



# Italy

*Updated version, September 2007.*

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## **Principles and general objectives of education**

The fundamental educational principles, sanctioned by the Constitution of Italy (which was developed in 1946/47 and came into effect on 1 January 1948), are: the freedom of teaching; the State's duty to ensure a school network open to all without distinction; the right of individuals to establish schools without the State's financial involvement; the right of the universities, academies and higher cultural institutions to lay down independently their own regulations; the right-duty of parents to educate their children; the cost-free nature of compulsory education offered by State schools. Teachers are free to teach according to methods and criteria which in all cases ensure that students have the possibility—and thereby the freedom—to develop individual critical abilities, free from any psychological or ideological conditioning. All capable and deserving students, even if they lack the necessary means, have the right to reach the highest levels of education.

## **Current educational priorities and concerns**

One of the main priorities of the Government elected in 1996 has been the overall reform of the school system, its structure, content and methods. To this end, a project of reform was presented to the Parliament. The main goals were: the modernization of the system as regards the age range of compulsory schooling; the conceptual framework of basic education; the continuity between primary and secondary education; and the definition of subject matters and their content.

The main characteristics of the reform of the school cycles launched in the second half of the 1990s were: pre-primary education starting, as in the past, at age 3, with voluntary attendance for the 3-4-year-olds and compulsory attendance for the 5-year-olds; primary education lasting six years instead of five (this change has not been retained in the subsequent reform initiatives), and covering the age group 6-12 years; secondary education lasting six years divided into three two-year cycles; compulsory schooling covering ten years instead of eight, i.e. from age 5 to 15, and for the age group 16-18 years the introduction of compulsory part-time school attendance. The extension of compulsory education up to 15 years of age was adopted by Law No. 9 of 20 January 1999. The new structure of the education system was approved by Law No. 30 of 10 February 2000.

The new Government elected in 2001 decided to suspend the reform of the school cycles as stipulated in Law No. 30/2000. After an intense period of study, reflections and widespread consultations (including a national conference in December 2001) with the participation of not only experts and practitioners, but also a wide range of stakeholders, on 11 January 2002 the new Minister of Education, University and Research presented to the Council of Ministers a new project for re-



designing the school cycles. The related Bill consisting of eight articles was not passed by Parliament.

Finally, Law No. 53 adopted on 28 March 2003 delegated to the Government the power of “defining the general educational framework and the essential levels of services offered in the field of education and vocational training”. The law envisaged an overall reform of the education and training system through a series of legislative Decrees and Regulations being issued within a period of twenty-four months. The main characteristics of the new system implemented from 2003/04 are summarized below.

The pre-primary (*scuola dell’infanzia*), primary and lower secondary school (*scuola media*) have been reformed by Decree No. 59 of 19 February 2004. At the pre-university level, the new education system comprises two cycles. The first cycle lasts eight years, consisting of five years of primary and three years of lower secondary (compulsory) education. At the end of this cycle pupils sit the school-leaving examination; the oral and written examinations at the end of primary school have been abolished. The (compulsory) teaching of a foreign language (mainly English) and information technologies is being introduced from the first year of primary school and the teaching of a second foreign language starts at the lower secondary level. Programmes include a core component defined at the national level and a flexible component to be defined at the level of the regions. The tutor-teacher, a new profile of teacher, has an important role in terms of coordination of the educational activities and support to pupils, being also an important reference for the parents and ensuring closer relations with the local institutions. The teacher also has the task of assembling all the elements required to document and appraise the progress of each pupil and to maintain updated his/her “portfolio” of competencies (a personal file on the pupil, which will accompany him/her from the pre-primary school to end of primary school) (see: INDIRE, 2001; Ministry of Education, 2003). According to Decree No. 227 of 2005 all the teachers should be graduates of a specialized two-year, second-cycle degree programme at university level.

The right-duty to education has been extended to twelve years or in any case until the student has obtained a qualification within the vocational education and training system (18 years of age). From the school year 2007/08 the duration of compulsory schooling has been extended to the age of 16 years by the Financial Law of December 2006.

According to the Decree No. 226 of 17 October 2005 the reform of the second five-year cycle of pre-university education was scheduled to be implemented from September 2007. Eight different types of lyceum were envisaged: classic, scientific, linguistic, artistic, human sciences, economic, musical and technological. The reform guaranteed possible transitions from the system of lyceums and the technical and vocational system (technical and vocational education institutes, offering programmes lasting four to five years). Furthermore, the reform also guaranteed individualized plans of study (optional subjects and workshops) according to each student’s cultural and vocational project, as well as the possibility of apprenticeship schemes involving school-based studies and practice in the workplace both at upper secondary schools and vocational institutes.



After the change of Government in 2006, the Decree on the reform of upper secondary education has been suspended by the Ministerial Decree of 31 May 2006. Two of the envisaged types of lyceum (i.e. economic and technological) are no longer considered, and taking into account the extension of compulsory schooling up to the age of 16, the introduction of a common (compulsory) two-year programme at the upper secondary level is being discussed. By the Ministerial Decree No. 47 of 13 June 2006 the flexible component of the curriculum for the first cycle of compulsory schooling has been increased from 15% to 20% of the total amount of instructional time. The new curricular guidelines for pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education has been published at the beginning of September 2007 and will be implemented on an experimental basis until 2009.

## Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

**Decree Law No. 444** dated 18 March 1968 on setting up State pre-schools, and the subsequent Directives of 1969 regarding educational activities, were instrumental in carrying out the constitutional principles, as well as in increasing consciousness about the value of early childhood intervention, and transforming the structure and role of the family. The establishment of State pre-schools has led to a gradual and increasingly broad provision of school services. The Directives regarding educational activities, issued by the **Ministerial Decree of 3 June 1991**, confirmed the educational and institutional autonomy of pre-schools. Pre-primary education has been reformed in 2004.

In accordance with the **President of the Republic's Decree No. 416**, passed on 31 May 1974, Participatory Committees were established in schools, both at the local and the national levels. These Committees were entrusted with several consultative and managerial functions, formerly ensured by administrative bodies. According to legislation, the Participatory Committees are responsible for running schools on a participatory basis, making the school a "community which interacts with the wider social and civic community," where parents and students become active participants in the educational process.

Between 1985 and 1990, primary education underwent a process of profound renewal which was completed by the new programmes approved in 1985 and the new system set out in **Law No. 148** of 1990. This Law outlines the new educational and organizational features of primary schools, and allows for adjustments to meet cultural complexities and social needs. The **Ministerial Decree of 9 February 1979** established the new programmes for lower secondary education, modifying the formulation and content of the programmes approved in 1962 through **Law No. 1859**, which also extended the duration of compulsory education up to eight years as of 1963/64, in accordance with the constitutional principles. In 1994/95, new criteria for pupils' assessment were introduced, concluding a long experimental phase started in 1977 with the adoption of **Law No. 517**, which abolished the traditional grading system replaced by analytic and synthetic evaluations. Primary and lower secondary education have been reformed in 2004.

As regards upper secondary education, the **Presidential Decree No. 419** of 1974 gives schools the possibility of introducing experimental innovations in terms of programmes and methodology. Many innovations introduced at the initiative of



Teachers' Committees, as required by the law, have been absorbed into ministerial programmes, which have thus rationalized projects and resources. This Decree defined the type of activities and modalities of in-service training for school heads, inspectors and teaching staff, and the ways to implement experimental/innovative activities. The Decree also established several institutions to act as support structures for these activities, i.e. the Regional Institutes for Research, Experimentation and In-service Training (IRRSAE, subsequently transformed into the Regional Institutes for Educational Research, IRRE), in charge of technical advice and support; the European Centre for Education (CEDE, subsequently transformed into the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System), which conducted studies and research at the national and European levels; and the Educational Documentation Library (BDP, subsequently transformed into the National Documentation Institute for Educational Innovation and Research, INDIRE). According to the **Financial Law No. 296** of 27 December 2006 the INDIRE has been replaced by the National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy, and the IRRE by Regional Offices (*Nuclei Regionali*) of the National Agency.

**Law No. 754** of 27 October 1969 introduced experimental teaching in vocational training schools. By extending the duration of the programme by two years this Law brought the length of studies in vocational training schools in line with the rest of the upper secondary system.

The need to maintain the university system up-to-date has led to some important changes in the organization of studies at the beginning of the 1990s. In order to give greater impetus to this process, the Ministry of Universities and Scientific and Technological Research was set up in 1989, and in 1990 the Law for the Reform of University Education (**Decree Law No. 341**) was approved. This law reorganized the system taking into consideration the cultural, economic and social changes at both the national and international levels. In December 1991, a Law concerning the right to university studies was passed, aimed at guaranteeing financial support to the students. It should be mentioned that **Law No. 910** of 11 December 1969 granted access to university to all upper secondary school graduates. The autonomy of universities is regulated by **Decree No. 509** of 3 November 1999, amended by the **Decree No. 270** of 22 October 2004. The Decree of 1999 entered into force in 2001 and **Law No. 508** of 21 December 1999 (complemented by the **Presidential Decree No. 212** of 2005) on higher education institutes in the field of the arts represent the main legislative framework for the implementation of the reform of the higher education system in accordance with the European three-cycle degree pattern outlined in the Bologna process (see also Eurydice, 2007).

