



## NATIONAL STUDY AND STATISTICS ON EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING IN ITALY

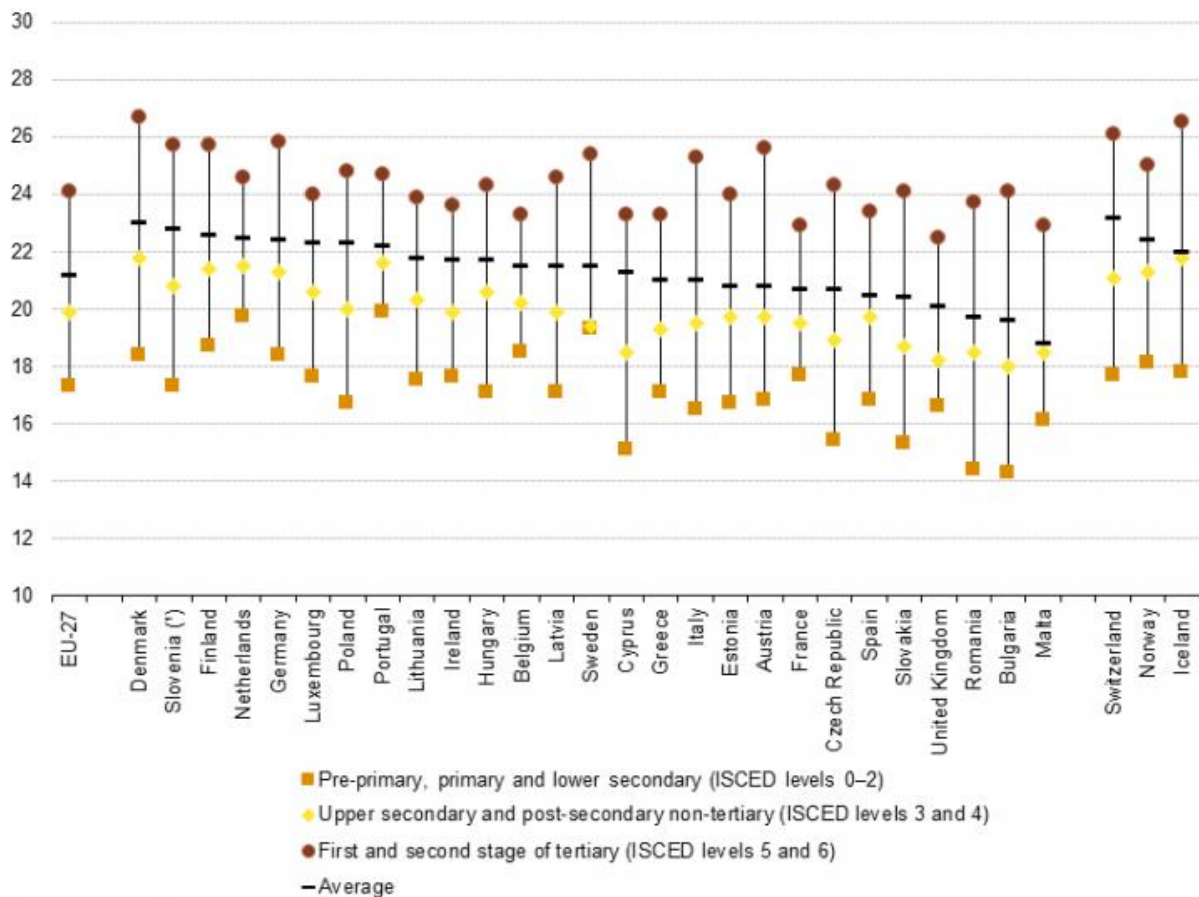
Target group of students aged 16-18

### 1. Participation of youth in education and the labour market

#### 1.1. Employment and education patterns by age

Young Italians, in particular, leave home at a later age on average than young people in other developed countries. The peculiarities of the Italian context can be explained from both cultural and structural standpoints. On the one hand, the presence of strong intergenerational ties is coherent with longer stays in the family of origin. On the other hand, the unfavorable labor market and a welfare system that is not generous to young generations tend to discourage individual autonomy.

The educational route is not free of risk either. Alongside the growing number of universities present throughout Italy offering a wide variety of programs of study and easier access even for youth from less affluent backgrounds, the probability that they will not succeed in completing their degree remains high. According to the Eurostat report “Youth in Europe”, only about 10% of students in Italy who have a parent with a low educational level succeed in obtaining a university degree, in contrast to the European average which is more than double this value.





