



National system overview on education systems in Europe

2011 Edition



ITALY

OCTOBER 2011

1. Education population and language of instruction

On 31 January 2009, the Italian population was 60 340 328, with a population aged 0-29 of 18 080 506.

In the school year 2009/10, children enrolled in pre-primary schools were 1 007 108. Students enrolled in school education were 7 804 711. Of them, 2 578 650 were in primary school, 1 670 117 in lower secondary school and 2 548 836 in upper secondary school (all data refer to participation in State schools).

The language of instruction is Italian, although in some areas the use of the local language ⁽¹⁾ is officially authorised for education.

2. Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education

Overall responsibility for school education lies within the Ministry of Education, University and Research (*Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca*), which works at central level, while regional and provincial education offices work at local level. Regions may delegate certain responsibilities to the provinces and municipalities.

According to Law no. 59 of 15 March 1997 and subsequent implementation decree (DPR 275/1999), all schools are granted teaching autonomy, organizing autonomy and research, experimentation and development autonomy.

The Constitution establishes that the State has to provide for a state-owned education system, but it also establishes that also non-state school may exist.

⁽¹⁾ Protection of minority languages and cultures is provided for in the Constitution and in Law no.482/1999. Minority languages are: Albanian, Catalan, German, Greek, Slovenian, Croatian, French, Provençal, Occitan, Friulan, Ladin, Sardinian.

These can be of two different kinds: schools with equal status (*paritarie*) and schools with non-equal status (*non paritarie*) (law no.27/2006). The former, are the schools managed by private subjects or public bodies. They have been granted equal status, as they have met specific requirements such as: carrying out an educational plan in coherence with the principles included in the Constitution and in the legislation, allowing everyone willing to be enrolled, hiring teaching staff holding a qualification to teach and according to the national contracts (law no.62/2000). Schools with equal status are allowed to issue legally recognised certificates and are part of the national education and training system. Schools without equal status are those that did not present a request for obtaining the equal status or do not meet the specific requirements. They are not allowed to issue officially recognised certificates, they cannot be called 'school' and they are not institutions for the fulfilment of the right/duty (*diritto/dovere*) to education. In school year 2007/08, people enrolled in non-State school were the 5.5 % of the entire school population.

In 2004, the National service for the evaluation of the education and training system was instituted. Its task is to improve the quality of the education system, through the evaluation of its efficiency also in relation with the international context. The National institute for the evaluation of the education and training system (*Istituto nazionale di valutazione del sistema educativo di istruzione e formazione* – INVALSI) is entrusted with the national service.

Also the universities have gradually gained administrative, financial and accounting autonomy. The Ministry is responsible for the allocation of funds, for monitoring and the evaluation of the system. This latter is carried out by the National agency for the evaluation of the university and research system (*Agenzia nazionale per la valutazione del sistema universitario e della ricerca* – Anvur), which has been set up in 2008. According to university autonomy (Regulation no. 509 of 3 November 1999), each university establishes its courses organisation in the respect of the qualifying formative objectives of the courses. Each university decides the teaching organisation and structure of its degree courses in the teaching regulations which are approved by the Ministry.

3. Pre-primary education

<i>Scuola dell'infanzia</i> (nursery schools)	Age 3-6
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The *scuola dell'infanzia* is the first stage of the education and training system and it is not compulsory. Children who turn three within the 31st of December of the current school year can enrol in the *scuole dell'infanzia*. Upon parents' request, also children who turn three on the 30th of April are admitted to pre-primary education.

Children enrolled in pre-primary education, considering both State and non-State schools, are about the 96-97 % of the entire population aged 3-5 years.

Pre-primary education is offered free of charge. Families are asked to pay a sum for transport and canteen services. Families with low incomes are exempted.

4. Compulsory education

(i) Phases

Primo ciclo di istruzione (first cycle of education)	
<i>Scuola primaria</i> (primary school)	Age 6-11
<i>Scuola secondaria di primo grado</i> (lower secondary school)	Age 11-14
Secondo ciclo di istruzione (second cycle of education)	
Age 14-16	
For information on programmes, see section 5.	