**Law No. 59** of 15 March 1997 stipulated the principles and guidelines for the autonomy of educational institutions. According to this law, all schools having full legal status will be autonomous with regard to their organization and programmes, within the framework of the general goals and objectives of the national education system and of national standards. School autonomy also means that school directors are responsible for the school's budget and outcomes, and for managing, coordinating and improving the school's human resources. In accordance with the **Presidential Decree no. 275** of 8 March 1999 on the autonomy of educational institutions, lesson timetables are defined by each individual school. **Law No. 62** of 10 March 2000 concerns the equality between public and private education. The **Regulation No. 347**



of 6 November 2000 reorganized the Ministry of Education (further reorganized in 2006).

**Law No. 9** of 20 January 1999 extended the duration of compulsory schooling up to the age of 15, further extended to the age of 16 by the Financial Law No. 296 of December 2006. **Law No. 144** of 17 May 1999 has introduced compulsory attendance up to 18 years within the ordinary education system as well as in the vocational training system managed by the regions and through apprenticeship schemes.

**Law No. 53** passed on 28 March 2003 delegated to the Government the power of “defining the general educational framework and the essential levels of services offered in the field of education and vocational training”. The right-duty to education has been raised to twelve years, or until the student has obtained a qualification within the vocational education and training system (18 years of age). The pre-primary, primary and lower secondary schools have been reformed by **Decree No. 59** of 19 February 2004. **Decree No. 227** of 2005 has introduced new requirements for the pre-service training of teachers.

## **Administration and management of the education system**

Traditionally, the administration of the school system in Italy has been centralized. Since the 1950s, however, a process of decentralization of services and responsibilities to the local level has started. In the 1970s, in particular, many responsibilities, including those related to education, were transferred from the State to the local authorities (regions, provinces and municipalities).

The **Ministry of Public Education** has the overall responsibility over pre-university education, coordinates and organizes educational activities of public and private establishments, and supervises of all educational institutions. The Minister is responsible for policy directions and he/she is assisted by one or more Under-Secretaries of State (appointed by the Prime Minister) who perform duties delegated to them by the Minister. The Minister of Education is also assisted by the members of the various General Directorates and Services within the Ministry, and by a group of ministerial advisers. The new organization of the Ministry of Public Education introduced by Regulation No. 347 of 2000 established two departments (*Dipartimenti*), increased to three in 2003.

The Ministry of Universities and Scientific and Technological Research, created in 1989, has been responsible for university education until the year 2000. In 2000 it has been integrated into the Ministry of Public Education (which became the Ministry of Education, University and Research) on the basis of the Decree Law No. 300 of 30 July 1999. In July 2006, the responsibility for higher education has been re-transferred to the **Ministry of Universities and Research**.

Until the end of the 1990s there were offices of the Ministry of Education in the regions (i.e. *Sovrintendenze Scolastiche Regionali*, Regional Education Superintendencies) and in the provinces (i.e. *Provveditorati agli Studi*, Provincial Directors of Education). The main functions of these bodies included: implementing centrally-defined political and administrative decisions; establishing contacts with



other entities at the local level; and harmonizing the activities and services offered in the interests of the local population. As a consequence of Constitutional Law No. 3 of 18 October 2001 which has modified the respective responsibilities of the State and the regions, and of Law No. 131 of 5 June 2003, the *Sovrintendenze Scolastiche Regionali* and the *Provveditorati agli Studi* have been abolished and replaced by **Regional School Offices**. These Offices are autonomous centres with administrative responsibility and additional functions which have been transferred neither to the regions nor to the schools (for example, the determination of the number of the schools' employees, the recruitment and deployment of educational staff); furthermore, they liaise with the regions, local authorities, universities and training agencies. They can be present also at the provincial and sub-provincial level through the Centres for Administrative Support to schools (*Centri Servizi Amministrativi*, CSA).

Several committees, such as the class, the teachers' and the school committees were created in 1974 in order to ensure increased participation in the management of the education system. The same law which set up the schools' participatory committees also established the Educational Districts, providing for the democratic participation of local communities and society in the life and management of schools. The Presidential Decree No. 233 of 1999 established **Regional Councils for Education** in each Regional School Office, and abolished Provincial Education Committees and Educational Districts, replaced by **Local School Committees** (*Consigli scolastici locali*).

Within the framework of national legislation, all regions have their own legislative and administrative responsibilities regarding: (i) educational assistance: it is their task to organize medical and psychological assistance services for students, including students with special needs, in order to facilitate the completion of compulsory education by all children resident in the area and the continuation of studies for deserving students; in this area, the local legislative function is a regional responsibility, whereas its administration is assigned to the Councils; (ii) vocational training: the regions manage vocational and handicraft education, offering training, specialization, re-qualification, counselling and guidance, with the exception of institutes awarding upper secondary, university or postgraduate qualifications or diplomas; (iii) the establishment of schools and the construction of school buildings: the regions, in collaboration with other organizations, plan the building of new schools or improvements to existing structures, and administer funds received from the State.

**Inspectors** have technical and supervisory duties. Some inspectors work at the Ministry of Education, whereas others work at the regional level, according to types of schools or subject areas, on the basis of the programmes defined annually at the National and Regional Service Conferences. Some inspectors are appointed by the Minister as Central and Regional Coordinators. With the collaboration of the Regional Coordinators, and based on reports regarding the activities carried out, the Central Coordinator draws up an annual report on the situation of school activities and services.

The **municipalities** (communes), under their own responsibility or delegated by the regions, administer the services required for the operation of schools in their



own areas, so as to ensure the school attendance of pupils, regardless of their economic or physical conditions. Welfare services, run by the municipalities, consist of: free transport to schools; the organization of school meals, either in or out of school, free of charge or at low cost according to the economic conditions of individual families; the granting of purchase-coupons for textbooks; and the granting of financial subsidies. In order to improve the offering of these services, smaller municipalities are often grouped together in consortia or inter-council associations.

Regulations concerning the autonomy of educational establishments (Presidential Decree No. 275 of 1999) have decentralized to schools many decisions related to the administration and management of education, including the organization of school time and classes, the adaptation of curricula to the local conditions on the basis of the national guidelines, the use of teaching resources, etc. Each school prepares a plan (*Piano dell'Offerta Formativa*, POF), which reflects its own specific identity and the cultural, social and economic requirements of the local environment. The POF should take into account, among others, the educational staff, the teaching timetable, the annual timetable for educational activities, and the individualized study plans.

The main administrative, management and consultative bodies at the school level (pre-primary, primary and secondary schools) include: the **headteacher**, who is responsible for the overall management of the educational establishment; the **group** (pre-primary and primary level) or **school council**, comprising representatives of school staff, parents and students (in the case of upper secondary schools); the **teachers' assembly**, which defines the POF in consultation with the headteacher and the group/school council; and the **inter-class** (primary schools) or the **class council**.

The Minister of Education is assisted in the planning and assessment of educational policy by a consultative body, the **National Education Council** (replaced by the **Higher Council for Public Education**, established on the basis of the Presidential Decree No. 233 of 30 June 1999). This Council is made up of seventy-one members (thirty-six in the case of the Higher Council), almost all of whom are elected from the various categories representing teachers, administrative staff, inspectors, staff from the offices of central and local educational authorities, the labour market and universities. This Council expresses its opinions on the running of educational services, planning, experimental interventions, educational innovation and reform, as well as other subjects which the law requires it to consider.

The **National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System** has been established by Ministerial Decree No. 178 of 4 April 2000. It is an independent body that interacts autonomously with the universities and the Ministry. The Committee establishes the general criteria for the evaluation of universities activities, implements an annual programme of external evaluation of the universities, and carries out consultative activities as well as surveys, evaluations, definition of standards, parameters and regulations for the Ministry.

The main advisory bodies for university education are the **National University Council**, comprising representatives of rectors, university staff and students, and the **National Council of University Students**. On the subject of the right to study, the Minister asks the opinion of the **National Council for the Right to**

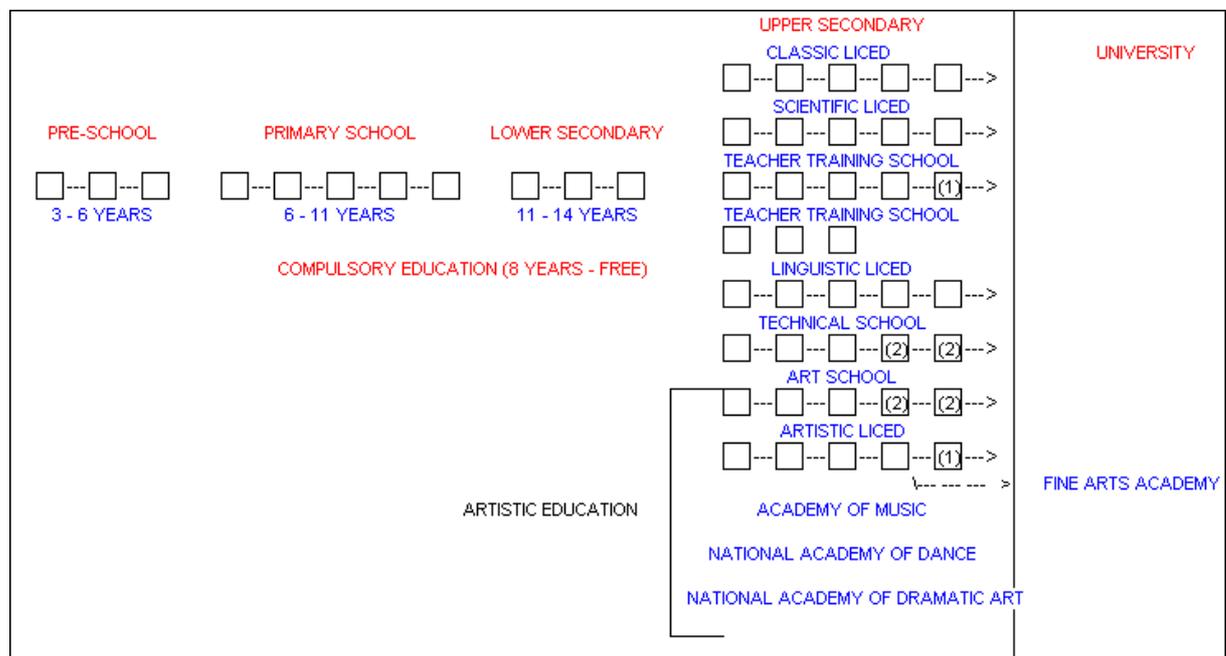


**University Studies**, while **National Council for Science and Technology** is the body through which the scientific community contributes to the definition of policies on scientific and technological research. The **Rectors' Conference** gives its opinion on draft decrees prepared by the Minister concerning the objectives of the university system and the allocation of financial resources.