## 1.2 Employment and education patterns by gender

Average age when leaving formal education by sex and educational attainment level for persons who left within the last 3 or 5 years

GEO/ISCED97	All ISCED 1997 levels	Pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 0-4)	Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2)	Upper secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary, first and second stage of tertiary education (levels 3-6)	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)	First and second stage of tertiary education (levels 5 and 6)
European	21.2	19.3	17.3	21.9	19.9	24.1
Belgium	21.5	19.8	18.5	22.0	20.2	23.3
Bulgaria	19.6	17.4	14.3	20.3	18.0	24.1
Czech Republic	20.7	18.7	15.4	20.9	18.9	24.3
Denmark	23.0	20.6	18.4	24.1	21.8	26.7
Germany	22.4	20.8	18.4	22.8	21.3	25.8
Estonia	20.8	18.8	16.7	21.7	19.7	24.0
Ireland	21.7	19.4	17.6	21.9	19.9	23.6
Greece	21.0	18.8	17.1	21.4	19.3	23.3
Spain	20.5	18.0	16.8	22.3	19.7	23.4
France	20.7	19.0	17.7	21.3	19.5	22.9
Italy	21.0	18.8	16.5	21.8	19.5	25.3
Cyprus	21.3	17.8	15.1	21.8	18.5	23.3
Latvia	21.5	19.2	17.1	22.3	19.9	24.6
Lithuania	21.8	19.8	17.5	22.3	20.3	23.9
Luxembourg	22.3	20.0	17.6	22.5	20.6	24.0
Hungary	21.7	20.1	17.1	22.2	20.6	24.3
Malta	18.8	17.1	16.1	20.6	18.5	22.9
Netherlands	22.5	21.0	19.7	23.1	21.5	24.6
Austria	20.8	19.3	16.8	21.2	19.7	25.6
Poland	22.3	19.7	16.7	22.6	20.0	24.8
Portugal	22.2	20.7	19.9	23.3	21.6	24.7
Romania	19.7	17.6	14.4	20.6	18.5	23.7
Slovenia	22.8	20.5	17.3	23.1	20.8	25.7
Slovakia	20.4	18.5	15.3	20.7	18.7	24.1
Finland	22.6	20.9	18.7	23.2	21.4	25.7
Sweden	21.5	19.4	19.3	21.8	19.4	25.4
United Kingdom	20.1	17.8	16.6	20.4	18.2	22.5
Iceland	22.0	19.8	17.8	24.0	21.8	26.5
Norway	22.4	20.2	18.1	23.3	21.3	25.0
Switzerland	23.2	20.9	17.7	23.4	21.1	26.1
Turkey	18.2	16.3	14.8	20.3	17.9	23.4



SEX – MALES

GEO/ISCED97	All ISCED 1997 levels	Pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 0-4)	Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2)	Upper secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary, first and second stage of tertiary education (levels 3-6)	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)	First and second stage of tertiary education (levels 5 and 6)
European	21.0	19.1	17.2	21.7	19.8	24.3
Belgium	21.3	19.6	18.1	21.9	20.2	23.6
Bulgaria	19.3	17.6	14.3	19.7	18.1	24.1
Czech Republic	20.4	18.6	15.5	20.6	18.8	24.6
Denmark	22.4	20.4	18.3	23.9	21.7	26.8
Germany	22.5	20.9	18.8	22.9	21.2	26.1
Estonia	20.4	18.7	16.9	21.4	19.5	24.4
Ireland	21.5	19.5	17.7	21.9	20.0	23.7
Greece	20.7	18.8	17.3	21.3	19.2	23.6
Spain	20.1	17.7	16.7	22.4	19.7	23.7
France	20.5	18.8	17.7	21.1	19.3	23.1
Italy	20.4	18.6	16.2	21.4	19.5	25.6
Cyprus	20.9	17.8	14.8	21.6	18.6	24.3
Latvia	20.4	18.8	16.7	21.4	19.7	24.3
Lithuania	21.0	19.4	17.0	21.7	20.2	23.6
Luxembourg	22.4	20.2	17.5	22.7	20.9	24.4
Hungary	21.4	19.8	17.1	21.8	20.3	24.5
Malta	18.5	17.3	16.1	20.6	19.0	23.2
Netherlands	22.4	20.8	19.2	23.2	21.6	24.9
Austria	20.9	19.3	16.9	21.3	19.6	26.3
Poland	21.8	19.6	16.6	22.2	19.9	25.0
Portugal	21.8	20.4	19.2	23.6	22.1	25.3
Romania	19.3	17.5	14.5	20.2	18.3	23.8
Slovenia	22.2	20.4	17.4	22.5	20.7	25.9
Slovakia	20.0	18.4	15.4	20.3	18.7	24.0
Finland	22.2	20.8	18.5	22.8	21.4	25.9
Sweden	21.2	19.2	19.1	21.5	19.3	25.6
United Kingdom	20.0	17.6	16.4	20.3	18.2	22.5
Iceland	21.7	20.0	18.2	23.7	21.8	26.1
Norway	22.2	20.3	17.7	23.3	21.5	25.6
Switzerland	23.4	20.9	17.6	23.6	21.1	26.3
Turkey	18.4	16.4	14.9	20.5	18.1	23.9