Education is compulsory from 6 up to 16 years of age.² The right/duty to education and training for at least 12 years is fulfilled within the education system or up to the obtainment of a three-year vocational qualification (either at school or in the initial vocational training system) before reaching 18 years of age. Compulsory education covers the first cycle of education (8 years) and the first two years of the second cycle (upper secondary education).

(ii) Admissions criteria

Enrolment to the first class of primary school is compulsory for all children who have turned 6 within the 31st December of the current school year or, earlier, within the 31st April of the current school year.

Enrolment to the first year of lower secondary school is compulsory for all pupils who have successfully completed the primary school.

Enrolment and attendance are offered free of charge for the whole first cycle of education. Families are free to choose the school, within the limits of available posts.

(iii) Length of school day/week/year

The school year comprises at least 200 days between the 1st of September and the 30th of June. Schools open five or six days a week. Compulsory annual teaching hours are 891 in primary school and 990 in lower secondary school; this amount is subdivided into 33 teaching weeks with an average amount of, respectively, 27 and 30 weekly hours. According to school autonomy, each educational institution is responsible for the organisation of its annual teaching time. At primary level schools can also organize the teaching time on an average of 30 or 40 weekly hours. In the first year of primary schools also a weekly timetable of 24 hours has been introduced.

(iv) Class size/student grouping

Pupils are usually grouped according to their age. According to their organisational autonomy, schools can also organise groups with pupils of different ages. Each class is generally made up of maximum 26-27 and minimum 15 pupils, at primary level, and of maximum 27-28 and minimum 18 in the first classes at lower secondary level. At primary level teachers are generalist. At lower secondary level, teachers are specialist in one or more subjects.

(v) Curriculum control and content

Schools of the first cycle of education (primary school and lower secondary school) adopt National Guidelines (*Indicazioni nazionali per i piani personalizzati delle attività educative*) of 2004 together with Guidelines for the Curriculum (*Indicazioni per il curricolo per la scuola dell'infanzia e per il primo ciclo di istruzione*), issued in 2007. From 2009/10 up to 2011/12 included, the activities carried out by the schools will be monitored. The outcomes are likely to be used to amend the Guidelines. Such guidelines define the essential performance levels that should be ensured by each school. The guidelines are nationally determined and adapted to local needs by each school according to school autonomy. Knowledge and skills are indicated for each subject; the school will help pupils to transform them into personal competencies.

Specific learning objectives at primary school level have been defined for the following subjects: Catholic religion, Italian, English language, history, geography, mathematics, science, technical education and ICT, music, art and drawing, and sport sciences. As for the lower secondary school,

⁽²⁾ The Constitution establishes that education is compulsory up to 14 years of age. The length of compulsory education has been prolonged up to 16 years of age in school year 2007/08, according to the Financial law for the year 2007.

the specific learning objectives have been defined for the following subjects: Catholic religion, Italian, English language, a second foreign language, history, geography, mathematics, science, technical education, information and communication technology, music, art and drawing, and sport sciences.

Teachers are free to choose textbooks and teaching methods. All textbooks should be downloadable from internet within 2012.

(vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

At both educational levels, periodical and annual assessment of pupils' learning is carried out by teachers by assigning a mark from 0 to 10. At primary school level, also an analytic justified assessment is given together with the mark.

Non-admission to the next class is used only "in exceptional and suitably motivated cases" and the decision is taken unanimously by teachers.

On completion of the first cycle of education, students take a state examination. The minimum mark required to obtain the first cycle leaving certificate is 6. The certificate is required to be admitted to the upper secondary education level.

Progression from primary to lower secondary school takes place upon pupil's positive assessment obtained at the end of primary school. At lower secondary level, pupils progress to the next grade upon obtainment of a minimum mark of six in each subject. Pupils' behaviour is also assessed by assigning a mark from 0 to 10. Pupils obtaining a mark lower than 6, assigned by all class teachers, cannot progress to the next grade and they are not admitted to the final state examination.