The **National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (INVALSI)** has been established in 1999. The **National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy** has been established in 2007 and replaced the National Documentation Institute for Educational Innovation and Research (INDIRE); the Regional Institutes for Educational Research (IRRE) are now Regional Offices (*Nuclei Regionali*) of the National Agency.

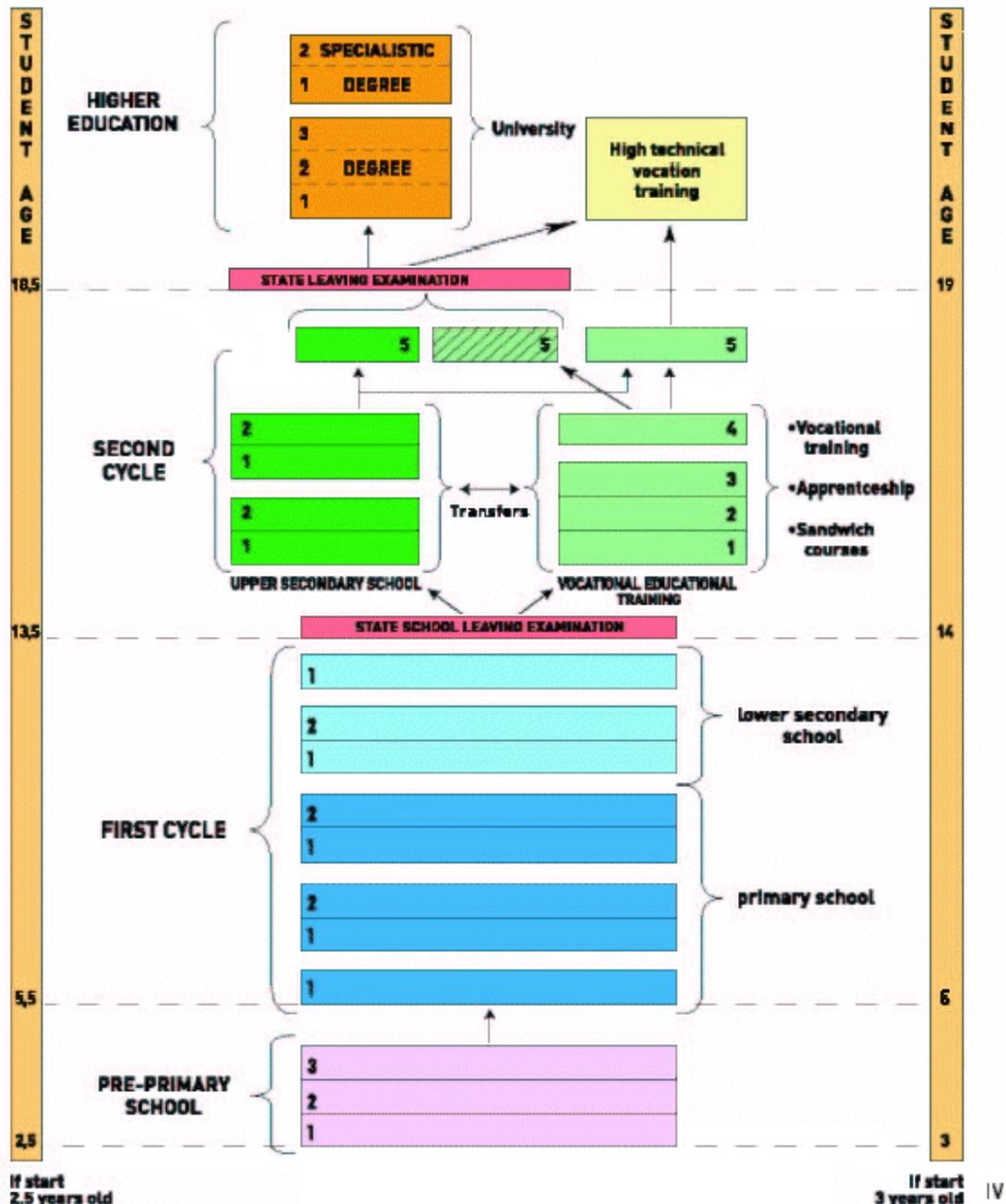
## Structure and organization of the education system

### Italy: structure of the education system (2000)



## Italy: new structure of the education system (2003/04)

The new system of education and training in Italy  
(Act no. 53 of 28 march 2003)



### Pre-school education

Pre-primary schools cater children between the ages of 3 and 6 years, including those with special education needs and learning difficulties. Children attending pre-schools are organized into groups (normally three sections), comprising children of the same age or of mixed ages. Attendance is free of charge in state-run pre-schools; parents contribute covering costs for transportation and meal services provided by the



municipality. Private pre-school operated by local organizations and associations receive subsidies from the State and the regions, provided that certain basic requirements are met.

## Primary education

Primary education lasts five years and attendance is compulsory for all children aged 6-11 years. As mentioned, according to Law No. 53 of 2003 and Decree No. 59 of February 2004, the new school system consists of two cycles. The first cycle lasts eight years, comprising five years of primary and three years of lower secondary education. Primary education consists of: the first year, which serves to ensure a smooth transition from pre-primary education, and two two-year stages. The oral and written examinations at the end of primary school have been abolished.

## Secondary education

The lower secondary school (*scuola media*) is part of the first cycle of schooling and is for pupils aged 11-14. Lower secondary education lasts three years (comprising a two-year stage and a final year of guidance and transition to the second cycle of schooling) and it is compulsory and free of charge. At the end of this cycle pupils sit the school-leaving examination. Post-compulsory, upper secondary education comprises: different types of lyceum (five-year programmes) providing general upper secondary education and preparing students for higher education; art schools, offering three-year programmes leading to a diploma of qualification and additional two-year programmes granting access to higher education; technical education schools, offering five-year programmes divided into a basic two-year cycle and a three-year specialization cycle; and vocational education schools, offering three-year programmes leading to a diploma of qualification and two-year post-qualification programmes granting access to higher education. At the end of upper secondary education, students sit the national school-leaving examinations. Post-secondary training courses (known as second-level courses) lasting six to twelve months and providing specific professional skills are offered by the regions to young people aged 18+.

Tertiary education comprises universities, non-university higher education institutions in the field of the arts, and other institutions offering higher technical training courses (lasting two to four semesters and leading to award of a certificate of specialization). After the reform of the higher education system implemented from 1999, university education is mainly organized according to a three-cycle structure. First-cycle degree programmes take three years to complete, second-cycle programmes require an additional two years, and third-cycle programmes leading to the award of a doctoral degree require a minimum of three years of studies. For holders of first- and second-cycle degrees universities can also offer master's degree programmes, usually requiring one additional year of full-time study (or 60 credits, one credit corresponding to 25 hours of academic work), as well as programmes leading to the award of a diploma of specialization and normally requiring two or three years of studies in the case of first-cycle degree holders, and one year of study for second-cycle degree holders. In 2005/06, about 80% of the students were enrolled in the two-cycle degree system in line with the Bologna process.



Pre-schools normally operate eight hours per day, which can be increased to nine or ten hours, five or six days per week, according to the needs of parents; normally there are two teachers per section. In certain cases, sections are permitted to operate with one teacher during the mornings only. As in all types of school, the school year begins in September on a date set in each region by the Regional Education Office, and normally ends on 30 June.

Primary schools operate twenty-seven hours per week (thirty-four weeks a year), increased to thirty hours in the third grade with the introduction of foreign language teaching. Pupils attend school five or six mornings per week with the addition of one or two afternoon periods, according to parents' choices and needs. The average minimum number of working days per year is about 200 and the minimum number of annual hours of instruction is 891.

Lower secondary schools operate thirty hours per week, five hours each morning from Monday to Saturday. The average minimum number of working days per year is 200 and the average number of annual hours of instruction is 891. At the request of a sufficient number of parents (enough to allow for the formation of one or more classes), the school may decide to extend attendance to thirty-six to forty weekly hours. These additional hours are used for extra-curricular or additional educational activities.