SEX – FEMALES

GEO/ISCED97	All ISCED 1997 levels	Pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 0-4)	Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2)	Upper secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary, first and second stage of tertiary education (levels 3-6)	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)	First and second stage of tertiary education (levels 5 and 6)
European	21.5	19.4	17.5	22.0	20.0	24.0
Belgium	21.6	20.0	19.0	22.0	20.4	23.1
Bulgaria	20.0	17.1	14.3	20.8	17.9	24.2
Czech Republic	21.0	18.8	15.3	21.3	19.1	24.1
Denmark	23.4	20.9	18.6	24.3	21.8	26.6
Germany	22.3	20.8	18.0	22.7	21.3	25.5
Estonia	21.3	19.0	16.3	22.0	19.9	23.8
Ireland	21.8	19.3	17.4	22.0	19.7	23.5
Greece	21.2	18.9	16.8	21.6	19.3	23.1
Spain	20.9	18.3	17.1	22.2	19.7	23.2
France	21.0	19.2	17.6	21.4	19.7	22.7
Italy	21.5	19.0	16.9	22.2	19.6	25.1
Cyprus	21.6	17.7	15.7	21.9	18.1	22.8
Latvia	22.6	19.8	18.2	23.0	20.1	24.8
Lithuania	22.6	20.3	18.6	22.8	20.5	24.1
Luxembourg	22.3	19.7	17.7	22.4	20.2	23.7
Hungary	22.1	20.3	17.1	22.6	21.0	24.3
Malta	19.0	16.9	16.1	20.7	17.9	22.8
Netherlands	22.7	21.1	20.4	23.0	21.4	24.4
Austria	20.7	19.4	16.7	21.1	19.8	25.0
Poland	22.8	19.9	17.0	23.0	20.2	24.7
Portugal	22.5	21.0	20.8	23.2	21.2	24.4
Romania	20.1	17.7	14.4	21.0	18.7	23.7
Slovenia	23.4	20.6	17.1	23.6	20.9	25.5
Slovakia	20.9	18.5	15.3	21.1	18.7	24.2
Finland	23.0	21.0	19.0	23.5	21.4	25.6
Sweden	21.8	19.6	19.6	22.0	19.6	25.3
United Kingdom	20.1	17.9	16.9	20.5	18.3	22.5
Iceland	22.3	19.7	17.2	24.4	21.8	26.8
Norway	22.6	20.1	18.6	23.3	21.0	24.6
Switzerland	23.0	20.8	17.7	23.3	21.2	25.9
Turkey	18.1	16.1	14.7	20.1	17.6	22.9



