I think that studying at home has helped students to be more relaxed, focused, not to get distracted and not to waste their study time. Thanks to the use of Youtube and in-depth studies on English culture, they became more passionate about studying English".

"Teachers need more training on teaching online. Distance teaching/learning should be part of the ordinary teaching/learning process".

"New stimulating materials need to be offered continuously. No books".

"Online teaching/learning should be retained as part of a more complex, large-scale blended teaching/learning which makes quite extensive use of ICT to provide students with 21st-century competences".

"Technology offers an extensive range of very useful distance learning solutions, platforms and resources, but it is exhausting to be on screen for a long time. Moreover, many students have been left behind because of technical issues. Technology is fundamental but cannot replace the real presence of teachers and students in a classroom. Anyway, I think that the integration of technology is necessary and enriching".

The above-mentioned comments, selected from the most relevant ones about online emergency language teaching, show that teachers discovered the potential of online tools and resources to enhance language learning. These quotes demonstrate professional growth among teachers, which will also impact on approaches to future teaching activities in class.

Teachers were generally quite satisfied with remote teaching, although they had to face a lot of challenges. Classroom instruction is still considered crucial and necessary, but what is important is that online tools and open resources are clearly useful for future face-to-face and/or blended forms of instruction as well.

Positive findings about the integration of OERs and digital tools within regular practice have an impact on both teachers and students. Classroom instruction is still considered crucial and necessary even though teachers have found that digital tools allow new ways of planning and organizing lessons which make them more interactive and interesting.

Teachers also found students reacted positively to the new ways and models of instruction making this relevant for future schooling.

Oral interaction and production were the most challenging skills for teachers to develop in remote teaching contexts.

A large number of language teachers found synchronous online meetings were a good way to foster interaction.

Some examples highlight the potential of videos both for delivering authentic material and for enhancing students' critical thinking skills, oral production and fluency in the foreign language.

Working with videos, manipulating open resources drawing from repositories can help students improve their language competences and practice oral skills effectively, provided that videos or open resources are not used as passive delivery of content or "clips" of knowledge. Students need to feel actively engaged through innovative methodologies such as debate, flipped learning, Task-Based or Project-Based Learning.

In summary, teachers have acquired new competences from remote language teaching: they have discovered the potential of OERs, videos and webtools and have learnt how to integrate them into both synchronous and asynchronous lessons.

KEY FINDINGS

Almost all Italian teachers used webtools and platforms for remote teaching during the pandemic. They were generally quite satisfied about their experience, despite all the problems and challenges they faced.

Oral production and oral interaction proved to be the most challenging skills to develop remotely.

The use of tools for online learning and collaboration resulted in teachers' upskilling their digital competences.

In conclusion, during the pandemic and with the need to work remotely, teachers have acquired new competences. They have discovered the potential of OERs, videos and webtools and may adopt forms of blended or hybrid teaching in the future, as encouraged in the "Linee Guida per la Didattica Digitale Integrata" of the Italian Ministry of Education already mentioned in this report. Needless to say, synchronous online meetings will not replace traditional models of schooling: students will need to be actively engaged in both individual and collaborative tasks and projects in face-to-face classrooms.

It is important to highlight that this report provides only a snapshot of language teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy rather than a complete picture. With a sample of 2805 respondents, the findings show that language educators made heroic efforts to adjust to online teaching and learning and have benefited professionally as a result.

It is hoped that this report will have an impact on language teachers and other stakeholders, and will support them in developing their approaches to language teaching, learning and assessment in any educational scenario they find themselves in, whatever that might be: face-to-face, online, blended or hybrid.

2.2. Discussion and Recommendations

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2.2.1. Preliminary considerations

The research reported on in this publication was stimulated by the release by the Council of the European Union of its 2019 Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages. The survey was intended to explore specific dimensions of the Recommendation from the perspective of language teachers in Italy with a view to identifying possible future developments to enrich languages education and move closer towards the vision expressed by the European Council.

This vision places language learning and teaching and the enhancement of multilingual competence as central to the on-going development of the European Education Area as a space, in which learning can take place across borders and a European identity can be fostered to complement national identities. Without an enhanced linguistic capacity, deep collaborations across the European Union will be impeded, as languages are essential not only for communication but also for intercultural understanding. The vision was informed by the active engagement of the European Commission in languages education across Europe, and in particular a series of workshops and peer learning activities in 2016-2017, which led to the production of two key reports: *Rethinking language education and linguistic diversity in schools*[55] (European Union 2018a) and *Migrants in European schools: learning and maintaining languages*[56] (European Union 2018b). These reports and the Recommendation itself call for an ambitious but necessary shift in the ways in which languages education is manifested. Despite its ambition, however, this shift is rooted in existing practice and research and therefore attainable.