## **The financing of education**

Schools enjoy educational and organizational autonomy, also in terms of research, experimentation and development, but they are not financially autonomous. According to Law No. 59 of 15 March 1997, almost all the funds financing administrative and educational activities come from the State budget, and are divided into an ordinary and 'equalizing' allocation. Such funds can be used for educational, training and guidance activities in general without any particular constraints. Additional funds are provided by the regions, local bodies and private organizations, and are mainly used to implement specific projects.

The State directly provides funding for educational and administrative purposes. The regions provide, frequently under a delegated power scheme, services and assistance to students (canteens, transportation, primary school textbooks, financial aids, and social care) financed from their own budget; they also finance plans for the building of schools. The provinces and municipalities can be delegated by the region to provide assistance and services such as school heating, lighting and telephone lines, and maintenance of school facilities.

Universities are financed from the State budget and receive three types of funds: regular financing; for buildings and major scientific equipments; and for the development planning of the university system.

Compulsory education is free of charge but there are some extra-services that are completely free for low-income families only. At the upper secondary education level, students from low-income families can have access to public transport, meals, and textbooks at reduced costs and they can also receive financial aids, taking also



into consideration their school achievements. The costs entailed by the implementation of the “right to education” are covered by the regions, which can delegate the municipalities and the provinces to manage directly the funds transferred.

According to Eurostat, the total public expenditure on education represented 4.59% of GDP in 2004.

## The educational process

### Pre-primary education

According to Decree 59/2004, the three-year pre-primary school (*scuola dell’infanzia*) aims at contributing to the emotional, psychomotor, cognitive, moral, religious and social development of the children. Pre-school education aims at promoting the children’s autonomy, creativity, and learning potentialities, and ensuring continuity between childcare services and school education, thus contributing to the all-round education of the children. Pre-schools cater to children aged 3-6 and are free of charge in the public sector.

State pre-schools normally comprise three sections, each one grouping children of the same age (3, 4, and 5 years). Sometimes sections with children of different ages are organized and, in sparsely populated areas, a single section grouping children of all ages is organized. Each section must have no more than 25 children, excepting those with disabled children (no more than 20). Typically, two teachers are in charge of each section. Pre-schools operate thirty-five weeks a year, and offer educational services from a minimum of 25 hours (mornings only) to a maximum of 40 to 48-49 hours per week. Pre-schools can be located in primary schools or in separate premises.

As other educational establishments, pre-schools have a considerable degree of autonomy as regards the choice of teaching methods and the organization of educational activities. The new national curriculum guidelines set general targets for the educational process and learning targets which specify the basic levels of performance that all pre-schools must guarantee. In addition, the guidelines provide for *portfolios* of individual skills. Teaching methods focus on play, exploration and socialization, and direct contact with nature, objects, materials and the social environment. The activities, whether structured or free, must be varied, progressive and carried out under the supervision of the teacher.

According to national data, in 2000/01 there were 13,593 state pre-schools with 936,018 children enrolled and 84,903 teachers. The children-teacher ratio was 11:1. There were also 11,447 non-state pre-schools with 639,848 children enrolled and 41,937 teachers. The attendance ratio (both in the public and private sectors) was estimated at 98%. In 2005/06, there were 13,622 state pre-schools with 967,345 children enrolled. A total of 694,794 children were enrolled in non-state pre-schools. In the same year, there were 79,316 teachers with a contract of indeterminate duration and 10,877 teachers with an appointment of limited duration.



## Primary education

According to Law No. 53/2003 and Decree No. 59/2004, primary education is part of the first cycle of compulsory schooling and lasts five years. Primary education consists of: the first year, which serves to ensure a smooth transition from pre-primary education, and two two-year stages.

The main aims of primary education are to: foster pupils' personal development and the acquisition of basic knowledge; develop the pupils' cognitive skills; set the basis for ICT literacy; develop the pupils' capacities of expressing themselves in Italian and a foreign language (English); set the bases for the use of scientific methods in the study of the natural world, its phenomena and laws; and teach the fundamental principles of civil coexistence.

Primary schools are expected to offer a minimum of 891 hours of instruction per year over 33 weeks. There is also an additional amount of hours (a maximum of 330 annual hours) to be used for meals and after-school recreational activities in the afternoon. Each school can autonomously decide how to use up to the 20% of curricular time. The new national curriculum guidelines do not focus on teaching subjects, rather on disciplines and special courses. The guidelines identify specific learning targets for each discipline that correspond to levels of knowledge and ability that pupils should have reached by the end of the relevant course. The disciplines are: Italian, English, history, geography, mathematics, science, technology and information technology, music, art, physical education and the Catholic religion. In addition to the disciplines, a number of special courses have been introduced: citizenship education, road safety education, nutrition, environmental studies and health education. All the courses fall within the general category of 'civics', which is not considered as a separate discipline but rather as a cross-curricular learning area. Schools are free to choose the most suitable teaching materials and textbooks, as well as to organize the educational activities.

Some examples of weekly lesson timetables implemented before the reform of 2003-2004 are shown below:

### Primary education: examples of weekly lesson timetables

Subject	Number of weekly hours in each form				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Italian language	6	6	6	6	6
Mathematics	6	6	6	6	6
Sciences	2	2	2	2	2
History, geography, social studies	5	5	5	5	5
Religion	2	2	2	2	2
Aesthetic education	2	2	2	2	2
Music education	2	2	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2
Foreign language	1	1	3	3	3
<b>Total weekly hours</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>

Subject	Number of weekly hours in each form				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Italian language	8	7	7	7	7
Mathematics	6	6	5	5	5
Sciences	3	3	3	3	3
History, geography, social studies	3	3	4	4	4
Religion	2	2	2	2	2
Aesthetic education	3	3	2	2	2
Music education	2	2	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2
Foreign language	1	2	3	3	3
<b>Total weekly hours</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>

*Sources:* Web sites of primary schools, March 2003.

*Notes:* In accordance with the Presidential Decree no. 275 of 8 March 1999 on the autonomy of educational institutions, lesson timetables are defined by each individual school. Schools which do not include foreign language teaching in Grades I and II are required to offer to pupils a minimum amount of twenty-seven instructional hours per week (not including lunch time and transportation), increasing to thirty hours per week in Grades III–V with the introduction of foreign language teaching. In general, breaks are included in the total amount of instructional time per week—thus instructional hours may often be fifty-five minutes long on the average. Whole-day schools operate forty hours per week. In principle, Religious education is not compulsory and alternative activities should be envisaged for those pupils not following the course.

The Ministerial Decree of 10 September 1991—no longer applicable after the approval of the school autonomy—had determined the minimum amount of weekly hours to be allocated to each teaching subject as follows: Italian, 4 hours; mathematics, 3 hours; sciences, 2 hours; history, geography and social studies, 3 hours; aesthetic education, music education, physical education, and religion, 2 hours each.

The level of learning and the behaviour of pupils are evaluated periodically and every year by the teachers, who also assess the pupils at the end of the two-year stage for the purpose of transition to the next stage and the certification of the skills acquired. The final examination at the end of primary education has been abolished. Therefore, the transition from primary to lower secondary education is the result of a comprehensive final assessment at the end of the second two-year stage. Any decision concerning the non promotion of a pupil to the next class must be taken unanimously by all the



teachers and for exceptional reasons. The reform also introduced the *individual skills portfolio*. This document records the academic progress of each pupil from the point of view of the attainment of the educational targets specified by the individualized study plans and in terms of their behaviour. The *portfolio* includes comments by teachers, the parents and, where appropriate, by the pupils concerning materials produced individually and in groups, school tests, remarks by teachers and the families on the teaching methods, comments on personal work and projects, remarks based on systematic observation, summaries of discussions between teachers and parents and with the pupil, as well as results of applied questionnaires or tests.

In 2000/01, there were 16,302 state primary schools with some 2.55 million pupils enrolled and 262,138 teachers. The pupil-teacher ratio was 9.8:1. There were also 2,408 non-state schools with 245,586 pupils enrolled and 18,124 teachers. The attendance ratio (public and private) was estimated at 99.8%. In 2005/06 there were 15,973 state primary schools with some 2.53 million of pupils enrolled. The total enrolment (state and non-state schools) was about 2.79 million pupils. In the same year, there were 238,728 teachers with a contract of indeterminate duration and 32,423 teachers with an appointment of limited duration.

## Secondary education

As mentioned, the lower secondary school (*scuola media*) is now part of the first cycle of schooling and is for pupils aged 11-14. Lower secondary education lasts three years (comprising a two-year stage and a final year of guidance and transition to the second cycle of schooling) and it is compulsory and free of charge. At the end of this cycle pupils sit the school-leaving examination. Post-compulsory, upper secondary education comprises: different types of lyceum (five-year programmes) providing general upper secondary education and preparing students for higher education; art schools, offering three-year programmes leading to a diploma of qualification and additional two-year programmes granting access to higher education; technical education schools, offering five-year programmes divided into a basic two-year cycle and a three-year specialization cycle; and vocational education schools, offering three-year programmes leading to a diploma of qualification and two-year post-qualification programmes granting access to higher education. At the end of upper secondary education, students sit the national school-leaving examinations.