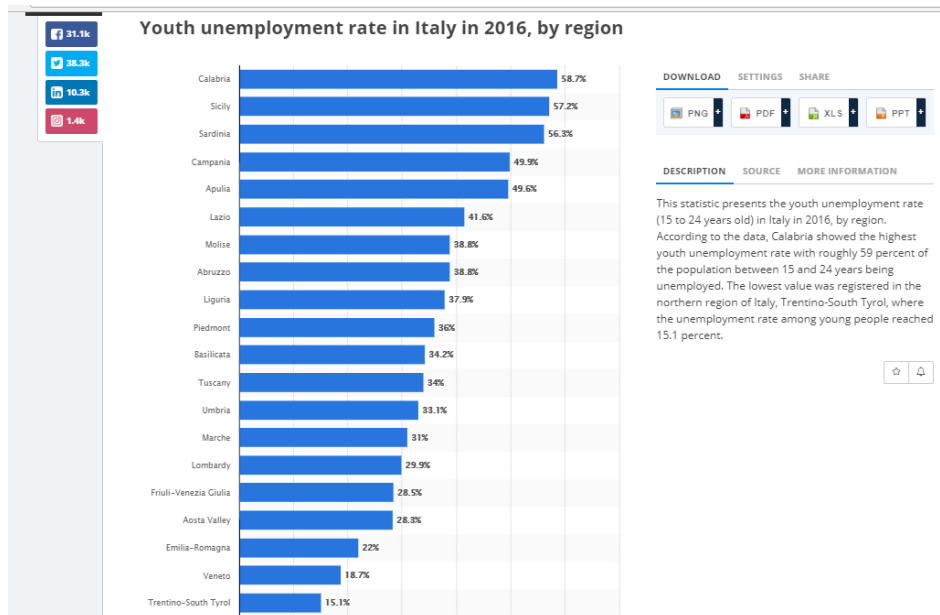
### 1.3 Youth employment situation

In February 2018, 3.589 million young persons (under 25) were unemployed in the EU-28, of whom 2.520 million were in the euro area. Compared with February 2017, youth unemployment decreased by 314 000 in the EU-28 and by 213 000 in the euro area. In February 2018, the youth unemployment rate was 15.9 % in the EU-28 and 17.7 % in the euro area, compared with 17.3 % and 19.4 % respectively in February 2017. In February 2018, the lowest rates were observed in Germany (6.2 %), the Netherlands (7.2 %) and the Czech Republic (7.5 %), while the highest were recorded in Greece (45.0 % in December 2017), Spain (35.5 %) and Italy (32.8 %).

Under the Youth Employment Initiative, introduced in 2013 by the European Commission, the EU aimed at supporting those regions and countries that have a youth unemployment rate above 25%. In June 2017, the Council and the Parliament agreed to increase the budget for 2017-2020 by €2.4 billion. Member States have also continued to implement the Youth Guarantee plan to ensure that all individuals under 25 receive a good-quality offer within four months after leaving education or becoming unemployed. Alternative paths to learning and development, such as the European Solidarity Corps have also been taken to ensure that the need to develop practical skillsset is met.

Despite these attempts to mitigate the problem of youth employment, young people starting their careers continue to face relevant structural problems. The long practice of offering unpaid internships, poor protection services for the young workers, as well as the inconsistency between the job market and the skills cultivated during the learning process, still continue to exist.. A better exchange of information between the teaching institutions, employers and employment services is necessary in order to better tap into the potential that each young person has.

This statistic presents the youth unemployment rate (15 to 24 years old) in Italy in 2016, by region. According to the data, Calabria showed the highest youth unemployment rate with roughly 59 percent of the population between 15 and 24 years being unemployed. The lowest value was registered in the northern region of Italy, Trentino-South Tyrol, where the unemployment rate among young people reached 15.1 percent.





### *Average length of the transition from school to work*

Why is, then, the Italian SWT so slow? After a first look at the stylised facts, a number of factors seem to be at work:

- a) the excessively rigid education system, particularly in the tertiary stage, that results in very late labor market entry for a large number of individuals who enroll at the university;
- b) the low level of both secondary and tertiary education attainment;
- c) insufficient linkages between the world of education and the labor market, that prevents young people from gaining the work experience they need to develop general and job related competences;
- d) the lack of an adequate vocational and training system;
- e) the lack of intermediation between demand and supply of qualifications, due, in turn, to inefficient public employment agencies and an insufficient number of private agencies.

## **2. Current situation on ESL**

### 2.1 Reasons for Early School Leaving

**Italy reached its Europe 2020 national target of 16% for early school leaving (ESL) in 2014.** Although steadily declining, Italy's ESL rate remains above the EU average (13.8% and 10.7% in 2016, respectively). The rate is particularly high among foreign-born students, at 30%, compared to the EU average of 19.7%. There is also a considerable gender gap, with the rate for boys at 16.1 %, compared to 11.3 % for girls, and a widening north-south divide

In Italy, the proportion of early school leavers is high by European Union standards even though the rate of early leavers has decreased over recent years (from 19,2% in 2009 to 15% in 2014). As a result of Law no. 296 of December 27, 2006, both the school leaving age and the minimum age to access the labour market were raised to 16 years. Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, in Italy the concept of 'at risk of drop-out' is also used for students who leave school education during the academic year without any official communication with an educational institution.

In 2013, 17% of the whole population aged 18-24 did not achieve any qualification beyond the 3C ISCED Level ("Scuola Secondaria Inferiore"), while the EU member countries average school drop-out rate was 13,5% and Italy was in fifth worst position in the EU. However, ESL is not uniformly distributed across the country: in Southern regions, it is almost double that of the Centre-Northern area. Dropping out is most severe in Sicily or Sardinia (25 and 25,1% respectively), while it is least in regions such as Umbria and Emilia-Romagna (11,6% and 13,9% respectively).