Linguistic diversity is often perceived as a problem (Lamb, 2015[57]) and this is reflected in the challenges facing the language education sector: a general

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[55] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/de1c9041-25a7-11e8-ac73-01aa75ed71a1/

[56] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c0683c22-25a8-11e8-ac73-01aa75ed71a1

[57] Lamb, T.E. (2015) 'Towards a plurilingual habitus: engendering interlinguality in urban spaces', in International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning, 10/2: 151-165 DOI: 10.1080/22040552.2015.1113848

ambivalence towards language learning, resulting in lack of engagement and low levels of multilingual competence in many contexts, as identified in the Recommendation itself; reluctance to value existing linguistic diversity, particularly in relation to languages that are not perceived to have high status, which are often the languages of those from migrant or refugee backgrounds; and a tendency for schools to lack language awareness, which itself leads to problematisation of societal and individual multilingualism and to an absence of pedagogic strategies that could provide linguistically inclusive learning environments across all disciplines. The Recommendation offers a range of measures to address these challenges, so that the enormous benefits of multilingualism for society and for individuals can be achieved, including the nurturing of social cohesion, intercultural awareness, openness to and acceptance of difference, democratic competences, opportunities for mobility, and enhanced employability, amongst others. These require comprehensive approaches to language education as stated in the Recommendation.

In this discussion, I will briefly explore some of the key aspects of the Recommendation in light of the Italian survey, highlighting strengths to build on and areas in need of further research and development. Firstly, I will discuss the ambition to enhance competence levels by the end of upper secondary education and training in at least three languages, namely the language of schooling, another European language to a level which "allows them to use the language effectively for social, learning and professional purposes", and a third language "to a level which allows them to interact with a degree of fluency" (Recommendation 1). Secondly, I will address the call for inclusive education through comprehensive approaches to language learning and teaching and greater language awareness, including the recognition and valorisation of a wider range of languages as well as support for the language of schooling. And thirdly, I will consider the professional development needs of teachers in relation to the first two aspects. In conclusion, I will return to the ambitious nature of the Recommendation, before make some recommendations in relation to the development of language aware schools through a range of collaborations.

2.2.2. Enhancing linguistic competence

The ambition for learners to leave upper secondary education or training with full use of two languages and confident use of a third seems to be a challenge at the moment in Italy, according to the Italian survey, though Italy is not alone in facing this challenge, according to the Flash Eurobarometer 466 in 2018[58]. Although English is compulsory in Italian primary schools and other languages can be offered alongside this, and in lower secondary school two languages are compulsory, in most upper secondary schools only English is compulsory. Nevertheless, there is some flexibility at the upper

[58] https://data.europa.eu/data/datasets/s2186_466_eng?locale=en

secondary level, with some schools offering more languages, including non-European ones, either on the curriculum or as extra-curricular activities. The expected attainment level for English at the end of upper secondary education is B2 (CEFR), which on the one hand, half of the participants completing the survey considered appropriate and realistic, but which on the other hand, was considered to be too high by 12.4%. Bearing in mind that English is offered from primary education, where the expectation is A1 and throughout lower secondary school, where A2 is the expectation, it would be useful to conduct further research to understand the barriers to more ambitious targets in upper secondary from the teachers' perspectives.

According to the Recommendation and its Annex, there is a need to develop innovative approaches to language learning and teaching in order to enhance language learning. These include more authentic learning, which enhances motivation by enabling learners to connect their language learning to their own lives and needs, and which can be further manifested in experiential learning through, for example, educational visits to other countries, or through building bridges between out-of-class, informal learning and in-class learning. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which involves teaching subjects through a foreign language, is also strongly recommended. In Italy it seems that there is a considerable commitment to CLIL, which was introduced into schools by law in 2003 and which is compulsory in most upper secondary schools (licei and technical schools, but not in vocational schools); indeed in licei linguistici, two subjects in two foreign languages are offered in the final three years. Encouragingly, almost half of the Italian participants in the survey reported having had personal experience of CLIL. There is considerable evidence that CLIL's focus on both content and language offers motivation for language development, which in turn tends to lead to higher levels of attainment[59], so this is potentially a strong basis for success, although it would be valuable to consider evidence from the Italian context to understand contextual factors in order to build on this strength.