The Ministerial Decree of 9 February 1979 issued the new programmes modifying the organization and content of the lower secondary school programmes adopted in 1962. The Decree specified the content of each subject of study, together with its educational and methodological aspects. The curriculum included the following subjects: mathematics, physics, chemistry, and natural sciences; Italian language; history; civics; technical education; geography; artistic education; foreign language; musical education; physical education; religious education (optional). The weekly lesson timetable for lower secondary education (including lower secondary education in the Republic of San Marino) before the reform of 2004-2005 and being phased out is presented below:

**Lower secondary education (*scuola media*): weekly lesson timetable (2000)**

Subject	Number of weekly hours in each form		
	I	II	III
Religion (optional)	1	1	1
Italian language	7	7	6
History, civic education and geography	4	4	5
Foreign language	3	3	3
Sciences (mathematics, chemistry, physics and natural sciences)	6	6	6
Technical education	3	3	3
Art education	2	2	2
Music education	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2
<b>Total weekly hours</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>

*Source:* INDIRE, 2000. Classes are held from Monday to Saturday, five hours per day. In principle, lessons last sixty minutes and there must be a ten-minute break after the second or the third lesson.

**Republic of San Marino. Lower secondary education (*scuola media*): weekly lesson timetable (2002)**

Subject	Number of weekly hours in each form		
	I	II	III
Religion (optional)	1	1	1
Italian language	7	7	6
History, history of San Marino, civic education and geography	4	4	5
English language	3	3	3
French language	2	2	2
Sciences (mathematics, chemistry, physics and natural sciences)	6	6	6
Technical education	3	3	3
Art education	2	2	2
Music education	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2
<b>Total weekly hours</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>

*Source:* Web site of the Republic of San Marino, March 2002. Each hour is 50 minutes long. Classes are held from Monday to Saturday and the school year consists of 200 teaching days.

According to Decree No. 59/2004, the first-level secondary school (*scuola secondaria di primo grado*) aims at fostering independent study and strengthening the students' attitudes towards social interaction. Lower secondary education must: provide further knowledge and skills also related to the cultural tradition as well as to the social, cultural and scientific evolution of the contemporary society; strengthen ICT skills;

develop abilities according to the pupils' attitudes and inclinations; provide the adequate bases for further education and training; introduce the study of a second foreign language of the European Union; and help the students to make the appropriate choice concerning their future studies.

As in the case of primary education, the new national curriculum guidelines identify specific learning objectives for each subject and the type of knowledge and skills that should be transformed into personal competencies with the help of the school. There are also the specific learning objectives for 'civil coexistence education' (citizenship education, traffic education, environmental education, health education, nutrition and emotional education) which is not a separate subject and consists of teaching units and activities carried out with the collaboration of the teachers. The educational process revolves around learning units planned by teachers in order to attain educational objectives adequate and relevant for each pupil (individualized study plans). These learning units aim at transforming the abilities of each pupil into real and documented experiences recorded in the skills portfolio. In line with the new national curriculum guidelines, the total number of annual compulsory hours should be distributed among the different subjects according to the scheme shown in the table below:

**Lower secondary education (*scuola media*): annual number of compulsory hours (2005/06)**

Subject	Annual number of hours for the students		
	Minimum	Average	Maximum
Italian language		(203)	
History		(60)	
Geography		(50)	
<i>Total</i>	<i>307</i>	<i>313</i>	<i>319</i>
Mathematics		(127)	
Science and technology (*)		(118)	
<i>Total</i>	<i>239</i>	<i>245</i>	<i>251</i>
English		(54)	
Second foreign language		(66)	
<i>Total</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>126</i>
Art education	54	60	66
Music education	54	60	66
Physical education and sports	54	60	66
Religion	33	33	33
<b>Total compulsory hours</b>		<b>891</b>	

*Source:* Ministry of Public Education, 2006. (\*) Out of the average amount of 118 hours, 33 hours are allocated to technology.

The learning achievement and behaviour of pupils as well as their progress in relation with the learning objectives fixed in the individualized study plan is constantly assessed by the teachers. At the end of the three-year programme, pupils sit the



national school-leaving examination which gives access to upper secondary education. Until the introduction of the reform the examination consisted of three written tests (Italian, mathematics, and a foreign language) and a multidisciplinary oral test. These tests should give the pupil the opportunity to show his/her ability to elaborate upon and organize his/her knowledge clearly, with a view to subsequent study choices. Evaluations for each written test and the oral examination were expressed according to the following marks: Excellent, Very Good, Good, and Fair, all of which were valid for obtaining the school-leaving certificate).

In 2000/01, there were 6,862 state lower secondary schools with some 1.68 million students enrolled and 178,449 teachers. The student-teacher ratio was 9.4:1. There were also 873 private lower secondary schools with 92,371 students enrolled and 11,546 teachers. The attendance ratio (public and private) was estimated at 102.3% and the transition rate to upper secondary school at 94.5%. In 2005/06 there were 7,034 state lower secondary schools with about 1.66 million students enrolled. The total enrolment (state and non-state schools) was about 1.76 million students. In the same year, there were 164,962 teachers with a contract of indeterminate duration and 33,854 teachers with an appointment of limited duration.

The content of upper secondary education has changed over time on the basis of legislative measures allowing for innovations at the school level. Upper secondary education has been profoundly modified by: the increase in the number and type of courses available; the widespread introduction of new subjects (for example, computer science); and the new programmes, particularly concerning the first two years. Post-compulsory upper secondary education is offered by different types of school: five-year lyceums; art schools, offering three-year programmes leading to a diploma of qualification and additional two-year programmes granting access to higher education; five-year technical education schools; and vocational education schools, offering three-year programmes leading to a diploma of qualification and two-year post-qualification programmes granting access to higher education.

The classical lyceum (*liceo classico*) offers a programme focusing on humanities and classical languages. The five years of study are divided into two cycles: the first two-year cycle is called *ginnasio* and the second three-year cycle is called *liceo*. The following subjects are taught in the *ginnasio*: Italian language and literature; Latin; Greek; foreign modern languages and literature; history; geography; mathematics; and physical education. In the *liceo*: Italian language and literature; Latin language and literature; Greek language and literature; history; philosophy; natural sciences; chemistry and geography; mathematics and physics; history of art; and physical education.

Originally, the aim of the scientific lyceum (*liceo scientifico*) was to prepare students for university studies in the faculties of science, medicine and surgery. Since 1968, the year which brought about the free access to university studies, this type of lyceum like the classical one grants access to all higher education institutions. It offers a five-year course, divided into an initial two-year period followed by a final three-year period, with no intermediate examinations. The following subjects are taught: Italian language and literature; Latin language and literature; foreign languages and literature; history; philosophy; geography (in the first and second years only); natural

sciences; chemistry and geography; mathematics and physics; drawing; and physical education.

The weekly lesson timetables for the scientific and the classical lyceums are presented below:

**Upper secondary education (scientific lyceum): weekly lesson timetable**

Subject	Number of weekly hours in each form				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Italian language and literature	4	4	4	3	4
Latin language and literature	4	5	4	4	3
Foreign language and literature	3	4	3	3	4
History and civic education	3	2	2	2	3
Geography	2	–	–	–	–
Philosophy	–	–	2	3	3
Natural sciences, chemistry and geography	–	2	3	3	2
Physics	–	–	2	3	3
Mathematics	5	4	3	3	3
Drawing	1	3	2	2	2
Religion (optional)	1	1	1	1	1
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Total weekly hours</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>

*Source:* Web site of the Italian Ministry of Education, March 2003.

**Upper secondary education (classical lyceum): weekly lesson timetable**

Subject	Number of weekly hours in each form				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Italian language and literature	5	5	4	4	4
Latin language and literature	5	5	4	4	4
Greek language and literature	4	4	3	3	3
Foreign language and literature	4	4	–	–	–
History and civic education	2	2	3	3	3
Geography	2	2	–	–	–
Philosophy	–	–	3	3	3
Natural sciences, chemistry and geography	–	–	4	3	2
Physics	–	–	–	2	3
Mathematics	2	2	3	2	2
History of the art	–	–	1	1	2
Religion (optional)	1	1	1	1	1
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Total weekly hours</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>

*Source:* Web site of the Italian Ministry of Education, March 2003.



The traditional primary education teacher training school (*istituto magistrale*) trained primary school teachers and gave access to higher education (faculty of education). The primary teacher training school used to offer a four-year programme with an additional year granting access to any university degree course. The following subjects were taught: Italian language and literature; Latin language and literature; foreign language (only in the first and second years); philosophy; pedagogy and teaching practice; psychology; history; civics and geography; natural sciences; chemistry; mathematics and physics; drawing and history of art; choral singing; physical education; and musical instrument (optional). The traditional pre-primary teacher training school (*scuola magistrale*) prepared pre-school teachers and offered a three-year programme. The following subjects were taught: Italian language and literature; educational science; history and geography; mathematics; accounting and natural sciences; hygiene and child rearing; religious education; music and choral singing; home economics and housework; plastic arts and drawing; and teaching practice. The two types of schools are being phased out, as in accordance with the Decree on teacher training adopted on 17 October 2005 and entered into force in 2006/07 all teachers must be holders of a higher education degree.

Technical education schools (*istituti tecnici*) aim to prepare students for a profession, or technical or administrative services, in the agricultural, industrial and commercial sectors. In the first two years the programme includes subjects which are common to all the sectors and specializations: Italian language and literature; history and civics; geography; foreign language; mathematics; physics; natural sciences and chemistry; drawing (except for the commercial department); and physical education. The only difference lies in the practical exercises which are carried out in workshops and businesses pertaining to the sector to which the school belongs. In the following three-year period, the teaching of subjects such as Italian literature, history, civics and physical education continues. Other subjects are incorporated, all of which relate to a specific sector and specialization, with a significant part of the curriculum reserved for specifically oriented practical exercises. The weekly timetable consists of thirty to forty hours of instruction, according to the class and the specialization. Lessons normally last sixty minutes.