Looking at the Eurydice study (European Commission, 2014), dropping out is also a gendered phenomenon, affecting 20,2% of the male population aged 18-24 in Italy when compared with 13,7% of the female population (EU28 13,6% males, 10,2% females). Again this is not uniformly distributed across the country, as in Southern regions it is almost double that of the Centre-Northern area. Among several determinants is the role played by family origin. According to Aina, Casalone and Ghinetti (2015) youths born in the Centre-North with both parents from Southern Italy, in other words second generation internal migrants, behave similarly to those born and living in the South. For this reason, they are more likely to leave education earlier than comparable individuals born in the Centre-North with parents from the same area.



In Italy, 34,4% of students who do not get any school-leaving certificate was born abroad, while among native students this percentage decreases at 14,8%.

Across Europe, several countries have a national strategy in place that has as one objective to reduce early leaving from education or training, or they are in the process of adopting one, but in Italy there is no comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving.

Among the students who leave school early are:

- The "hunted" that the school actively seeks to distance themselves because they cause difficulties to the structure;
- The "unaffiliates", specially males who feel no interest in school and do not want be in contact with it (they do not want, they think that the school is useless and are often supported in this by the family, such as Roma and Shinti that barely reach the end elementary school);
- The "weak": those who do not have the cultural tools and learning complete the program of study which is proposed to them;
- The "drop out capable": students who have the intellectual capacity to deal with the school, but lack other skills such as social and emotional etc.

### Risks subjects

The places and causes of discomfort

The discomfort school is always the result of a combination of causes.

Let's try to define the scope and privileged places of the various manifestations of discomfort:

a) the family has unfortunately assumed economic conditions that affect strongly on the school curriculum

The critical details are:

- The difficulty in creating positive relationships (family divisions that are reflected on relationships, difficulties in the parental role);
- the family culture. Often it is the "cultural heritage" of the family to generate discrimination between students.

b) the school, which is located, especially today, to receive discomfort, and not being able to solve it. To have a positive impact in this area, the school should be aware of its fundamental role in education. The school is the first privileged place of encounter between companies and fewer lives directly the experience of the great cultural changes that are reflected on youth behavior

The real innovation must start by the teachers, who must recover their motivation.

c) the society: we have already seen the effects of the profound cultural changes related to mass media but there are also the dominant value orientations (success, money, hedonism etc.) that affect the goals that boys are given. It 'a duty of society as a whole to teach young people that education and training are fundamental values for their future



## 2.2 Rates of early school leavers from education and training at national level (% of the youth aged 16–24)

Despite the fact that early school leaving is decreasing: passing from 28.7% to 21.5% and is increasing the rate of secondary school attendance rising from 67.4% to 74.6%, Italy still lags behind the abandonment.

### Early leavers from education and training

#### Early leavers from education and training, 2011 and 2016 (% of population aged 18-24)

	2011	2016	Europe 2020 targets
EU-28 <sup>(1)</sup>	13.4	10.7	10.0
Malta	22.7	19.6	10.0
Spain <sup>(2)</sup>	26.3	19.0	15.0
Romania	18.1	18.5	11.3
Portugal	23.0	14.0	10.0
Italy	17.8	13.8	16.0
Bulgaria	11.8	13.8	11.0
Hungary	11.4	12.4	10.0
United Kingdom <sup>(3)</sup>	14.9	11.2	
Estonia	10.6	10.9	9.5
Germany <sup>(1)</sup>	11.6	10.2	10.0
Latvia	11.6	10.0	10.0
Belgium	12.3	8.8	9.5
France	12.3	8.8	9.5
Netherlands <sup>(1)</sup>	9.2	8.0	8.0
Finland	9.8	7.9	8.0
Cyprus	11.3	7.7	10.0
Sweden <sup>(1)</sup>	6.6	7.4	7.0
Slovakia	5.1	7.4	6.0
Denmark <sup>(1)</sup>	9.6	7.2	10.0
Austria	8.5	6.9	9.5
Czech Republic	4.9	6.6	5.5
Ireland	10.8	6.3	8.0
Greece <sup>(1)</sup>	12.9	6.2	10.0
Luxembourg <sup>(1)</sup>	6.2	5.5	10.0
Poland	5.6	5.2	4.5
Slovenia	4.2	4.9	5.0





Lithuania (1)	7.4	4.8	9.0
Croatia (4)	5.0	2.8	4.0

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat\_ifse\_14)