As the survey was distributed during the Covid pandemic, the opportunity was taken to consider the impact of Covid on language learning and teaching in the Italian context. This provided valuable insights into the use of digital tools for Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), another strong element of the Recommendation, which offers authentic learning opportunities by tapping into changes in society with increased use of digital and mobile technologies (e.g. Rüschoff and Ritter 2001[60] as referred to in the report). The pandemic led to a large increase in use of

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[59] See, for example, Mearns, T., de Graaff, R. & Coyle, D. (2020) Motivation for or from bilingual education? A comparative study of learner views in the Netherlands, *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism,* 23:6, 724-737. See link: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13670050.2017.1405906

[60] Rüschoff B., Ritter M. (2001), Technology-Enhanced Language Learning: Construction of Knowledge and Template-Based Learning in the Foreign Language Classroom, *Computer Assisted Language Learning,* 14:3-4, 219-232.

digital technologies and Italy was no exception, with 97.7% of participants reporting that they had been teaching remotely through the pandemic, the vast majority of whom had been teaching both synchronously and asynchronously. Despite the challenges of the sudden need to escalate the implementation of TELL, the survey reveals significant levels of positivity from the survey participants. Not only did 61.2% believe that useful lessons for the future could be drawn from their experiences in the pandemic, the figures further showed that that the majority of teachers believed that students as well as their parents were satisfied with the distance learning that had been provided. The data also demonstrate that most teachers had used technology to assess student progress, including formatively, which is also a recommendation from the European Council. Generally, despite the need for further professional development in the employment of TELL, the qualitative comments demonstrated engagement with the benefits of TELL for learners and teachers, as well as confidence in and enthusiasm for its use. It is clear that recent experiences provide a real opportunity to continue to expand the use of digital technologies for language learning and teaching as a way to address some of the challenges identified in the Recommendation.

2.2.3. Language awareness and inclusive education

The Recommendation and its Annex make strong reference to the need for comprehensive approaches to language learning and teaching, in order to enhance linguistic competence and inclusive education, and this requires the development of language awareness in schools. Though the concept of language-aware schools is wide-ranging in scope, including recognition of the benefits of mobility for learners and teachers and the necessity of promoting progression and continuity between the different school levels, its connection with a commitment to inclusive education, training and pedagogies is particularly powerful. In the section on language awareness, the Italian survey focuses mainly on the teachers' awareness of language policy, which is generally positive. There is also a brief section on teachers' awareness of support for students' home languages in school. Further research is needed, then, on teachers' overall language awareness, in particular in relation to their awareness of the value of multilingualism for society and for individuals and to their sensitivity in the classroom to the specific (multi-)linguistic needs of their students. This will also involve the need to support their students with the language of schooling, either because their home language is not Italian or because they have not had opportunities to develop the academic, specialist language required for success across all disciplines.

Inclusive education means inclusion of all students regardless of their background. In reference to its etymology, education involves 'drawing out' and developing the potential of all students by building on their strengths. With regard to language, this involves recognition that students bring with them not only prior knowledge and experience from life, but also potentially

a range of languages and language varieties that form their language repertoire. In inclusive education, this language repertoire is acknowledged and valued in the classroom as a tool for learning other languages and for knowledge creation more generally, and opportunities are provided to support the continued development of these languages, rather than them being excluded from the school and classroom. In the section on home languages in the Italian survey, 40.6% of the teachers stated that there was no provision for enhancing and supporting students' home languages in their schools, unless they are the language of schooling or languages taught as part of the foreign language curriculum. Furthermore, many teachers (49.4%) simply do not know if such opportunities exist, suggesting that the need to include the learners' language repertoire is not on the agenda for discussion in their schools. In 10% of the responses, however, teachers claimed that there was support for home languages in their schools, suggesting that there are practices to be explored and learnt from in follow up research in order to address the apparent lack of language awareness in schools. Given the increased confidence and expertise in use of learning technologies, the possibility of offering support in a wider range of languages, in collaboration with other schools, universities and specialist organisations, is also enhanced but this first requires teachers and their schools to be more aware of the importance of this.

A further area for research is teacher awareness of ways of developing their students' capacities in the language of schooling in order to promote equal opportunities for success, as specified in the Council Recommendation. There are no data on this in the report, but it is crucial that all learners are supported linguistically so that their attainment is not affected by the need to improve their academic and specialist language. Such support can be manifested through opportunities to draw on all the languages in the students' repertoire, encouraging them to compare languages to deepen their understanding of the language of schooling, including the specialist language required. Though this particular approach may be more suited to language classes, where teachers are more aware of language itself, there is also a need for all teachers across the curriculum to be more aware of and sensitive to the ways in which they can make their own use of language more accessible to all learners as well as explicitly teaching the specialist language of their discipline.

2.2.4. Teacher education

It is suggested in the Italian research that not all teachers have attended a monitored training pathway in their first year of teaching, despite this being a requirement. Nevertheless, the majority of language teachers have attended continuing professional development (CPD) activities, and many have also taken the opportunity to have experience or study abroad, both as part of their initial teacher education or their CPD. Indeed 67.2% of language or CLIL teachers have benefitted from training in

another country. This is a strong foundation on which to build. Initial and continuing education of language teachers forms a major part of the Council Recommendation in recognition of the new demands on teachers emerging from the recommendations.

In the previous sections, I have identified strengths in language teacher education in Italy, particularly as far as CLIL and overseas experience are concerned. The need for on-going development to support technology-enhanced learning, both in relation to blended and distance learning, is clear and there is likely to be enthusiasm for this as a result of the global pandemic; in addition, teachers need to be able to explore ways of offering more personalised and authentic learning opportunities to their learners. Furthermore, it would also appear that teacher education is required that can raise language awareness and shift mindsets in relation to the language repertoires of their students, enabling classrooms to be more inclusive. In particular, teachers need development opportunities to enable them to provide strategies for supporting the diverse linguistic needs of students in a multilingual classroom. Furthermore, teacher education for comprehensive approaches to language learning will need to involve teachers from subjects across the curriculum and provide opportunities for collaborations across languages and disciplines.

2.2.5. Conclusions and Recommendations

In this discussion, I have attempted to acknowledge the scale of the European Council's Recommendation as an ambitious, but much needed, reform for languages education. At its heart is the need not just for a switch from teacher- to learner-centredness, but to a holistic approach to *learning*-centredness, in which learners and teachers learn together and collaboratively develop more inclusive learning spaces, a pedagogical shift that is occurring across disciplines and across the globe (e.g., Lamb and Vodicka 2021[61]). The demand for students to have innovative, authentic, personalised learning opportunities related to real life situations (including enquiry/problem/project/resource-based learning as well as co-learning with schools abroad, either virtually or through study visits), the accelerated need for digital and mobile technologies to be employed effectively to enhance education (both inside and beyond the institution), the need to diversify the language offer to enable learners to grow their capacities in a range of languages within and beyond formal education, and the need to enable learners to draw on their language repertoire in order to construct knowledge across the curriculum, all necessitate new ways of thinking not only about language education, but also about the role of the teacher, of the learner and of the school. What is common to all of these developments is the need for learners to play an active role in their own learning, by developing their capacity for autonomy

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[61] Lamb, T. and Vodicka, G. (2021). Education for 21st Century Urban and Spatial Planning: Critical Postmodern Pedagogies, in Frank, A. and Pires, A. (eds) *Teaching urban and regional planning: Innovative pedagogies.* Edward Elgar Publishing: 20-38.

in order for them to be able to learn independently and collaboratively, and this too requires particularly sensitive approaches to teachers' professional development (Jiménez Raya, Lamb and Vieira, 2017).

In order to achieve such changes, it is strongly recommended that schools embark on a comprehensive project of change, supporting innovation and collaboration within the school and with external partners, including parents. It is challenging for individual schools to do this alone, just as it is difficult for teachers to bring about sustainable change if working alone, but in partnership it becomes more manageable. I have experienced collaborations between schools and universities to offer a wider range of languages, including through technology. The development of pedagogical approaches that draw on all language repertoires is a task that teachers can best undertake in partnership with other teachers as well as parents, in their own schools and beyond. Collaborations between formal and semiformal learning institutions (mainstream schools and community-led voluntary schools, for example) can help to offer opportunities for all to learn of the benefits of multilingualism and to develop competence in a wider range of languages.

The Annex to the Council Recommendation also makes reference to the importance of partnerships and links in the wider school environment and the Recommendation itself further welcomes the opportunity to strengthen cooperation with the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (ECML). Since 2015 I have had the honour of co-coordinating a Training and Consultancy activity funded by both the European Commission and ECML, which by the end of 2021 will have facilitated 52 Supporting Multilingual Classrooms workshops in 26 different countries. In addition to workshops aimed at language teachers and teacher educators (including those teaching the language of schooling as well as those teaching foreign or home languages), we also offer a module for teachers of any discipline and a module aimed at developing language-aware schools, usually including school principals amongst the participants. Throughout these workshops we encourage collaboration between teachers of different languages and disciplines, collaboration between different schools, and collaboration with teacher training institutions, universities, language teacher associations, parent organisations and others. Through experiential, participatory learning with ECML resources, participants have opportunities to rethink their assumptions and to open their minds to fresh and manageable approaches to language learning and teaching; indeed workshop evaluations frequently make reference to experiencing a change of mindset as a result of the activities. Although each country is a different context with its own policies, practices, problems and priorities, themes closely aligned to the European Council's Recommendation can always find relevance and be addressed through such teacher development activities. On reflection, this is largely related to the sweep of globalisation, which impacts on all countries,

bringing with it constantly shifting challenges but also new opportunities. This Italian report demonstrates particular strengths that can be built on and the challenges are not unique, so it is recommended that lessons are learnt on a national level in collaboration with education practitioners in other contexts.

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Appendix

APPENDIX

Questionnaire on language teaching, learning and assessment

Dear teacher,

this questionnaire has been developed by the European Commission in cooperation with INDIRE (Italian Institute for Documentation, Innovation, Educational Research).
The questions are relevant for the current policy discussion on language learning, teaching and assessing and your answers will provide useful input in this context.

The data will be collected and analyzed by INDIRE and shared through a report which will be written by INDIRE in cooperation with the European Commission.
The questionnaire is addressed to all foreign language teachers, CLIL teachers and school leaders working at any school level.

Thank you in advance for the time you will kindly dedicate to the questionnaire!

For any technical problems or doubts write to:
europeansurvey@indire.it

To continue please first accept our survey data policy.
Show policy

PERSONAL DATA

Q1
Country where you are currently working:

Q02
Your home country (if different):

Q03
Your name and surname :
Write your name and surname only if you would like us to stay in touch with you concerning new developments in language teaching.

Q04
Your e-mail address :
Write your email address only if you would like us to stay in touch with you concerning new developments in language teaching.

Q5
What is your professional profile?
- Foreign language teacher
- CLIL teacher
- Both foreign language teacher and CLIL teacher
- School leader

Which school level do you work?
- Pre-primary education
- Primary education
- Lower secondary education
- Upper secondary education

QUESTIONNAIRE

Before starting, please download and read the latest Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach on language teaching and learning.

Q7

PRIMARY EDUCATION

Q08

How many languages are offered in primary education in your country, including the first foreign language?

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five
- More than five
- I don't know/ Not applicable

Q09

Which are the foreign languages taught in primary education?

Q10

Is there a compulsory first foreign language?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Q11

If yes, can you specify the languages which are compulsory?

LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION

Q12

How many languages are offered in lower secondary school in your country, including the first foreign language?

- One
- Two
- Three

- Four
- Five
- More than five
- I don't know

Can you specify the languages offered in lower secondary education?
How many are compulsory?

- None
- One
- Two
- Three
- More than three
- I don't know/Not applicable

Can you specify the languages which are compulsory?

Can the first foreign language be exchanged against another non-language subject?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Can the first foreign language be dropped and exchanged against another language?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION
How many languages are offered in upper secondary education in your country, including the first foreign language?

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five
- More than five
- I don't know/ Not applicable

Which are the foreign languages taught in upper secondary school in your country?

Q20
How many are compulsory?

- None
- One
- Two
- Three
- More than three
- More than five
- I don't know

Q21
Can you specify the languages which are compulsory?

Q22
Can the first foreign language be dropped and exchanged against another language?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Q23
Can the first foreign language be exchanged against another non-language subject?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Q24
Can the second foreign language be dropped and exchanged against another language?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Q25
Can the second foreign language be exchanged against another non-language subject?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Q26
Are specific pathways focused on languages provided in upper secondary school?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Q27
If yes, how many languages are taught in these pathways?

- One
- Two
- Three
- More than three
- I don't know

Q28
If yes, which languages are taught in these pathways?

Q29
Is it necessary to have at least one foreign language in your school leaving certificate from secondary school?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Q30
Please indicate if there is a difference between vocationally oriented and general upper secondary education
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Q31
Are there any provisions for enhancing and supporting students' home languages in your country, in case these are not generally included as foreign languages in the curriculum?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Q32
If yes, how are home languages supported in your country?

COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE (CEFR) AND EUROPEAN LANGUAGE TEST

Q33
Would you be in favour of a European language test to assess the language competences of your students in such a way that these can be compared across EU Member States?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Q34
If yes, which school level would you like to be tested?

- at the end of primary
- at the end of lower secondary
- at the end of upper secondary

If yes, would you like it to be computer-based?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

If yes, which skills would you like to be tested?

- Listening
- Reading
- Writing
- Oral production
- Oral interaction

In your country, is there a target CEFR level of competence in the first foreign language at the end of lower secondary school (age 15)?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

If yes, specify

- A2
- B1
- B2
- C1
- C2

Do you think this target is:

- Appropriate and realistic
- Too low
- Too high
- I don't know

In your country, is there a target CEFR level of competence in the first foreign language at the end of upper secondary school (age 18)?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

If yes, specify

- A2
- B1
- B2
- C1
- C2

Do you think this target is:

- Appropriate and realistic
- Too low
- Too high

Would you be in favour of a PISA test, assessing language competences, to be carried out along with the regular PISA test for 15-year old students?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

If yes, which skills would you like to be tested?

- Listening
- Reading
- Writing
- Oral production
- Oral interaction

CLIL

Have you any personal experience of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)?
- Yes
- No

Who is the CLIL teacher in your country?

- The language teacher
- The subject teacher
- Both of them
- Other
- I don't know

How many languages are taught in CLIL in your country?

- One
- Two
- Three
- More than three
- I don't know

Q48

Do CLIL teachers have to attend specific CLIL training courses?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Q49

In which school level is CLIL most frequently adopted?

- Pre-primary school
- Primary school
- Lower secondary school
- Upper secondary school
- I don't know

Q50

Would you like to briefly share your views on CLIL methodology?

TEACHER EDUCATION

Q51

Did you have to attend a monitored training pathway during your first year of service?
- Yes
- No

Q52

Were you offered any continuous professional development?
- Yes
- No

Q53

Have you been abroad to train as a language/CLIL teacher?
- Yes
- No

Q54

The experience abroad was part of my initial teacher education
- Yes
- No

Where?

Q56
For how long?

Q57
How was this funded?

- Through my university and with an Erasmus grant
- Through my university without Erasmus grant
- Through my employer and with an Erasmus grant
- Through my employer without Erasmus grant
- Other funding, please specify
- I don't know

Q58
The experience abroad was part of continuous professional development
- Yes
- No

Q59
Where?

Q60
For how long?

Q61
How was this funded?

- Through my employer and with an Erasmus grant
- Through my employer without Erasmus grant
- Other funding, please specify
- I don't know

REMOTE LANGUAGE TEACHING/LEARNING

Q62
Have you been teaching remotely during COVID-19 emergency?
- Yes
- No

Q63
If Yes, how have you organized your lessons?
- synchronous lessons
- asynchronous activities and materials
-both

Q64
Have you used any platform?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what kind of platform have you used?
- The platform used by the school
- Your own platform

Q66
If you have been teaching with synchronous lessons, which webconference tool have you used?
- Google Meet
- Microsoft Teams
- Jitsi
- Cisco WebeX
- WESCHOOL
- Zoom
- Lifesize
- ClickMeeting
- GoToWebinar
- Other

Q67
If you have been teaching with asynchronous activities, which platform have you used?
- Moodle
- Edmodo
- GSuite
- Other

Q68
Have you used specific webtools for languages in your distance teaching?
- Yes
- No

Q69
If Yes, can you mention the most common ones you used?
_____

Q70
Which language skills have you found challenging to develop in remote teaching?
- Listening
- Reading
- Writing
- Oral production
- Oral interaction

Q71
Which language skills have you found easy to develop in remote teaching?
- Listening
- Reading
- Writing
- Oral production
- Oral interaction

How would you be able to define your students' reactions to distance learning?
- fully satisfied
- very satisfied
- satisfied
- quite satisfied
- not very satisfied
- I don't know

How would you define your students' parents'reactions to distance learning?
- fully satisfied
- very satisfied
- satisfied
- quite satisfied
- not very satisfied
- I don't know

Have you assessed your students' progress in the foreign languages during COVID-19 emergency?
- Yes
- No

If yes, how would you rate their progress?
- very good progress
- good progress
- quite good progress
- weak progress
- no progress at all
 - I don't know

Please write here your further comments and reactions to the questionnaire. Your opinion is precious!