Vocational education schools (*istituti professionali*) were created in the 1950s in order to train qualified entry-level technicians in the following sectors of production: agriculture; industry and handicrafts; and services. Vocational school curricula have long been distinguished by a high content of practical training and the specification of the qualifications issued (one for each profession). In the past, the choice of a short course of study upon completion of compulsory education was seen as being reserved, in general, for those persons who aspired to a 'practical' type of training, with the aim of entering employment as early as possible. However, there has been an increasing demand for adjustments corresponding to the new requirements stemming from the labour market's call for stronger socio-cultural preparation.

The new vocational training qualification courses are all three-year programmes. The first two years include: an area of teaching common to all courses (classical scientific education, twenty-two weekly hours); an area of specialized teaching (technological-scientific and practical training, fourteen weekly hours); an intensive learning area (four weekly hours). The third year includes: a common area



(twelve to fifteen weekly hours); a specialization area (twenty-one to twenty-four weekly hours); an in-depth learning area (four weekly hours). After obtaining the final qualifications, students may: enter the labour market; register to take one of the vocational school's two-year post-qualification courses; pass on to the fourth year of another type of upper secondary school, by means of complementary examinations; attend subsequent vocational training modules, also offered by the school in collaboration with the region, in order to obtain a second-level qualification. Even if the intensive learning area is an integral part of the curriculum and compulsory for all, it is entrusted to the autonomous programming of each school, in order to allow for greater flexibility of management. This area makes it possible to carry out individualized educational strategies in order to compensate for and overcome situations of disadvantage; to relate to the local community circumstances; and to carry out alternating school-work experiments in collaboration with businesses.

Artistic education is offered by schools belonging to the upper secondary school system, as well as institutes of non-university higher education. The following types of school are part of the secondary education system: art schools (*istituti d'arte*); artistic lyceums (*licei artistici*); experimental music lyceums (*licei musicali sperimentali*), connected to the music conservatories (*conservatori di musica*); experimental dance lyceum (*Liceo coreutico sperimentale*), connected to the National Dance Academy (*Accademia nazionale di danza*). There are also lower secondary schools connected to art schools and academies of music.

Art schools provide suitable cultural education in order to develop the creative qualities of students and to train them for employment and artistic production, while taking into account specific local traditions. Programmes cover a total of thirty-four sections (the arts of ceramics, gold, textiles, coral, alabaster, printing, wood, mosaics, glass, etc.) and last five years, divided into a three-year cycle followed by a two-year cycle. The three-year cycle ends with a final examination awarding the master of art diploma; the following two-year cycle ends with a State examination awarding the applied arts upper secondary school-leaving certificate.

Artistic lyceums aim to give the students cultural training which is specifically oriented to the sector of visual arts and relevant forms of expression. The programmes consist of two sections: the first begins the study of painting, sculpture, decoration and scenography; the second begins the study of architecture. Courses normally last four years, and are divided into one two-year cycle which is common to both sections, followed by another two-year period which differs for each section. At the end of these four years, students sit the state examination in order to obtain the artistic upper secondary school-leaving certificate (*maturità artistica*). Students from the first section may thus gain access to the Fine Arts Academy (*Accademia di belle arti*), and those from the second section may register at the university's faculty of architecture. Holders of an artistic lyceum upper secondary school certificate must enrol in a fifth complementary year in order to gain access to any university faculty. In recent years most artistic lyceums started offering five-year programmes.

For the purpose of assessing students at the upper secondary level, the school year may be subdivided into two or three periods, depending on the decision of the teacher's assembly of each school. At the end of each period, group discussion and assessment of each student's work takes place. The assessment is carried out not only



on the basis of the marks received by the student during the examination period, but also taking into account the student's participation in school activities in general, his/her initial preparation and subsequent progress, as well as other information obtained from contacts with the family. The last period of lessons ends with a final assessment on the commitment and progress of each student throughout the school year. This evaluation is expressed with grades in tenths. Students who receive at least six tenths for each subject and eight for behaviour are promoted to the next year.

At the end of the upper secondary school programme, students sit the national school-leaving examination (*esame di maturità*). Only those who have received a positive assessment of their previous year's results are admitted to this examination. The examination consists of two written tests and an oral examination, which is held before a Board of Examiners appointed by the Ministry of Education. The oral examination, based on the programmes carried out in the final year, involves two subjects and includes a discussion of the written tests. The final assessment provides an overall appraisal of the student's level of maturity; this judgment is then translated into a grade expressed in sixtieths.

The examination results are certified with a classical, scientific, teacher training (being phased out), artistic, technical or professional reference in the upper secondary school-leaving certificate (*maturità classica, scientifica, magistrale, artistica, tecnica, professionale*), according to the type of school. This certificate is necessary for employment or for entering higher education. The final examinations for the three-year courses offered by vocational schools are called qualification examinations (*esami di qualifica*). They are held before commissions comprising teachers of academic, technical and practical subjects from the school, plus two external experts delegated by business and industry. The qualification certificate (*diploma di qualifica*) gives access to the labour market; professional training courses at regional level; post-qualification courses in vocational schools; as well as other institutes after a further examination.

In 2000/01, there were 4,688 state upper secondary schools with some 2.38 million students enrolled and 233,128 teachers. The student-teacher ratio was 10.2:1. There were also 1,727 private schools with 174,182 students enrolled and 32,685 teachers. The attendance ratio (public and private) was estimated at 84.3%. In 2005/06 there were 5,001 state upper secondary schools with about 2.50 million students enrolled. The total enrolment (state and non-state schools) was about 2.69 million students. In the same year, there were 227,528 teachers with a contract of indeterminate duration and 46,994 teachers with an appointment of limited duration.

### **Assessing learning achievement nationwide**

Decree Law No. 258 of 20 July 1999 has established the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (INVALSI). This Institute is the result of the transformation of the European Centre for Education (CEDE) in Frascati, but while the latter had several responsibilities, the main task of the Institute is the evaluation of the education system. Documentation functions have been assigned to the National Documentation Institute for Educational Innovation and Research (INDIRE, formerly the Educational Documentation Library), and research functions to the Regional Institutes for Educational Research (IRRE, formerly the Regional Institutes for



Research, Experimentation and Training). In 2007 the INDIRE has been replaced by the National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy, and the IRRE by Regional Offices (*Nuclei Regionali*) of the National Agency.

Decree No. 286 of 19 November 2004 established the National Evaluation Service and re-organized the INVALSI in pursuance of Reform Law 53/2003. According to Decree No. 59 of 2004, the National Evaluation Service is in charge of the assessment of learning achievement at the end of the first and third year of primary school and at the beginning of the lower secondary school, in conjunction with the pupils' achievement at the end of primary school.

## Higher education

Article 33 of the Italian Constitution recognizes the right of universities and higher education academies to carry out their activities autonomously within the limits set by law. Both public and private organizations and legal entities have the right to establish educational establishments. Therefore, there are both state-run and non-state higher education institutions.

In order to enter higher education students must be holders of an upper secondary school-leaving certificate (five-year programmes). Within their jurisdictions, the regions are responsible for ensuring the right to universities studies for students through the provision of meal services and housing, grants and scholarships, counselling and guidance, and health care services.

Tertiary education is offered at universities and non-university higher education institutions. The latter include higher institutes of physical education (*Istituti Superiori di Educazione Fisica*) and some specialized higher education institutes and schools, such as the *Istituto orientale*, the *Istituto Superiore Navale* of Naples and the *Scuola Normale Superiore* of Pisa. Furthermore, Law No. 144 of 17 May 1999 has established the system of higher technical education and training. Programmes offered at this level range from a minimum of two semesters to maximum of four semesters, or not less than 1,200 and not more than 2,400 hours. The curricula focus on interdisciplinary and technical-vocational basic skills. Enterprise stages and training apprenticeships are compulsory for not less than the 30% of the total number of hours. Upon completion of the programmes, successful students are awarded a certificate of higher technical specialization.

After the reform of the higher education system implemented from 1999, university education is mainly organized according to a three-cycle structure. First-cycle degree programmes take three years to complete, second-cycle programmes require an additional two years, and third-cycle programmes leading to the award of a doctoral degree (research doctorate) require a minimum of three years of studies. For holders of first- and second-cycle degrees universities can also offer master's degree programmes, usually requiring one additional year of full-time study (or 60 credits, one credit corresponding to 25 hours of academic work), as well as programmes leading to the award of a diploma of specialization and normally requiring two or three years of studies in the case of first-cycle degree holders, and one year of study for second-cycle degree holders. In 2006/07, almost all students (98.5%) were



enrolled in the two-cycle degree system in line with the Bologna process. Universities and polytechnics also offer long-cycle programmes in the fields of medicine and surgery (lasting six years), and veterinary, dentistry, pharmacy, architecture and law (lasting five years).