**Early school leavers Italy aged 15-18 y/o**

2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
4,4	4,6	4,3

**ESL 2015/16 per Region aged 15-18 y/o**

Sicilia	5
Campania	5,1
Sardegna	5,5
Puglia	4,7
Calabria	4,4
Basilicata	3,4
Lombardia	4
Abruzzo	3,5
Toscana	4,2
Liguria	4,6
Emilia Romagna	4
Marche	3,5
Lazio	4,2
Molise	3,1
Piemonte	4,7
Friuli	3,3
Veneto	3,1
Umbria	2,9
Italia	4,3

**ESL 2015/16 per Emilia – Romagna region aged 15-18 y/o 2015/16**

**Same as I.T.E.S. Valturio school types –  
Technical economical institutes**

	emilia romagna	italia
1° year	0,2	0,5
2° year	0,1	0,4
3° year	0,2	0,5
4° year	0,2	0,4



### Why these differences at national and regional level?

The priority goal of the Emilia-Romagna Regional authority is to combat early school leaving and to promote the fulfillment of the right/duty to education to qualify entry into the world of work. The Region also intends to continue to implement actions in furtherance of the right to education aimed at ensuring equal opportunities to education and training and support for proper educational performance to foreign students.

The new vocational education and training (VET) statutory framework, set forth by Regional Law n. 5 of 2011, aims to ensure the completion of compulsory education and the right/duty to education and training and it serves as an effective tool against early school leaving. Since its establishment, foreign students have accounted for approximately 30% of all pupils. The “2011/2013 programming guidelines for the educational system and labour” reaffirm the value of social inclusion, vocational and employment enhancement of immigrants, as a resource and an asset for the achievement of the regional economic development and social cohesion objectives and they identify work retention policies as a tool to prevent migrants from becoming trapped in an illegal status.

Education and vocational training initiatives for the integration and reintegration of adults into the labour market will take into account the diverse and additional needs of immigrants, particularly for those who have greater difficulties of inclusion, ranging from the victims of trafficking and exploitation, to refugees and asylum seekers. Different work integration initiatives will also be promoted to respond to immigrants’ needs, taking into account their individual specific needs and difficulties, using suitable tools, such as guidance, training, job placements, work integration or reintegration in favour of asylum seekers (Regional Law 7/13 and implementing provisions).

As part of the priority areas identified by the aforementioned 2013/2014 Health and Social Plan a few emerging issues have been identified: the growing impoverishment process, the need to shape and build a sustainable future for youth, the need to support dependent persons, such as the elderly and the disabled, and the need to recognize and appreciate the growing multicultural context, to reinforce social cohesion, to ensure equal access, equal opportunities and to prevent potential discrimination and social unrest.

In this sense, it is necessary to shift away from the old approach based on separate targeted specific goals towards, instead, a broad regional programme, taking into account the aforementioned emerging issues and enhancing the decision-making and action planning freedom and empowerment of associated Municipalities at district level.

Programming resources shall be allocated by the Local Social Fund at district level. In compliance with the Health and Social Plan guidelines, this fund envisages the allocation of a minimum percentage of spending for a range of specific interventions aimed at fostering migrants’ integration.

Given the widening scope of the phenomenon, it will be necessary to respond to growing and diverse needs, also through the other main thematic priorities (rising impoverishment, childcare, family, youth issues).

It will also be vital to coordinate the regional social planning within the framework of new programming opportunities and interventions, which will be implemented under the Asylum and Migration Fund. In this regard, the following priorities can be identified:

- Specific activities related to Italian language learning programs for adults;



- Intercultural mediation services and, more generally, territorial and community mediation experiences to prevent and combat social phenomena, such as urban ghettoisation; they account for approximately 1-2% on an annual basis of total social spending in the Municipalities of the EmiliaRomagna Region, source ISTAT.
- Information, guidance, advice relating to foreign immigration;
- Specific actions in schools aimed at children and their families, with particular attention to newly arrived students and to upper secondary school students, in order to combat early school leaving;
- The enhancement of different cultural identities of young people of foreign origin through active citizenship initiatives in schools and in the local community;
- Measures to promote cross-cultural activities (intercultural communication, intercultural centres, intercultural training for operators, enhancement of foreign languages), promotion of migrant associations and involvement in public life, as well as interventions aimed at specific target groups (asylum seekers and refugees, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied minors, women in conditions of social isolation).

The Vocational Education and Training system is the first branch of the Emilia-Romagna Education and Research infrastructure not only because it is addressed to young people leaving first-level secondary schooling, but also because it is aimed at translating compulsory education into an effective right. To guarantee this right, in fact, the system does not diminish educational objectives but places the emphasis on different models of learning for inclusion with no discrimination, thus extending opportunities and prospects for young people.

Three-year work-based education and training:

- an effective right
- the three-year courses in Emilia-Romagna offer the possibility to choose from 23 vocational qualifications .