5. Post-compulsory education / upper secondary and post-secondary level

(i) Types of education

Secondo ciclo di istruzione (second cycle of education) within post-compulsory education	
<i>Liceo classico</i> (general upper secondary school specialising in classical studies) <i>Liceo scientifico</i> (general upper secondary school specialising in scientific studies) <i>Liceo linguistico</i> (general upper secondary school specialising in foreign languages) <i>Liceo delle scienze umane</i> (general upper secondary school specialising in human sciences) <i>Liceo musicale e coreutico</i> (general upper secondary school specialising in music and dance) <i>Liceo artistico</i> (general upper secondary school specialising in arts subjects)	Age (14) 16-19
<i>Istituto tecnico</i> (technical school)	Age (14) 16-19
<i>Istituto professionale</i> (vocational school)	Age (14) 16-19
<i>Istruzione e formazione professionale</i> (vocational education and training system)	Age (14) 16-17
<i>Istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore</i> (higher technical education and training system)	Age 19-21

The upper secondary level of education is called 'second cycle of education' (*secondo ciclo di istruzione*) and it is made up of the upper secondary school (called *scuola secondaria di secondo grado*) falling under the responsibility of the State and offered by the *licei*, the technical institutes

and the vocational institutes, and the vocational and training system falling under the responsibility of the Regions and offered by the recognized formative agencies operating nationwide.

The reform applied from school year 2010/11, starting from the first grades. The whole process will be completed in school year 2014/15, when the new organisation will apply to all grades. As indicated in the table, the current *licei* system foresees 6 *licei*. Further innovations introduced are the following: the introduction of Latin as a compulsory subject in all *licei* except for the arts and the music *liceo*, where it is an optional subject; a foreign language as a compulsory subject for 5 years in all *licei*; more teaching hours for mathematics, physics and sciences; the introduction of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) in the fifth grade which foresees the teaching of a subject through a foreign language.

As far as technical and vocational institutes are concerned, the reform foresees what follows: technical institutes offer studies referred to 2 sectors, economic sector (2 branches) and technological sector (9 branches); vocational institutes offer studies in 2 sectors, service sector (4 branches) and industry and handicraft (2 branches). For both technical and vocational institutes some changes occurred are the following: a weekly timetable of 32 teaching hours plus some hours dedicated to labs activities; increased teaching time for English language (technical institutes); more stages, apprenticeships and combined school and workplace courses (vocational institutes).

Higher technical education and training is offered through courses provided by the Higher Technical Institutes (*Istituti Tecnici Superiori* – ITS) and through pathways provided by the Higher technical education and training institutes (*Istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore* – IFTS).

(ii) Admissions criteria

Holders of the certificate of the first cycle of education, obtained after having successfully passed the first cycle leaving examination, may enter the second cycle of education. Enrolment and attendance are not free of charge. However, fees are modest and the amount is fixed at central level. Students enrolled at the first, second and third year of the second cycle are exempted from paying, as they are still fulfilling the right/duty to education. Students are free to choose the school, within the limits of available posts.

Three-year vocational training courses (Initial vocational training) are offered by the Regions. Compulsory education can be accomplished also within these vocational pathways.

Anyone (adults included) holding an upper secondary education leaving certificate, has access to courses offered by the High Technical Institutes (ITS) and to IFTS pathways. Access to IFTS pathways is also allowed to those in possession of a three-year vocational diploma, to those who have been admitted to the fifth year of the *liceo*, as well as to those who do not hold any upper secondary certification. These latter are required to hold a certification of competences acquired through previous training and working experiences undertaken after the fulfilment of compulsory education.

(iii) Curriculum control and content

Central government determines basic curricula for each branch of general, vocational and technical upper secondary education and gives guidance on teaching methods. Core subjects common to all institutions are Italian, history, a modern foreign language, mathematics and physical education.