Higher education institutes in the field of the arts belong to non-university sector and include: fine arts academies (*Accademie di belle arti*); the National Drama Academy (*Accademia nazionale d'arte drammatica*); the National Dance Academy (*Accademia nazionale di danza*); higher institutes for applied arts (*Istituti Superiori per le Industrie Artistiche*); and music conservatories (*Conservatori di musica*). Higher education institutes in the field of the arts have been reformed by Law No. 508 of December 1999, complemented by the Presidential Decree of 2005. The degrees awarded by these higher education institutes are equivalent to university degrees and are increasingly based on the two-cycle structure implemented within the framework of the Bologna process.

Fine arts academies aim to promote the progress of arts and sciences in the area of graphics and plastic arts, and to teach the aesthetic and scientific culture necessary for practicing the relevant professions. Access to the academies is for students holders of the upper secondary school-leaving certificate. Traditionally, programmes last four years and attendance is compulsory; students sit annual examinations in order to pass on to the following year's course. Each course ends with a final examination leading to the award of the relevant diploma. The National Drama Academy offers two types of four-year programme with compulsory attendance (a three-year course with a fourth year of specialization). One course is for training actors and the other for training art directors. Access to the Academy is subject to a *concorso* (competition.-based entrance examination) for students holders of the upper secondary school-leaving certificate. In order to be awarded the relevant diploma, students must successfully sit a final examination. The National Dance Academy offers an eight-year programme for training dancers and a subsequent three-year specialization for training soloists, teachers, choreographers and dance composers. Access to the Academy is subject to the results of the entrance examination. The requirement are a primary school-leaving certificate and attendance at a lower secondary school at hours which do not coincide with the Academy's lessons. Attendance at lessons is compulsory and promotion to the following year is dependent on results of the end-of-year examination. Higher institutes for applied arts, established on an experimental basis, promote the progress of design, and teaching the aesthetic and scientific culture necessary for practicing the relevant professions. Access to these Institutes is subject to a competition-based entrance examination (*concorso*) for students with an upper secondary school-leaving certificate. Programmes last four years; compulsory attendance and annual examinations are required in order to pass into the following year. Successful completion of a course final examination is necessary to receive the relevant certificate, equal to that issued by the Fine Arts Academy. Music conservatories are training centres for musicians, teaching the skills necessary for practicing professions in the musical arts sector. Conservatories offer a total of thirty-four programmes. For courses where admission is granted with the minimum requirement of the primary school-leaving certificate, students must fulfil their compulsory education obligations by simultaneously attending a lower secondary school. Attendance is compulsory and progression in the



study course depends on the examination results. At the end of their studies, students sit an examination and are awarded a certificate relevant to the course attended.

University education has been re-transferred under the authority of the Ministry of Universities and Research in 2007. In addition to public funds, State universities are allowed to receive financing and contributions for research and activities from other sources. Additional income for the university comes from fees paid by students for services (laboratories and libraries). Private universities can receive funds from local organizations, associations or foundations. Universities have a considerable degree of autonomy in the management of funds and staff, in the determination of fees and contributions, and in the evaluation of their own activities.

Each university is divided into a certain number of faculties which carry out administrative and scientific-educational activities, and issue one or more degrees or diplomas, corresponding to the various courses of study provided. The faculty committee (comprising the dean, the permanent professors and researcher representatives) has programming and coordinating functions. Representatives of students may also take part in the meetings when the issues discussed concern their interests more closely. The departments, established by the Presidential Decree of 1980, promote research activities in a specific field of study and have their own structure with financial and managerial autonomy. The department committee, chaired by the head of department, comprises professors and researchers, representatives of the non-teaching staff, and students. This committee makes decisions regarding research and teaching activities. The university is legally represented by the Rector, who is elected by the professors from among their own ranks. The Rector implements the decisions taken by the Senate, a collegiate body with decision-making responsibilities on educational-scientific subjects and issues of general interest, and the Administrative Board, responsible for the administrative, economic and financial management of the university. Instruction at the university level is provided by the following categories of teaching staff: full professors; associate professors; contract professors; researchers; and lecturers. Full and associate professors and researchers are employed as civil servants, and are appointed on the basis of a competitive selection and recruitment process (*concorso*). Contract professors and lecturers are under an appointment of limited duration scheme. Full professors must ensure their presence for lectures, exams and out-of-class contacts with students for not less than 250 annual hours. They also carry out scientific research and take part in the running of the university. Researchers contribute to scientific research and may also carry out educational activities.

External evaluation of the higher education system is under the responsibility of two bodies: the National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System (CNVSU) and the Committee for Research Evaluation (*Comitato di indirizzo per la valutazione della ricerca*). The CNVSU, established in 1999, is responsible for quality assurance. It determines the general criteria for the evaluation of universities and higher education institutes in the field of the arts and prepares an annual report on the evaluation of higher education. It promotes experimentation and implements quality assessment procedures, methodologies and practices. The Presidential Decree of 1998 provides for compulsory external evaluation in the accreditation process of new state and non-state universities, while the Ministerial Decree of 2003 set out plans for the compulsory external evaluation in the accreditation process of virtual



campuses (open universities or *università telematiche*). Universities have established a system for the internal evaluation of operational management, teaching and research activities, and students' welfare services. The evaluation is conducted by the university evaluation units (*Nuclei di valutazione di ateneo*), established in 1999, and their composition, objectives and functions are regulated by the university statutes.

According to national data, in the academic year 2000/01 the higher education network at the university level comprised: fifty-two state universities; three state polytechnic universities; thirteen free (private) universities; two universities for foreigners; and three higher education schools specialized in postgraduate studies. There were about 1.65 million students enrolled in universities. In the same year, teaching staff at the university level consisted of: 15,026 professors; 17,259 associate professors; and 19,668 researchers. In 2004/05 there were 80 universities with satellite campuses in 278 communes and the network comprised: fifty-five state universities; three state polytechnic universities; fourteen free (private, legally accredited) universities; two universities for foreigners; three higher education schools specialized in postgraduate studies; and three virtual campuses (open universities). In 2005/06 there were about 1.82 million students enrolled in universities (of whom 56% were women). In the same year, teaching staff at the university level consisted of: 19,845 professors; 19,083 associate professors; and 23,046 researchers.

In 2004/05 there were 129 higher education institutes in the field of the arts, including twenty fine arts academies, fifty-eight music conservatories, and four higher institutes for applied arts. In the same year, the total enrolment (including students in pre-university education courses) was 68,840 students and the total number of teaching staff was 9,241 (of whom 76.2% with a contract of indeterminate duration).

## Special education

Article 34 of the Constitution acknowledges to disabled people the right to education and work. The framework Law No. 104 of 1992 contains regulations concerning: the assistance, social integration and rights of the disabled; the full integration into mainstream educational establishments at all levels, including university; and procedures for the diagnosis and the certification of disabilities. To this end, "programme agreements" with health, social, cultural, welfare services, local authorities, and with specialized centres were introduced in order to offer care and assistance to students with special education needs. Support teachers were also introduced. They must possess the prescribed qualifications and they share the entitlement of the classes in which they work, participating in all the school activities.

In order to perform their activity of integration, schools must have adapted structures, with the removal of all architectural barriers, and the use of all facilities in the most functional manner suited to the needs of the disabled. Law No. 104 also provides for the creation of classes as detached sections of state schools in rehabilitation centres and hospitals where children who are temporarily unable to attend school can continue their studies. These sections and classes are established by the school administration in cooperation with the local health authority.



The Ministerial Decree No. 141 of 3 June 1999 regulates the composition of classes with pupils with special education needs in all types of school; as a rule, such classes cannot be made up of more than 20 pupils. The integration of more than one pupil in a class can take place if there are no alternatives or if the pupil has a mild disability.

In 2000/01, there were 130,876 students with special needs enrolled in mainstream state schools at all levels. In 2004/05, the total enrolment was 156,639 students, of whom 11,452 at the pre-school level, 66,778 in primary schools, 51,378 in lower secondary schools, and 33,031 in upper secondary schools. The total number of support teachers was 79,970.

## Private education

Article 33 of the Italian Constitution establishes two fundamental principles: (i) the State's obligation to establish a school system that is accessible to all young people and that conforms to their attitudes and aspirations, regardless their economic and social conditions; (ii) the right of private entities and organizations to establish schools and institutes, without the State's financial involvement.

The creation of primary schools by private individuals requires the authorization of the Ministry of Education. In order to receive this authorization, the applicant must prove his/her moral and legal ability, possess a secondary education certificate and demonstrate the suitability and practicability of the premises to be used. Private primary schools can obtain legal recognition and financial subsidies if the service they offer replaces or complements the service offered by the state.

There are two types of recognized private primary schools: *scuole paritarie* (formerly, *scuole parificate*), which are part of the national education system under Law 62/2000; and state-authorized private schools. In order to obtain the authorization to operate, schools must fulfil the following requirements: be open to all; be free of charge; have programmes, timetables and curricula which correspond to the national guidelines; have suitable premises. In addition, teachers must hold a certificate qualifying them for primary school teaching, be of high moral character and be paid the same salaries as teachers in state schools. Qualifications issued by these schools are fully and legally recognized. Private secondary schools can be distinguished as *scuole paritarie* under Law 62/2000 and state-authorized private schools. Legal recognition is awarded by means of a Ministerial Decree, after one year of actual operation, under the following conditions: the school meets all the hygienic and educational requirements; the scientific and educational materials, laboratory equipment and the structured area for physical education are sufficient and suitable for the type of school; the school offers an educational programme which is similar to that of the same type of state schools; the students possess the required qualifications for the class they are attending; and the teaching staff possess the required teaching qualifications. The working contract of the staff is of a private nature and is not subject to limitations regarding age, amount of salary (which is freely agreed upon) and number of teaching hours.



Law no. 62 of 10 March 2000 introduced rules for equality and provisions concerning the right to education. The solution has been found through the assignment of financial supports directly to the parents of pupils of state and non-state schools through scholarships and tax relief instead of allotting them to the administrators of non-state schools (*scuole paritarie*).

## Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure

All Italian schools, from pre-primary to upper secondary institutions, are equipped with the sufficient instructional materials and didactic resources. Most of them have a school library, a laboratory (according to the school level and type), a playground and a structured area for physical education. Many also have a theatre and special rooms equipped for arts and musical performances.

Computers are available in almost all schools, but in general they are located in special rooms and are used by students under the supervision and guidance of teachers. Most schools also have modern ICT and multimedia equipment. According to national data, in 2005/06 there were about 580,000 computers in schools (at all levels) representing a national average of one computer per 11 students. About a half of the computers were in upper secondary schools. About 52% of the schools had a website, and about 85% used Internet for educational purposes. A total of 42,198 laboratories (or about 80% of the laboratories) had multimedia equipment.

## Adult and non-formal education

Old popular schools for illiterates were founded in 1947 and abolished in 1982. They were replaced by literacy courses (leading to the primary school certificate) and courses for workers (leading to the lower secondary school certificate). The latter were initially targeted to those who were already employed and whose labour contracts provided for paid permissions of 150 hours in the year for attendance. In recent years the amount of workers' attendance decreased remarkably, and courses are now mainly attended by a higher number of unemployed, housewives, young people aged 15+ and immigrants.

Following the Agreement of March 2000 between the State and the regions, the Ministerial Directive No. 22 of 6 February 2001 provided for the following types of services: adult literacy courses (primary education); lower secondary education courses (150 hours); adult education courses in upper secondary schools; functional literacy courses; integrated courses (education and training); and pilot projects. The Directive also referred to the Centres for adult education and training (*Centri Territoriali Permanenti, CTP*), established since 1997, which are expected to organize integrated training activities through agreements with schools at different educational levels. As a general rule, they operate at the district level and have the task of coordinating the educational and training activities planned in their area. The Centres have their pedagogical and administrative reference point in a school (a primary or secondary school).

The Reform Law 53/2003 has introduced the concept of lifelong learning as one of the main principles of the education and training system. For its



implementation, the law envisaged a plan to finance 'interventions for the development of higher technical training and adult education'.

According to a survey carried out in 2003/04, there was a total of 570 CTP in the country and 675 upper secondary schools offering evening classes. The total enrolment in courses offered by CTP was 403,212 learners, while in evening classes it was 65,073. A total of 19,365 courses have been offered, of which 13,371 short and modular courses of functional literacy, 2,966 courses for attaining a school certification, and 3,169 language courses for immigrants. Young adults (up to 29 years) represented one third of the total number of learners, and adults aged 40+ represented more than 26%. Women represented 56% of all the learners and foreigners/immigrants about 25%.

## Teaching staff

Reform Law 53/2003 has introduced changes in the pre-service teacher training (pre-school, primary and secondary school) and Decree No. 227 of 17 October 2005 has established new requirements for the training and recruitment of teachers, while regulating the transition from the old to the new system, which became operational in 2006. According to the new system, teachers must be holders of a second-cycle degree, which requires two additional years of study after the three-year, first-cycle degree programme.

Since 1990 (Decree Law No. 341), pre-service teacher training is offered at universities. Traditionally, training programmes for pre-primary and primary school teachers last four years leading to the award of a first-cycle degree. Training programmes for secondary school teachers are offered at the school of specialization (within a university) and last two years; candidates must be holders of a first-cycle degree and pass the competitive entrance examination, as the number of available places is fixed and established at regional level according to the local needs in terms of teaching staff. In order to be appointed as a teacher with tenure, with the right to choose a workplace (that is, the school assignment is made, as far as possible, in keeping with the teacher's preferences) and to develop economic and career progression (as established by labour contracts), it is necessary to pass the examinations set forth by a *concorso*. Primary school teachers are qualified to teach all subjects included in the curricula, with the exception of foreign languages, whereas secondary school teachers may only teach those subjects that they have studied at university and taken *concorsi*.

Teachers at any educational level in state schools are civil servants, with rights and duties guaranteed by law. Freedom of teaching is a fundamental right. Freedom of teaching means educational autonomy and free cultural expression limited only by constitutional principles, the school system established by the state, and the moral and civil values. The rights and duties are defined by law and regard the workplace, working hours, economic treatment, career development, holidays and leave. There are only two types of contract, i.e. of indeterminate duration and fixed-term.

As regards teachers' workload, pre-primary teachers work 25 hours per week, primary school teachers 22 weekly hours plus two hours for planning the activities,



and secondary teachers work 18 hours per week. Additional non-teaching activities are no longer listed in detail, although they include professional performances established in the plan of activities adopted by the teachers' assembly (for example, projects, research, documentation updating activities, etc.). These activities cannot exceed 80 annual hours, and don't include the planning lessons or exercises, correction of papers, meetings with parents, examinations, and administrative tasks related to pupils' assessment. This is due to the new employment contract of 1999 (confirmed by the contract of 2003) which, unlike the contract of 1995, stipulates that such activities are closely related to teaching and cannot be quantified in terms of working time.

In-service training is considered as a right and is offered at the central and local levels by schools, universities, Regional Institutes for Educational Research (IRRE, now Regional Offices of the National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy), public research institutes, as well as by professional bodies and associations recognized by the Ministry. In-service training usually takes place outside working time; however, teachers participating in training courses organized by the school administration at the central, local or school level, are considered to be in service.

## Educational research and information

The Presidential Decree No. 419 of 1974 created the Regional Institutes for Research, Experimentation and In-service Training (IRRSAE), the European Centre for Education (CEDE), and the Educational Documentation Library (BDP). These institutions were established in order to strengthen educational research and documentation as essential instruments for in-service training and educational innovation. Decree Law No. 258 of 20 July 1999 has established the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (INVALSI, formerly the CEDE), the National Documentation Institute for Educational Innovation and Research (INDIRE, formerly the BDP), and the Regional Institutes for Educational Research (IRRE, formerly the IRRSAE). According to the Financial Law No. 296 of 27 December 2006 the INDIRE has been replaced by the National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy, and the IRRE by Regional Offices (*Nuclei Regionali*) of the National Agency.

The IRRE (now the Regional Offices of the National Agency) provide support to the central administration, schools, school networks and consortia. They have legal personality, develop research activities on pedagogy and didactics as well as on teaching staff training. They carry out these activities in cooperation with the National Agency (formerly the INDIRE), universities and other training agencies, as well as the INVALSI. The Regional Offices support schools through: (i) collaboration and active participation in planning and implementing educational research programmes; (ii) support to building up training pathways for teaching staff; (iii) selection of specific training projects; (iv) participation in and support to the implementation of system of documentation exchange among educational institutions; (v) collaboration in the elaboration of proposals concerning teaching regulations.

The National Agency is responsible for the development of a documentation system aimed at providing services and materials supporting didactic activities and the



autonomy process; draws attention to the training needs related to the results of the research; and supports research and training strategies referred to documentation and ICT systems. Furthermore, it defines and implements national research projects in coordination with universities as well as with national and international organizations, and plans the dissemination of the results. It also collaborates with the Ministry of Education as far as the management of programmes and projects of the European Union is concerned, and supports the development and dissemination of ICT and documentation in schools.

The Ministry of Education's Statistical Service, having direct access to the data of the public education administration, carries out the following functions: supplying statistical data of relevance to other organizations, produced by the Education Department; contributing to the development and promotion of computer science for statistical purposes, to the management archives and to the collection of administrative data; preparing the Ministry of Education's statistical programme based on the Minister's directives.

Once a programme has been approved by the Minister, it is transmitted to the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) for subsequent inclusion in the national statistical programme. In order to carry out its duties effectively, the Statistical Service works in collaboration with the Ministry of Education's peripheral offices, as well as with the Ministry's Data Processing Centre.

Finally, the Ministry of Education's information service handles the administrative information necessary for running the education system. In particular, it aims to plan scholastic activities, and serves as a support for school policy and administration. In the near future, the following services will be ensured: the automatic administration of all operations carried out at the level of the various school offices; telecommunications link-up among central offices, peripheral offices and schools; the opening of the Ministry of Education's information service towards the training systems of other national and international bodies.

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## Web resources

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Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca (Ministry of Universities and Research): <http://www.miur.it/> [In Italian. Last checked: September 2007.]

Comitato Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Universitario (National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System): <http://www.cnvsu.it/> [In Italian. Last checked: September 2007.]

Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane (Italian Rectors' Conference): <http://www.cru.it/> [In Italian; some information in English. Last checked: August 2003.]

Consiglio Universitario Nazionale (National University Council): <http://www.cun.it/> [In Italian. Last checked: September 2007.]

National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy (formerly the National Documentation Institute for Educational Innovation and Research, INDIRE): <http://www.indire.it/> [In Italian. Last checked: September 2007.]

Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema dell'Istruzione (National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System, formerly known as Centro Europeo dell'Educazione): <http://www.invalsi.it/> [In Italian. Last checked: September 2007.]

EURYBASE, the information database on education systems in Europe: <http://www.eurydice.org/> [In several languages.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>