The qualifications provide access to the world of employment but the choice of a three-year pathway does not exclude the possibility of pursuing further studies and continuing in education. To obtain a diploma, students who have attended the three-year programme at a vocational institute can continue in secondary school until a fifth year. Students who have obtained the qualification at accredited training providers, and pass an examination of acquired skills, can return to secondary school to complete the last two years.

Alternatively, having obtained the three-year diploma, students can specialise and improve their professional skills through various other opportunities offered by ER Education and Research Emilia-Romagna.

### **3. Tackling Early School Leaving**

#### **3.1. Policy actions in tackling Early School Leaving**

The main measures and policies related to early leaving are:

- *Enhancing in the right way the apprenticeships:* through enhancing school-work experiences could be the answer to part of the leakage problem.



- *Open school*: remedial afternoon courses could prevent the risk of rejection.
- *Trainers training*: teacher training should be one of the keys to fight dispersion by increasing the quality of teaching. What is needed at the school would be a school staff consisting of dedicated teachers, re-motivated professionally.
- *Not Italian citizen students*: foreign students represent a very wide band of dispersion risk.
- *New learning environments*: to combat early school leavers and reconnect young people to the school there is also need to re-design the spaces where learning takes place, redesigning school construction, the distribution of space and furniture
- *Reorder cycles and cutting a year*: reorder School levels could be a tool in the fight against school dropouts. The variant of four years instead of may be a way to shorten the course of high school, then creating a year-bridge between secondary education and post-secondary education while reducing the exams just to two or three discipline

On 3 September 2014 the Italian government published 'La buona scuola', a set of guidelines for a comprehensive reform of the school education system. The plans were subject to a public consultation from 15 September to 15 November 2014.

On 13 March 2015, the Italian government presented the reform as a draft law, which was approved by parliament on 9 July 2015<sup>37</sup>.

Projections in the 2015 National Reform Programme suggest that, of all the ongoing reforms in Italy, the school reform is likely to have the largest positive impact on GDP in the long-term.

The main points of the reform concern:

- *Introduction of merit-based components for teacher salaries*: each year, the best performing teachers in each school will receive a one-off bonus. The school head will identify the best-performing teachers using criteria established by the school's teacher evaluation committee. The committee will be comprised of:
  - (i) the school head;
  - (ii) three teachers;
  - (iii) an external evaluator (a teacher or head from another school, or an inspector);
  - (iv) two parent representatives (in pre-primary, primary and lower secondary schools) or one parent representative and one student representative (in upper secondary schools).

In 2018, based on an assessment of the first three years of implementation, the Ministry of Education, University and Research will establish national guidelines for teacher evaluation. EUR 200 million per year have been allocated to this measure. This is a positive step, as it introduces the principle of assessing teachers' work and rewarding good performance. However, this might have only a limited impact on increasing teachers' motivation and the financial attractiveness of the profession, as the reform does not modify the teacher career system.

- *Teacher recruitment*: over 100 000 teachers, who have until now been employed on short-term contracts, will be recruited on a permanent basis in 2015/16. While around half of these teachers will be filling existing positions, the other half will be entering new posts. Their role will be to strengthen the educational programme offered by each school, both in terms of subjects taught and other aspects, including reducing early school leaving and improving foreign students' proficiency in Italian. The recruitment plan is intended to fix the long-standing problem of 'waiting



lists' of qualified teachers. Overall, it is a positive measure, provided the government honours its commitment to only allow access to the profession via open competitions from 2016 onwards. A potential issue is that it is unclear to what extent the competences of the additional teachers will really fit individual schools' needs.

- **School autonomy**: school heads will have greater autonomy in managing human, technological and financial resources and will be subject to external evaluation every three years. In addition, from 2016/17 onwards they will have the freedom to select new teachers from within the specific subject area, according to their school's needs. These measures are potentially far-reaching, as they relax certain constraints that have so far limited the development of real school autonomy. International evidence shows that autonomy only works if coupled with accountability (Hanushek and Woessmann 2011), and higher school management quality is strongly associated with better educational outcomes. The success of this measure will depend on the proper implementation of the planned evaluation system of school heads in order to increase their accountability.
- **Curriculum**: some subjects may be introduced or strengthened: music, arts, economics, law and sports. In particular, introducing/strengthening economics may help raise Italian students' financial literacy levels, which are very low by international standards (OECD 2014b). Upper secondary schools will have some flexibility to set their own curriculum by introducing optional subjects.
- **Digital and language skills**: the reform includes:
  - (i) a national three-year plan ('Piano Nazionale Scuola Digitale') to strengthen digital competences among teachers and students, and improving internet connections in schools;
  - (ii) opportunities for introducing the 'content and language integrated learning' (CLIL) methodology from primary level onwards
- **Work-based learning**: traineeships are to become compulsory for students in the last three years of upper secondary education (at least 400 hours for students in vocational education and 200 hours for students in general education). They can take place either in the private sector or in the public administration. This measure will be financed with EUR 100 million per year from 2016 and is a step in the right direction, as it could help education and training to better meet the labour market needs.

The school reform makes provisions for further legislative decrees, empowering the government to legislate on a number of issues in the 18 months following adoption of the reform. The most significant issues are initial teacher education and the creation of a single integrated system of early childhood education and care for children aged 0-6.

### 3.2 Measures for tackling Early school leavers:

In order to be effective, the Council Recommendation suggests that comprehensive strategies to combat early leaving should include three types of measures:

- Prevention measures, which aim to tackle the root problems that may eventually result in early leaving.
- Intervention measures, which aim to combat any emerging difficulties experienced by students, by improving the quality of education and training and providing targeted support.



- Compensation measures, which create new opportunities for those who have left education and training prematurely to gain qualifications.

Moreover, comprehensive strategies to tackle early leaving should address all levels of general and vocational education (see Chapter 6 on tackling ELVET), and they should coordinate the activities of different policy areas and agencies such as youth, social/welfare, employment and health.

In other words, the recommendation promotes a shift from piecemeal efforts to a more joined up, comprehensive approach

### Policies - Europe allocates 32.2 billion for education in Italy

Meanwhile, the dispersion target for 2020 is 10% but Europe asks "for more targeted and coordinated" measures:

- skills enhancement, another sore point of the Italian education system
- the school-work is key objective of the European Union

How, then, connect the school to the working world? Is the Italian way to the dual system

- mandatory alternating training for at least 200 hours per year
- didactic enterprise
- artefact shops, stores
- apprenticeship

The Ministry of Education to reduce school drop intends to focus on three lines of action:

- constant actions constant over time and results evaluation;
- Personalization of learning and competence-based approach;
- Close collaboration between school, family, land and other educational agencies

### 3.2. Good practices in schools tackling Early School Leaving

Italy has made progress in improving its education system over the last few years. A school evaluation system is being implemented, basic skills proficiency in international surveys has improved, the early school leaving rate is falling and participation in early childhood education is almost universal for 4-6 year-olds. Moreover, the recent reform of the school education system could further improve school outcomes.

General government expenditure on education, both as a proportion of GDP (4.1% in 2013) and as a proportion of total general government expenditure (8.0% in 2013), is among the lowest in the EU. This applies in particular to expenditure on tertiary education, which is the lowest in the EU at only 0.4% of GDP and 0.7% of total general government expenditure in 2013

Tackling inequalities 4. Although the early school leaving rate has been on a downward trend since 2008, it remains well above the EU average (15% in 2014 compared with the EU average of 11.1%), especially among foreign-born students (32.6% in 2014 compared with the EU average of 20.1%) and in southern areas. Moreover, there is a significant gender gap as the rate is 17.7% for boys, compared with 12.2% for girls. Italy however, achieved the largest decrease in the early school leaving rate in the EU between 2013 and 2014 (1.8 percentage points) and has now reached the Europe 2020 national target of 16%.



## Modernising school education

The ongoing school reform (Box 2) is the main initiative aimed at modernising education in schools. In addition, the implementation of the National System for Evaluation of schools (SNV) started in 2014/15. The key to the success of this system is ensuring that all relevant actors and stakeholders are involved. The SNV follows a three-year cycle:

- In spring 2015, each school was provided with a wide set of data on its resources, processes and outcomes, and was then asked to produce a self-assessment report identifying strengths and weaknesses, based on a standardised template from the National Agency for School Evaluation (INVALSI). Each school also had to identify areas to be improved and targets to be met over the following years. These reports also include the results of the annual INVALSI standardised student tests and are to be published by end-September 2015, also as a means to help parents make an informed choice when selecting a school. Unfortunately, in 2015 the participation in INVALSI tests was rather low in some Southern regions, partly owing to a protest against the school reform (INVALSI 2015). As a consequence, data on INVALSI tests will be lacking for many schools in those regions.
- Evaluation by external teams, coordinated by an inspector, will start from the 2015/16 school year. The external teams aim to visit up to 10% of all schools each year.
- Public reporting starts with the publication of the self-assessment report and continues with the results of the improvement process during the three-year cycle, with a view to offering stakeholders greater transparency.

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