The Higher technical education and training system (ITS courses and IFTS pathways) offer courses aiming mainly to develop professional specialisations at post-secondary level which meet the requirements of the labour market, both in the public and private sectors.

(iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Periodical and annual assessment of pupils' learning and behaviour is carried out by teachers by assigning a mark from 0 to 10. Admission to the following grade requires marks equal to or higher than 6/10 in each subject and behaviour. Admission is suspended if a student obtains a mark lower than 6/10 in one or more subjects. In this case, students should fill in their gaps within the beginning of the following school year. The students' learning outcomes are assessed before the beginning of the school year. Students who obtain at least 6/10 are admitted to the following grade.

At the end of general and vocational upper secondary education, pupils take the State examination; those who successfully pass the examination obtain an upper secondary school leaving diploma which allows them to continue their studies at higher level.

For the issue of the relevant certification, courses offered by Higher Technical Institutes (ITS) end up with final assessments of the competences acquired by students. For the issue of the relevant certification by Regions, also IFTS pathways end up with final assessments of competences acquired by students. Courses offered by Higher Technical Institutes (ITS) lead to the obtainment of a *diploma* of high level technician, while IFTS pathways lead to the obtainment of a certificate of high level technical specialisation. Both qualifications are accepted to apply for open competitions.

6. Higher education

(i) Types of institutions

Higher education is organised at university and non-university level. This latter is offered by the higher level arts and music education system (*Sistema dell'Alta formazione artistica e musicale – Afam*) and by other institutions. The institutions belonging to the Afam system are: Academies of Fine Arts, the National Academy of Drama, Higher Institutes for Artistic Industries (*Istituti superiori per le industrie artistiche – ISIA*), the National Dance Academy, Conservatoires.

Only universities and Afam institutes issue officially recognised degrees.

Higher education, both at universities and Afam institutes, is organised in three cycles – Bachelor, Master and Doctorate – according to the Bologna process: the first cycle lasting 3 years; the second cycle lasting 2 years and the third cycle having a variable length. Courses in medicine and surgery, veterinary science, and dentistry are still organised in one single cycle lasting 5-6 years.

(ii) Access

Applicants must have the upper secondary school leaving certificate, or a foreign comparable qualification.

Admission to the degree courses in medicine and surgery, dentistry, veterinary medicine, architecture is regulated by *numerus clausus* at national level. However, selection procedures are defined by each institution.

To access the institutes belonging to the Afam system, adequate basic skills are also required. Skills required and assessment procedures may vary, as they are defined by single institutions.

(iii) Qualifications

Universities are autonomous for the planning of study courses, for which each university establishes the title, the objectives, the general framework of learning activities, credits attributed to

each activity and the assessment procedures. Common objectives and general criteria are, however, defined at central level for all courses.

Universities issue the following degrees: first level *Laurea* (L) obtained after a 3-year course (180 credits); second level *Laurea magistrale* obtained after a 2-year course (120 credits) and a third level *Dottorato di ricerca* after a course which duration varies depending on the field of study.

Afam institutes issue the first level *Diploma accademico di primo livello*, obtained after a 3-year course (180 credits) and the second level *Diploma accademico di secondo livello*, obtained after a 2-year course (120 credits).

7. Special needs

Students with special needs are integrated into mainstream education and specialist support is provided.

8. Teachers

According to the reform on the initial training of teachers, introduced by Ministerial Decree no. 249 of 2010, teachers at pre-primary and primary level must have followed a five years' university course of study, while teachers at secondary level, in addition to the attendance of a five years' university course of study, must follow a formative training of one year of length.

Universities offer in service training to teachers for their professional development.

Primary school teachers are generalist teachers, but are responsible for a specific subject area. Secondary school teachers are specialist teachers. All teachers are civil servants.

Unrevised English

Information provided by the Italian Eurydice Unit.

For more detailed information on education systems in Europe, you may consult EURYPEDIA which provides descriptions of educational systems and policies in the Eurydice network countries: <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurypedia>