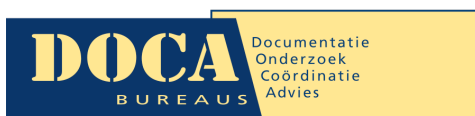


# Inclusion and education in European countries

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INTMEAS Report for contract –2007-2094/001 TRA-TRSP0

Final report: 7. Italy



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August 2009

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Drafts of this report benefited from comments and advice from the consortium's reference group members and from other experts in this field.

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**Strategies for supporting schools and teachers  
in order to foster social inclusion.**

Italy  
Final Report

Francesca Gobbo, Roberta Ricucci, Francesca Galloni

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## Section I – General overview on the Italian School Context

### 1. Introduction

“Comparative education is not as easy as it once was. From the early days of the subject, there was an assumption that the soul or culture of a nation was expressed within its school system, and the obligation of the travelling scholar was to observe closely and listen intently, and develop a complex but truthful picture of education in society. The boundaries around the subject were clear, it was the boundary around the state and the nation, seen as a barrier between it and the Other. Those comparativists for all their holistic searching for the soul of the nation, represented in the school, were not sensitive to the truth but to the complexities of the official discourse, weaving together national myths, founding narratives, and public identities inside its creation, their schools. Globalizing forces and their critiques have made it harder to decide where boundaries lie, in the present and in the past. More than ever national policies are revealed as trans national policies delivered locally, and ‘policy borrowing’, a clumsy phrase, woven through national initiatives”.

(Lawn M., “In Inghilterra: un’Odissea senza significato”, in Gobbo F. ed., *Le scuole degli altri*, SEI, Torino, 2006, p. 16 ).

Although this project is about “Strategies for supporting schools and teachers in order to foster social inclusion”, and thus it addresses those issues in terms of school population as a whole, most of the information that is here presented and discussed concerns measures for supporting schools and teachers involved in teaching foreign minors (i.e., minors born in Italy to an immigrant couple; immigrant children arrived in Italy before schooling age; newly arrived immigrant adolescents; unaccompanied minors) and minority children such as the Roma, for fostering the educational and social inclusion of latter, for intervention against and prevention of bullying, and for the school integration of disabled persons.

The focus on these categories of pupils and students does not mean that inquiring qualitative researchers do not pay attention to other ethnic or occupational groups, as well as to Italian students of low social background and status. In fact, in depth research carried out among foreign minors<sup>1</sup> in schools located in Italian urban contexts has pointed out the persistent learning and teaching difficulties in the case of Roma, Sinti, Caminanti, and the circus and fairground pupils’ fragmented schooling experience, as well as incidents of social uneasiness and/or bullying (Gobbo, 2003, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2009; Gobbo, a cura di, 2007a, 2007b, 2008; Comitato oltre il razzismo, 2006).

Some information on pupils – native, migrant and second generation - at different school levels can be found in general analyses on educational attainment, as well as in studies on poverty and social exclusion (Liverta-Sempio, Gonfalonieri and Scaratti (eds) 1999; Cavalli and Argentin (eds.), 2007; Casacchia, Natale, Paterno, Terzera (eds), 2008). Most of these specific studies were carried out in

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<sup>1</sup> How to define these young people is a complex decision to make given the number of different subjects the expression “foreign minors” includes. The most recent statistical Report by the Ministry of Public Education defines them as “students with non Italian citizenship” which seems the most correct definition. Since it is also the longest, “foreign minors” will be used in its place.

order to evaluate youth opportunities for the future, and the degree to which they have adapted to the labour market, where the position they occupy depends mainly on the level of education and the lack of discriminatory behaviour. To better understand these results, the Italian studies pay attention to the policies outlined in different countries to promote both equal opportunities at school and integration into society (Brandolini and Saraceno (eds.), 2007). More rarely, such studies use the concept of social capital (Coleman, 1990), although some specific public policy initiatives suggest that such relationships should be taken into close consideration. Other researchers underline the fact that some pupils are better culturally equipped thanks to family, kinship and communal resources.

This Report's focus as well as on the institutions' and researchers' concern for foreign minors' schooling experience and results is related to the sharp rising in enrolment by those young persons during the last 10 years. Though their percentage is not as high as that of French, British or German school systems, the current 6.5 % of the total school population has been reached in a much shorter time span. Therefore, schools and teachers are still trying to adjust to the new situation and to respond to it in an educationally effective way. The rights of foreign pupils and students were upheld by the 1998 immigration act that stated "the principle of equal treatment for foreigners in access to public services and places a duty on the 'regions, provinces, municipal authorities and other local authorities' to take measures aimed at eliminating obstacles".

It can also be hypothesized that teachers' uneasiness and schools' difficulties are partially related to the recent changes to the Title V of the Italian Constitution (voted in Parliament in 2001); such changes aimed at introducing a form of decentralization and consequently a greater autonomy for the schools in devising part of their educational offer. The overall goal was to make schools more responsible in terms of educational choices and more responsive to local needs; however, since the change requires that schools be able to finance their own projects and new educational roles, principals and teachers have not always succeeded in securing the necessary resources.

Not surprisingly, given this new turn, there is quite a number of research projects or activities (see the following table) enacted at the regional and local level<sup>2</sup>, both by regional and local government bodies<sup>3</sup> and by non governmental organizations<sup>4</sup>, at times connected and/or supported by

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<sup>2</sup> Fondazione Cariplo, *Progetto Intercultura. Educazione e pari opportunità nell'apprendimento per i ragazzi stranieri*, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Cittàdi Torino, Ministero della Solidarietà sociale, "Se non ora quando?", 2006. See Coordinamento Politiche di Integrazione, Settore Integrazione/ *Se non ora, quando?*. Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Ufficio Scolastico Regionale per il Veneto, *La scuola veneta in cammino*. 2006. *Quarto Rapporto Regionale*, Milano, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Comune di Bologna, Osservatorio sulle differenze, *L'integrazione scolastica delle seconde generazioni di stranieri nelle scuole secondarie di primo grado della Regione Emilia Romagna*, ottobre 2006. Luatti, La Mastra, a cura di, *Terzo rapporto sull'immigrazione in provincia di Arezzo*, Arezzo, 2007. Provincia di Torino, Assessorati alla Solidarietà Sociale, Politiche Giovanili, Sanità e Pari Opportunità, e Università di Torino, Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione, *Fatti riconoscere! Riconoscimento dei titoli di studio e delle competenze professionali degli stranieri*; the updated version is only to be found in [www.piemonteimmigrazione.it](http://www.piemonteimmigrazione.it) and [www.sciform.unito.it](http://www.sciform.unito.it). Agenzia Sviluppo Empolese Valdelsa, *La scommessa e la strategia. Attività didattica interculturale e progetti educativi nell'empolese*

ethnographic research carried out at the university level, by graduate students (among others, see Rapanà, 2007; Peano, 2007; Redaelli, 2007; Gobbo, a cura di, 2007b).

In front of the above sketched situation, recent steps taken by the Ministry of Public Education have always been qualified by a double aim: (1) integration of foreign students into the school and social contexts, (2) enactment of the intercultural education approach by teachers and principals. The relative novelty of migration and of pupils and students of migrant families has promoted not only many researches but also many and diffused initiatives of “good practices”, as it will be seen in the subsequent paragraphs. Most of such initiatives are still being enacted and this fact, plus their dissemination in the Italian school and out-of-school institutions, has so far slowed down monitoring procedures.

<i>Initiatives for teachers in...</i>	
Empoli, Pistoia, Bologna and Turin	Courses, projects and meetings aimed at widening and deepening educational competence.
<i>Initiatives for migrant pupils in...</i>	
Veneto Region	Actions aimed at fostering Italian language proficiency, both for young people and for lifelong learners.
Lombardy Region	Through the “Progetto Intercultura”, Cariplo Foundation funds and organizes many events and projects around the year since the early nineties <sup>5</sup> .
Arezzo province (Tuscany)	Intercultural education projects (especially Italian as a second language and foreign students’ life stories collected at the upper secondary education level).
Turin	“Se non ora, quando?” [“If not now, when?”], project aimed at supporting and reinforcing processes of inclusion of foreign citizens so that their integration be promoted <sup>6</sup> .
<i>Research projects<sup>7</sup> focussed on investigating migrant pupils’ school integration in...</i>	
Research in Cremona on Sikh children	This research offers an innovative interpretation of school integration processes and obstacles experienced by those students.
Research on out of school - initiatives in Turin and in Mazara del Vallo	These researches have shown the importance of supporting migrant pupils in their leisure time, helping them in the integration process both at school and in the Italian society.
Research in Turin both on pupils and teachers <sup>8</sup>	The research is aimed at describing whether or not the Italian schools are well equipped for receiving migrant pupils and in which way the school integration process of these pupils is proceeding.

Valdelsa, 5-6 ottobre 2007; Assessorato Istruzione Provincia di Pistoia, *La valigia – Uno spazio aperto*, 2007, <http://88.33.89.70/toscana/dettaglio.asp?IdNotizia=384&tematica>.

<sup>5</sup> Fondazione Cariplo, *Progetto Intercultura. Educazione e pari opportunità nell’apprendimento per i ragazzi stranieri*, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Città di Torino, Ministero della Solidarietà sociale, “*Se non ora quando?*”, 2006. See Coordinamento Politiche di Integrazione, Settore Integrazione/ *Se non ora, quando?*. Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Ufficio Scolastico Regionale per il Veneto, *La scuola veneta in cammino. 2006. Quarto Rapporto Regionale*, Mirano, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Information on these researches can be found in the doctoral ethnographic studies mostly coordinated by Francesca Gobbo (Galloni, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c; Naclerio, 2007a; Costa, 2007a, 2007b, 2008; Dallavalle, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> This research was carried out in Turin in 17 different schools (Comitato oltre il razzismo, 2006) through questionnaires, focus groups and unstructured interviews with teachers of foreign students and “minors at risk”, families and students. Not unlike other surveys, in this too foreign young people see themselves as Italians but are considered “foreigners” by their Italian peers. The research emphasizes both teachers’ and students’ efforts towards inclusion and the creation of an intercultural climate, but it also points out the personal difficulties and organizational problems each social actor encounters.

Lots of initiatives and projects have been funded in recent years to:

- support migrant pupils' school integration (language courses, cultural mediators, translations of educational materials and definition of leaflets explaining the characteristics of the Italian school system);
- improve the relationship between schools and migrant families,
- organise training courses for teachers to develop new methodologies and define new instruments for teaching in a multicultural class.

The great majority of activities outlined in this report have developed in the North-Centre of Italy, where local intercultural policies has improved since the 90s. In the South, projects and initiatives are increasing, following either practices already tested in the other Italian regions or developing new initiatives dealing with specific needs.

Focussing on the initiatives in the North-Centre of Italy, it is interesting to note that more than 90% of these initiatives are developed through a partnership among local authorities, school, NGOs and associations (both intercultural and ethnic). This kind of partnership enlightens one of the main characteristics of the Italian scenario in the migration field: in a situation of a lack of institutional initiatives, there is a great self-promotion of associations and the third sector. In this way, some needs, dealing with the increasing number of migrants, were satisfied just in time. The side effect of this modus operandi is the fragility of these kind of initiatives: they are carried out under annual funding, without either any continuity or any final evaluation of the efficacy of the actions. Recently, some funding provided by local authorities requires a final report on the activity: this is only a self declaration written by the grantee organization, without any serious evaluation carried out by experts.

The three projects funded by the European Commission are of interest because they all share the aims of the present project. As it can be seen (annexes 6, 20, 21, 22), they are devoted to promote inclusion of Roma and non Italian pupils and students, and to improve both the latter's learning and their teachers' relations with families. They were successfully completed or are near to completion. The results of the training course in Turin and Florence (annexes 20, 21) are satisfactory due to the involvement of teachers, and the quality of reasearchers' and experts' teaching. Another project (annex 22) successfully transferred the knowledge and methodology of the original project to another one in the Marche Region.

## 2. *The Italian school system's educational choices*

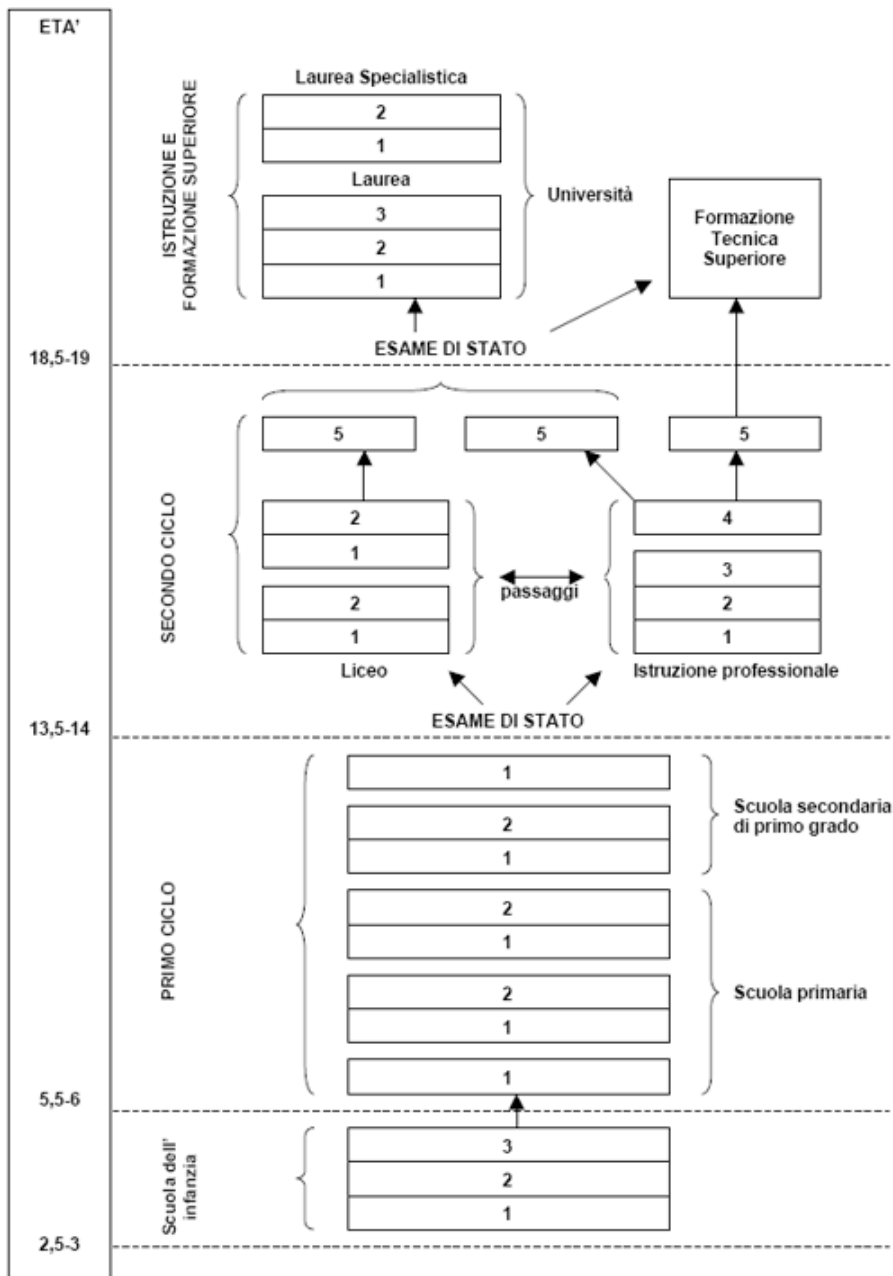
A December 2006 official statement<sup>9</sup> acknowledges (1) the *structural* dimension of foreign pupils' increase in the Italian school system, (2) its uneven distribution across the country, (3) its growth that concerns mostly vocational and technical schools at the upper secondary level, (4) the number of schools and urban neighbourhoods whose classrooms are predominantly composed of foreign pupils. It also emphasizes that the last two points should be paid close attention to and prompt educational initiatives. In fact, contemporary Italian educational discourse has from the beginning privileged intercultural education to promote (A) a sense of educational and social membership into the new country by foreign pupils and (B) an alternative to assimilation and to the construction of bounded ethnic communities - which however are increasingly more numerous and visible in Italian society. Towards these two ends, heterogeneous classrooms are ideally presented as a viable, and *equitable*, educational decision. Organization of courses for school principals<sup>10</sup>, administrative staff, future teachers and in-service teachers are also seen as urgently desirable (and some have in fact already taken place) so as (1) to recognize and answer the different needs of a diverse school population, (2) to become responsible for new educational initiatives in line with the official perspective of "school autonomy" and a "bottom up" educational approach, and (3) to mobilize itself around such initiatives.

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<sup>9</sup> Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Documento generale di indirizzo per l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri e per l'educazione interculturale*, dicembre 2006.

<sup>10</sup> See also Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Ufficio Scolastico per l'Emilia Romagna, Osservatorio nazionale per l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri e per l'educazione interculturale, *"Head to Head". Dirigenti scolastici a confronto. La formazione dei Dirigenti delle scuole a forte impatto migratorio*, Seminario nazionale, Rimini, 17-19 maggio 2007,

Fig. 1 – Italian School System



With regard to issues of instruction, it must be noticed that the newly issued *Curricular Indications* for childhood education and primary schooling<sup>11</sup> place the *person* in a central position around which the curricula's educational philosophy revolves. The individual pupil is seen as a *unique* individual *also thanks to its cultural identity*. Obviously, since this statement may concern every pupil, it is further qualified by another one, according to which the *structural* school enrolment of immigrants'

<sup>11</sup> Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Indicazioni per il curricolo per la scuola dell'infanzia e per il primo ciclo dell'istruzione*, Roma, settembre 2007.

children and adolescents provides classrooms with a positive learning opportunity for all. Teachers are invited to complement *ad hoc* projects for acknowledgement and maintenance of diversity, as well as for interaction and integration among pupils, with others promoting dialogue on different religious beliefs, family ways, gender differences. They are:

- education for living together (for which the valorisation of students' different identities and cultural roots represents a crucial asset);
- future citizenship, founded on the national values' cohesion and nurtured by diversity;
- families' (especially migrant ones) involvement in their children's education.

With particular regard to heterogeneous classrooms, cases are known (and sometimes they are reported by newspapers) of local administrations that give priority to Italian children over the foreign ones when families apply for enrolment in childhood education institutions. Likewise, it is known that many Italian families choose to enrol their children in primary and lower secondary schools where the number of Roma and foreign pupils and students is low. The presence of the latter are perceived to slow down the teaching of subject matters due to limited knowledge of Italian language (Gobbo, 2000). This families' choice may change in the future because of the greater number of foreign pupils who understand and speak Italian well, as they were born in Italy and attended childhood education. Attendance by Italian students whose language proficiency is quite low might also make a difference (Sansoé, 2007; Comitato oltre il razzismo, 2006), as well as local administrations' and schools' investment in intercultural education projects (Naclerio, 2007b; Comitato oltre il razzismo, 2006; Demartini, Ghioni, Ricucci, Sansoé, 2008).

Regarding the educational inclusion of foreign students, further matters of concern are that (1) the official rule of enrolling them in the grade corresponding to their age is not always honoured, (2) their school delay grows significantly with age and school grade and level; it has been interpreted as a partial inability on the part of the schools to meet their educational needs; (3) it is high the risk of strengthening and disseminating stereotypical views of other cultures, and of ignoring the interesting changes within those groups, as it has been stressed by ethnographic research on Roma, Sinti and Caminanti (Piasere, 2007; Saletti Salza, 2007, 2008; Sidoti, 2007; Pontrandolfo, 2007), (4) there is a dearth of educational initiatives for occupational nomads such as fairground and circus people (Gobbo, 2003, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2008).

The *Indications* also state that childhood education institutions may be the first opportunity for migrant families to meet other families and build relations of trust within the new environment. As Francesca Gobbo wrote in the 2007 Raxen Report, “ with regard to childhood education, children speaking other languages, with different lifestyle and religions, and with different *features* are seen

to ‘open new horizons, prompt reactions, curiosity, concerns and feelings that should not be ignored’, because of their importance for children’s construction of their identity.

In primary school, the *Curricular Indications* recommend teachers to remember how children’s different cultural experiences shape their perceptions, feelings, the relation with their own body and the environment. Thus curricula must be designed from an intercultural education perspective and pay attention to children’s cultural origins. In primary school curriculum, the various disciplines should provide children with the required competences. Some disciplinary areas (such as the Italian language, history) are concisely considered from the intercultural perspective: the contribution to the Italian language by other European and Mediterranean ones represents an ‘important resource for intercultural education’. In history it is recognized that the present social and cultural complexity provides teachers and pupils with the opportunity to learn about, and discuss, (1) human groups’ diversity and their original propensity to migrate and mix, (2) identity and diversity in present times, (3) the importance of dialogue. Present socio-cultural complexity is thus interpreted as the backdrop of the curriculum *and* the occasion to teach and learn about its various facets (socio-economic status, gender, social groups, religious affiliations, national identities, etc.)’.

### 3. Immigrant pupils’ population

Research on *second generations* is still in its infancy in Italy. Since the early 2000s, however, the field has begun to attract researchers from different disciplines studying various facets of this issue: school, family, identity and, more recently, friendship relations of different ages from infancy to adolescence. Questions have broadened and measures have deepened to improve the attention and increase the importance of the field. Local and regional studies (see references) have helped to identify key topics of interest to researchers and to educators, but unfortunately these researches have not helped to redirect and improve policy and practice: changes in policies and improvements in practices appear to be fragmented.

Tab. 1 – Distribution of immigrant minors by age (data at 1.1.2006)

	Total resident population (Italians + foreigners)	% Foreign population
Pre-school age (0-5 years old)	25,8	44,9
Compulsory school (6-16 years old)	58	54,6
Post- compulsory school (17-18 years old)	10,9	9,7
Total	100	100

Source: Dossier Caritas/Migrantes on Istat data.

It is important to stress that, according recent Italian immigration history, these studies are mainly focused on children and adolescents belonging to “1.5 generation” (Rumbaut, 1994): the rate of the second generation (the children born in Italy from first-generation immigrants) is increasing, but at

the moment it is mainly represented by children under 10 years old<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, in most cases studies refer to minors belonging to “1.5 generation”, a definition that allows those “in the middle” or “half-way”, to easily manage the world of identity and plurality of integration and interaction paths that young people’s experience shows on the personal, internal (family and the original country) as well as on the external (school, peer groups, host or society of origin).

As data show (Ismu, 2007), in the period 1996-2005 the number of minors<sup>13</sup> increased at a much higher rate than immigrant residents as a whole (respectively 120% and 66%), increasing from 125,565 to 586,483 (Ricucci, 2006). In 2005, two factors influenced this tendency: the arrival of minors from abroad (over 42,255) and the number of births of children of foreign-born parents (53,000). The proportion of immigrant minors, 19% of the foreign population, is higher in the North and reaches levels of between 24% and 27% in the various provinces of the Lombardy region. These data show deep structural and socio-cultural changes in Italian society, as reflected in Italian schools. In the school years 2005/2006, there were 430,000 foreign pupils, approximately 5% of the total, whereas in the school year 1993/94 they had reached only the number of 37,478 students, equal to 0.4% of the overall number of students. In the last twelve years, the number of foreign students has become almost ten times greater, with a 50,000 unit yearly increase during the last three years. This is a distinctively Italian situation: this rate is not comparable with other countries where the “transformation” took a longer time.

### *3.1. Minority pupils at school: a general overview*

The increasing number of non-Italian children has influenced the standard management of schools and their socializing role. In other words, the institutional adaptation to this new kind of users has involved the elaboration of a competence definition as regards basic issues, such as the encounter

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<sup>12</sup> According to the recent Italian immigration context before describing the state of the art of the integration of foreign minors, it is necessary to face the problem of their generational definition. In fact, until now, the majority of them arrived in Italy for family reunion. This means that their age at the time they left their country acquires significance. In fact, unlike the second, Italian-born generation, foreign adolescents born elsewhere share with their parents their country of origin, language and culture, although they differ for other aspects. Therefore, how can we define these adolescent minors who have certain characteristics that would compare with first generation migrants and yet are projected – and partly socialized – within a context different from where they were born and partially grew up? Some Italian authors use the definition of ‘1.5’ generation (Rumbaut, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Usually, Italian research studies consider as belonging to this category: immigrant children or children of immigrants (individuals from birth to age 18 who come to Italy with their parents: they could be divided into generation ‘1.25’, ‘1.5’, ‘1.75’); second generation immigrant (the Italy-born child of first generation immigrants), unaccompanied minors (according to the Italian legislation an ‘unaccompanied minor’ is a minor who does not hold the Italian citizenship or that of another EU Member State, he/she has not applied for asylum, he/she is present for other reasons, on the Italian territory without the assistance and the legal representation of his/her parents or other legally responsible adults in accordance with the Italian law); Roma minors (they belong to different ethnic groups, often with Italian nationality); minors applying for asylum (they are beneficiaries of humanitarian reception).

between different cultures and the development of innovative didactic interventions (see introduction).

Tab. 2 – Foreign pupils in Italian schools (school years reported 1995/96 – 2005/06)

School year	Pupils without Italian citizenship	% foreign pupils on the total pupils at schools
1995/96	50.322	0,56%
1996/97	57.595	0,66%
1997/98	70.657	0,81%
1998/99	85.522	1,09%
1999/00	119.679	1,47%
2000/01	147.406	1,84%
2001/02	181.767	2,31%
2002/03	232.766	2,96%
2003/04	282.683	3,49%
2004/05	361.576	4,20%
2005/06	424.683	4,80%
2006/07	501.445	5,6%

Source: MPI, 2007.

Tab. 3 - Education success in the different school levels (a.y 2006/2007)

	Total pupils* (a)	Immigrant pupils (b)	Italian pupils (c)	(b-c)
Primary school**	99,7	96,4	99,9	-3,6
Lower secondary school	95,8	90,5	97,3	-6,8
Upper secondary school	85,8	72,0	86,4	-14,4

\* Successful pupils per 100 after mark assignment.

\*\* Data are referred at the a.y 2005/2006 and they don't include Roma pupils.

Source: MPI, 2007.

To sum up, the Italian school context is characterized by:

- the presence of a number of different nationalities within the classrooms;
- higher numbers in primary and intermediate school grades;
- an increase of second-generation foreign students who display different needs from foreign students who enter the Italian context after having started their school in the country of origin;
- inconsistency of politics and interventions adopted to cope with these different needs (in terms of diverse origins, time arrival, diverse educational grades and especially the degree of language competency).

The most important difference between immigrant and native children is the migratory biography. The age at the moment of immigration determines differences in educational attainment in migrant

pupils. The explanation is based on the logic of a generation-integration-cycle implying that the generation status is determining for the education career.

Following this hypothesis, children starting primary school and having attended kindergarten in the host society (namely the second generation) have higher opportunities to end up with higher educational degrees. Those arriving after the age of twelve are more likely to leave school without having obtained a high school level diploma. It is clearly shown in the experience of recent immigration countries where migrant pupils are over-represented among “1.5” generation (namely it is referred to children rejoining their family between 10-14years old). Consequently, studies based on the experience of the new European immigration countries found that there is a lack of inclusion of immigrant children in the school environment and that national students need to be supported to adapt to the arrival and inclusion of immigrant students. These studies noted that immigrant children encounter hostility and difficulties at school.

Therefore, the phenomena of withdrawal, setback and exclusion of foreign students are obvious within the Italian context and are consistent with other European countries. To this effect, the transition from lower to higher education represents an indicator to assess the quality of the relationship between education (and the overall society) and foreign students. Schools represent a good observatory to understand the situation of foreign children and their paths of integration in the Italian society.

### *3.2. Minority pupils at school: the main key issues.*

Attention to migrant pupils, or those belonging to an ethnic minority, especially at lower secondary school level, has been acknowledged as crucial for the definition of integration paths. In fact, it is exactly at this level that the bases for subsequent schooling are built: without language support, an educational basis, etc. foreign minors arriving from abroad when 11 to 14 years old risk to pursuing exclusively vocational education.

It is now obvious that dealing with school integration problems means entering a multi-faceted and constantly evolving world, in which there are numerous actors: teachers, autochthonous and allochthonous students, native and migrant families, cultural mediators, associations, local government operators, etc. The research, analysis and definition of methods and activities must take into account each school-involved actor's viewpoint in order to develop efficient projects, responding to foreign students' requirements and compatible with the local education system.

Lots of initiatives and projects have been funded in recent years to:

- support migrant pupils' school integration (language courses, cultural mediators, translations of educational materials and definition of leaflets explaining the characteristics of the Italian school system);
- improve the relationship between schools and migrant families,
- organise training courses for teachers to develop new methodologies and define new instruments for teaching in a multicultural class.

### 3.2.1. Language

Language (the criterion of language proficiency) is among the first criteria considered when allocating immigrant children to mainstream classes: the question Italian teachers deem crucial for that purpose is “are those children capable of following lessons in the language of instruction used at their schools?”

Tab 4 - Classes with a minimum 20% of immigrant pupils:  
number of nationalities in the Italian school classes.

% of immigrant pupils	Number of the nationalities in the classroom							
	1	2	3	4 e 5	da 6 a 10	da 11 a 15	da 16 a 20	oltre 20
20-25%	0	1	0	4	12	28	58	111
25-30%	0	0	0	2	4	7	13	47
30-35%	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	26
35-40%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
40-45%	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	7
45-50%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
50% y más	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	6

Source: MPI, 2007.

If the answer is no, than the education system consider that they require special assistance to meet their needs. There two models to answer to this question:

- a) an integrated model
- b) a separate model.

In the integrated model, children are allocated to classes consisting of children of the same age in the mainstream education. Measures for support (essentially linguistic) are implemented on an individual basis for each pupil during normal school hours.

The separate model may assume two forms:

- 1) Transitional arrangements: immigrant children are grouped together separately from other children for a limited period so that they can receive special attention geared to their needs. However, they may attend some lessons in the corresponding mainstream classes with all other pupils;
- 2) Long term measures: in other countries, for instance France, special classes are formed within the school for one or several years. In these classes, children and young people who have not reached an appropriate level due, for example, to their poor language skills, are prepared for transition to the regular classes. In these classes, they mainly learn French but also receive assistance with other subjects. After a year in these special classes, the student should be able to join regular classes, but the period of attendance may be reduced or, in exceptional cases, extended for a period of two years maximum.

Paying attention to this matter is crucial because an inadequate proficiency in the language of the school is frequently cited as a primary reason for poor academic performance. The consequence is that the enrolment rate of foreign children is always higher than that of nationals in those cycles which either require only minimal qualification or provide only a short course of instructions.

In Italy, the education system has chosen the integrated model. Nevertheless, even if learning the language is the first step for a good integration within the school, given the scarcity of resources available for specific language workshops for foreigners, every school tries to manage this problem independently. The use of multi-media tools can be a more appealing way for students to approach a new language (e.g. annex n. 12).

### *3.2.2 School success.*

The family socio-economic condition continues to be an important factor of school failure. According to this, in Italy there are till today significant differences between both the North and the South of the country and between residential areas and the peripheries in the main cities. In these specific contexts, first, low educational and low economic capital of the parents have a negative effect on the school careers of Italian children. Second, the lack of other strong educational figures (teachers, youth workers, priests) enforces the situation of children well-being, favouring the increase of illegal activity. Finally, the arrival of migrants (thanks to the low cost of accommodation) had added a new element of instability for both adults and the youths. Some projects have been developed in these areas to fight against the marginalisation process of the inhabitants, especially of the new generation. Strong “community plans” were designed by local authorities and funded by the European Social Fund to promote: 1) a new social agreement across generations, old and new residents, youth and aging people; 2) educational initiatives inside and outside school, promoted by a network of schools and associations and dealing with the definition of a strong educational community able to oppose illegal behaviours; 3) forms of youth

participation, aiming to develop a civic spirit and legality. Examples of these actions can be pointed out in the Turin experience in Italy, as it is described below:

1) *Project “The Gate” - Turin*

In June 2002 the proposal was presented to the Mayor of Torino which foresaw the transformation of The Gate from Urban Pilot Project to a Local Development Agency, a tool for the Public Administration to be used within the framework of the most complex development projects in the Suburb Sector. The Project has been updated with a series of continuing innovative initiatives compared to the experience gained in the neighbourhood. By visiting the website you can examine in depth the areas (economic, social, cultural, built environment and sustainable environment) in which the project intends to operate and the services that it will offer (Social Support Unit and Territorial Consulting).

2) *Porta Palazzo and children: in co-operation with the “Polo Educativo” - Turin*

The project “La Porta dei Legàmi” [The Relations Door] is presented as a fundamental example of the experimentation proposed by the Education System of the City of Torino, which has as its objective the establishment of a “Polo Educativo” integrated in Porta Palazzo - Borgo Dora area aimed at “..increasing the value relating to specific gender, ethnicity, cultural and religious issues that characterize the history and past of every child”.

The initiative aims at providing access to education services for immigrants, the use of cultural mediation and the training of staff, through the development of a study during the academic year 2002 – 2003 on Shared Actions within the school system of the area.

An analysis regarding the needs of the teaching/school staff, that has been dealing with pupils experiencing socio-cultural hardship, heavy migratory flows and continual evolution of the pupil population for many years, has shown the need for definition and sharing of possible tools for reception, mediation and support within the school and social system, beginning with socialisation of that which effectively takes place in reality. In this light the Scientific Technical Committee of the project has established the need to build a shared concept, among teachers, educational personnel and mediators, on what can be gained from cultural mediation in the school context. (source: <http://www.comune.torino.it/portapalazzo/eng/ambienti/sociale/>).

The relevance of the family and the significance assigned to education as an instrument of social mobility is obvious. However, if the family is capable of representing a resource to support education efforts, sometimes is transformed into a heavy load for the definition of schooling paths as well as of education withdrawal.

*“Jawad is very good at school. He started in Turin in grade 2. After grade 8, he will enrol in a vocational institute”*

*“But ’d like to become a nurse [as a secondary school choice], it’s a good profession”. He thinks for a moment and then adds: “I would have liked to attend high school, but my family did not agree. For us, high school is too much”. (Source: *La stampa*\*, 2007/04/03) \* (Turin newspaper with nationwide distribution)*

Personal inclinations are silenced and replaced by the parents’ economic needs and worries, especially in the case of families with both lower economic and cultural capital, as they prefer to direct their children towards professional careers that ensure a quick access to the work market. Even within the Italian context, adolescents with a poor family background mainly attend

vocational institutes because these are considered as less educationally and culturally demanding and more useful to job placement. Even more so for immigrant pupils or pupils with a migratory background.

Tab. 5 - Upper secondary level: percentage of Immigrant pupils on the overall school population (s.y. 2006/2007).

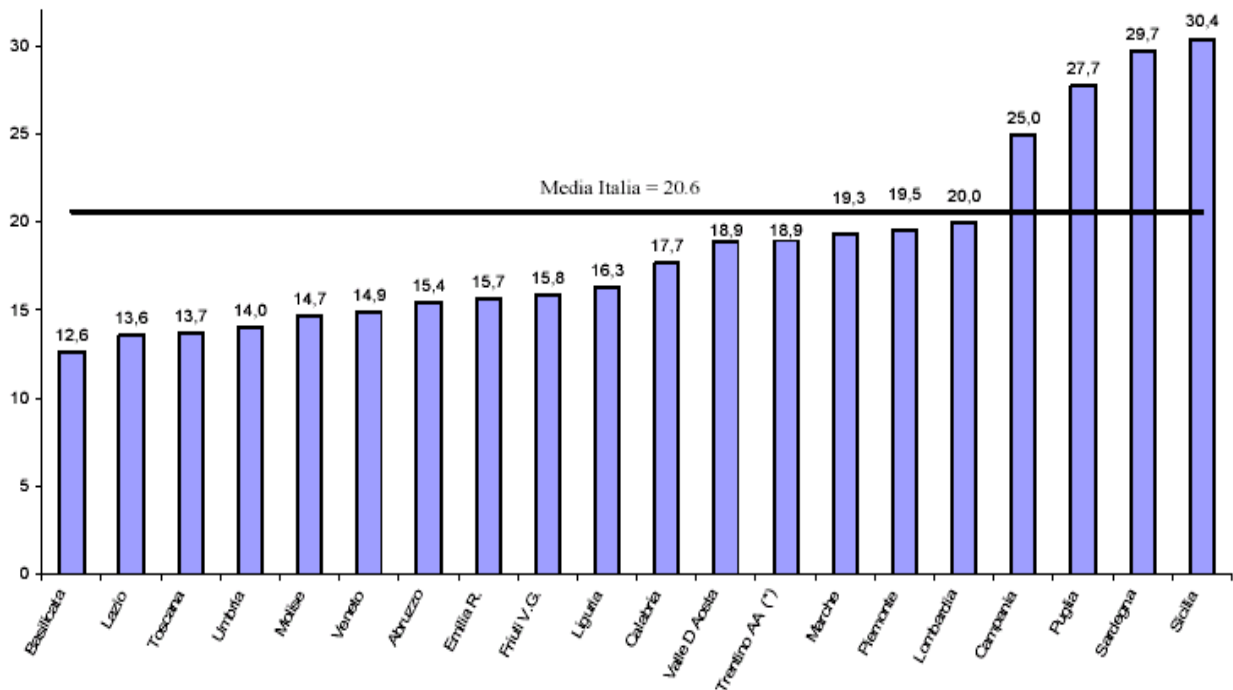
Education type	Incidence of Immigrant pupils on the overall school population
Classical, scientific, teacher training education	1,7
Technical education	4,1
Vocational education	7,5
Artistic education	2,9
Total upper secondary level	3,8

Source : Miur, 2007.

*“I enrolled in this school because I already knew other kids coming here. To be the only Moroccan in a class I couldn’t bear it” (Moroccan boy)*

*“When I arrived I went to the high school director to enrol and he told me that that school was too difficult for us foreigners, so he sent me to a vocational institute” (Albanian girl)*

Figure 2 – 18-24 years old Italians with only compulsory education. Data by Regions (per 100 people).



Source: Istat, 2006.

Therefore, the phenomena of withdrawal, setback and exclusion of immigrant students are obvious within the Italian context and are consistent with other European countries. To this effect, the transition from lower to secondary education represents an indicator to assess the trend direction of the relationship between schooling (and the overall society) and foreign students: towards a subordinate integration that compares parents’ to children’s experiences or towards an equal

integration where the outcome is defined by individuals' characteristics (personal and family), not influenced by discrimination and stereotyping processes.

## Section II

### Strategies for supporting schools and teachers in order to foster social inclusion

Some information on pupils – native, migrant and second generation - at different school levels can be found in general analyses on educational attainment, as well as in studies on poverty and social exclusion (Bouteyre, 2004; Checchi, 2006). Most of these specific studies were carried out in order to evaluate youth opportunities for the future and the degree to which they have adapted to the labour market, where the position they occupy depends mainly on the level of education and the lack of discriminatory behaviour (Zincone, 2009). To better understand these results, most studies pay attention to the policies outlined in each country to promote both equal opportunities at school and integration into society (Eurydice; 2006; EFMS, 2008). More rarely, the concept of social capital (Coleman, 1990) is used, although some specific public policy initiatives invite consideration of such relationships. On the other hand, researchers refer to the fact that pupils with migratory background are better equipped than others in drawing upon family, kinship and communal resources (Phinney, J. S. e Rosenthal, 1992; Phinney, 2003).

#### *1.1. Support measures*

In order to make effective the right to education and make the integration of pupils with difficulties easier, national, regional and local authorities have established programmes aimed at promoting and facilitating the reception and integration in different social contexts (Eurydice, 2004).

These projects can be sorted into three categories:

- 1) Orientation measures;
- 2) School-based support measures
- 3) School-based recognition of specific culture.

In the first category orientation measures can be cited, that are generally focussed on improving the quality of information transferred between home and school, particularly by favouring the use of migrants' languages in the case of migrant pupils. The principal types of information and orientation measures for pupils in schools (pre-primary and full-time compulsory education) are: simple written information about the school system, supplying interpreters, special resource persons/councils, additional meetings specifically for families with low educational capital and reception measures for immigrant pupils.

In the second category, measures have been developed that are aimed at fighting early school leaving, high failure rates and drop-outs. According to the wide range of existing measures, it could be interesting to focus on those measures dealing with: 1) support to fill gaps in certain areas of

their curriculum (see below par. 2.); 2) support the educational paths among the different agencies of socialisations (family, school, association) especially through out of school initiatives.

To help those pupils in certain areas of the curriculum, there are various initiatives that provide individual or group teaching during part of the school timetable. Other initiatives intended to foster “pupils at risk” high school success involve more successful students who become tutors/mentors of their migrant peers, by offering tutoring and help in learning the school system and the school way of life. These type of projects allows migrant pupils both to reinforce their opportunities and to better proceed in their school careers (e.g. projects dealing with either Roma or immigrants). However, it has been noticed that support measures at high school level can be useless if they are not followed by equal opportunities at University level.

As for the last category of measures (school-based recognition of specific culture, e.g. immigrant culture), there are many findings confirming that integrating the pupils’ mother tongue as equivalent and not as an alternative to the language of instruction guarantees the necessary intellectual development, which would provide a basis for school success and integration into the host societies’ school system. Programs to maintain home languages have been implemented under differing forms of sponsorship: homeland governments seeking to maintain loyalty, ethnic organisation (often religious ones) seeking to reinforce community cohesion, and the education authorities of the host country, believing in the relevance of the above mentioned topics. However, teaching the pupils’ mother tongue is in most cases an extracurricular activity occupying a few hours a week. Generally speaking, measures to support teaching the pupils’ mother tongue encompass not merely language tutoring in its own right, but instruction related to aspects of the culture or history of the country of origin.

### *1. 2. School support measures*

Research has ascertained that the institutional setting is extremely important for the future opportunities of the young generation (Favrega and Queirolo Palmas, 2003; Besozzi and Colombo, 2007). Speaking about the institutional setting, about 40 years ago Coleman (2005) underlined that while education plays an important role in people’s lives, contributing to determine class status, degree of social mobility and attitudes, it is not necessarily the determining cause of inequalities or the key to equality of educational opportunities. This of course does not mean that other role-players, such as parents and teachers, should be forgotten (see below). In this way, schools have begun to re-enforce their attention to families, promoting their relations with the institutional educational setting.

In many cases, schools encounter difficulties in communicating with parents because of their lack of knowledge of the educational system and the changes it underwent (e.g. see annexes n.3 and n.13). Sometimes, even among native families, language represents a barrier, though certainly not the only one. Until recently, language teachers fulfilled the role of school/family mediators and were often asked to bridge the gap between parents and teachers (Besozzi, 2005; Giovannini et. alii, 1996).

Providing school support means also supporting school attainment. Data show that some students (e.g. pupils of Roma background, pupils with disabilities, pupils coming from families with a low economic capital, pupils with a migratory background) have performance and social integration problems within their class (Miur, 2006: 2007). In order to help compensate for these problems, some projects envisage support during school hours as well as out-of-school support (e.g. see annexes n. 6, n. 9, n. 11). Since mapping this kind of activities throughout the whole of Italy would have required greater time and resources than we had, we collected and analyzed the significant ones that are carried out in the Northern and Central regions of Italy. However, we are also documenting a few examples of initiatives enacted in the South of Italy (annex 7,8,9,10,11).

### *1.3. Teacher support measures*

With regard to teachers, training courses have been organized to improve teaching ability in a multiple-complex context, which is characterized by pupils with different and numerous needs: psychological, physical, cultural and social. As teachers have often to become “youth workers, educators, social assistants”, they need to improve their skills to better understand the generation of “risk society”, as Beck dubs it (Beck, 2002).

Thus, the training courses offered to teachers can be distinguished in:

a) Training courses on new methodologies for the school of the new century.

An important training course, “Teaching in a intercultural school”, for teachers and school managers of both compulsory and non-compulsory Italian schools was organised by the Minister of Education last year. The challenges dealing with, e. g., development of the information society, improvement of immigration flows, were dealt with during national workshops, where teachers coming from different schools (according to the area of residence and the type of educational curriculum) had the opportunity to discuss problematic situations together, to improve their ability to meet new challenges and to present their requests to the Ministry’s delegates (e.g. annexes n. 10, 11, 20, 21).

b) Collaboration with professionals (e.g. counsellors, psychologists, youth workers) inside and outside of the school.

Confronted by the increasing complexity of the teaching pupils with numerous and different needs, new professional figures have entered the schools. According to those projects elaborated to meet specific needs, teachers are supported by counsellors, psychologists and youth workers in their teaching activities (e.g. annexes n. 16 and 17).

The idea is to create a “school community”, integrated in the neighbourhood, and able to educate pupils to live in a society, by working on both their empowerment and their social skills, according to a wider concept of teaching and school education (Favaro, 1990; Fele and Paoletti, 2003)<sup>14</sup>. At high school level, aids towards orientation to the labour market or university level are recognised as a central topic, especially in a knowledge society, as we well know.

It is interesting to point out the following two initiatives:

- 1) Project “Scientific degrees” (National pilot project promoted by the Italian Ministry of Education): The aim of the project is to attract youth to scientific topics: chemistry, physics, maths and the science of materials. One of the initiatives including in the project is a website, which is designed to reach two goals: a) to facilitate access to information on the scheduled activities and b) to outline the cultural context in which the numerous initiatives take place.
- 2) Project “Tutoring and Orientation”: The project is addressed to high schools (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> years) of the province of Viterbo and it provides the following activities: a) experimentation of orientation activities (to pursue university degrees or an immediate entry into the labour market), with an interactive methodology; b) training courses for teachers of the classes involved with the research-action method; c) improvement of co-operation between school and university.

Both the projects are considered good practices in order to support educational paths: paying attention to juvenile school integration signifies promoting inclusion. A lot of local authorities and

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<sup>14</sup> A good practice in this way, it can be considered the Turin project “Magic carpet” (Tappeto volante). More than any other industrial city, Turin has been affected by the immigration flow. Already in the 1980s, the analysis of the immigration impact on the city defined it as a “melting pot”, into which very dissimilar populations merged. Demographic pressure deeply modified the citizenship social outline as well as its metropolitan structure. This process has involved the old settlement quarters, especially the city centre, as well as the outskirt neighbourhoods; the vicinity to the main railway station has determined that the San Salvario area immediately became a reference point for immigrant and so it has remained since.

Low cost, accommodation availability and vicinity to the station of arrival has made this area the first stop of a route that later branched out towards other city neighbourhoods. The VIII, I and VII districts are some of the areas with the highest number of foreign citizens (9,4% of Turin total foreign residents). Immigration requires an in-depth education of the neighbourhood, not just because many foreign minors have little familiarity with Italian language, but also because they belong to different cultural traditions.

In this context is built-in the 1999 project “The magic carpet”. Among its objectives is the creation of a social and educational context in which all the subjects in the area (council, school, associations) share an educational project focussed on the integration of resources and on the involvement of all family units and children living on such an area. In order to reach this target, the initiatives tested are: 1) the development of educational training paths for the learning of Italian language; 2) neighbourhood schools cooperation to improve the answer to students’ demand for training; 3) the creation of intervention targeting the promotion of learning achievement, especially by foreign students; 4) the creation of a network of associations and neighbourhood schools.

The schools have built some path in synergy with neighbourhood public and private subjects, whose cooperation has helped to renew educational methodology with a powerful cultural project based on creativity and on the global dimension of culture and cohabitation. The main intervention lines concern not just the strictly educational activities, but the connection and relationship with parents, the limitation of the level of academic withdraw and failure, the study and research for instruments favouring citizens’ participation to school life.

private foundations are aware of this and in the recent years numerous projects have founded, especially in the regions of Lombardy, Piedmont, Emilia Romagna and Lazio, where needs combine with a wider range of ngos working in both the educational and youth fields.

c) Training courses to promote pupils' understanding of life in a multicultural society.

As socio-educational research indicates (Kellerhalls and Montadon, 1991; Palmonari, 2001 Amerio et alii, 1990), adolescents' identity definition and social integration sway between a strongly emotional cultural system within the family context and a network of strong and prevailing social symbols and meanings in the host society, outside family. For adolescents, the immigrant, or immigrant's children's status, involves a greater chance of facing difficulties as compared to the full realization of one's own self as well as greater likelihood of remaining at the fringe of society (Eldering and Kloprogge, 1989; Elliott, Payne, Ploesch, 2997).

Up to now, training courses have taken into account the fact that foreign adolescents grow within a context primarily characterized by the lack of strong identification models. Family is weak because in most cases it is marginal to the new context of integration (furthermore, it sometimes finds itself to be in an inferior social position compared to the original context) because the latter represents values and traditions that are different from those of the prevailing culture. Consequently, the outcome is a devaluation of parental models, even though the reference models in the host society that could replace them are still missing or are not easily accessible. Various intercultural associations address some of their activities to parents with a migratory backgrounds, especially if they are early arrived in Italy. Two examples are famous in Italy and their experience has been recognized by numerous European projects focussed on good practices in the integration process: Alma Mater<sup>15</sup>, an Intercultural Centre for Immigrant Women, and ASAI<sup>16</sup>.

Furthermore, the network of external survival support for the elaboration of one's migratory experience, combined with the adolescents' crisis stage, is poor. Often, the second generation has neither people nor places where it can express uneasiness, worries and difficulties.

Finally, there rarely is an educational agency support: not only by school, but by socio-recreational services and sport associations as well. The socio-educational world in general seems still ill-prepared to tackle – and even notice at times – the specific relevance of diversity and of cultural,

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<sup>15</sup> This Centre offers information and orientation for services and self-help groups, mainly addressed to women. It also provides intercultural activities such as a documentation centre, and a theatre. Economic activities by immigrant women are also encouraged and there are two co-operatives managed by immigrant women who run a Turkish bath, a laundrette, catering and dress-making services.

<sup>16</sup> Asai promotes a centre aimed at: supporting the social and vocational path of foreign youngsters and improving their cultural and language skills; improving youngsters' self confidence and to promote youth empowerment; promoting intercultural dialogue as a resource for social cohesion and responsible participation; fighting social isolation and discrimination by offering learning opportunities.

religious and family feelings of belonging along these adolescents' growth process. In these conditions, adolescents' growth processes can increase inter-generational gaps and negatively affect assimilation and integration paths.

Like everyone else, foreign adolescents are expected to take up a role and work out identity choices that are not merely individual but rather involve family, school and friends (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000; Perone, 2006); . In fact, the choices do not only result from the individual's decision and will, but are connected to numerous factors. Therefore, it is deemed necessary to assess how individual freedom – with limitations due to the migratory condition – relates to the second and first generation projects, and to the integration politics of the host society context

In brief, when facing the various identity aspects, adolescents might activate options based on a continuum that sways between two opposite poles: the positive one, where young people supported by family and a network of friends are able to manage the various levels, transforming their perception of belonging to more than one cultural system into an asset, and the negative one where pupils, still retreating into a defence position, come to define their own identity in a rigid and non-negotiable way.

A strong signal of integration in the host society - especially in the case of adolescents - is the opportunity to enjoy their free time, in other words the peer-group dimension, entertainment, leisure and sport time with their peers which seems to be especially significant for drop-outs. This is why some projects are trying to combine supporting school measures with leisure time (e.g. annexes n.1, n. 3, n. 17, 19).

There are many leisure-expressive activities offered to pupils focussed on supporting their school integration processes, because nowadays it is clear that a synergic cooperation between school (whose training and educational tasks play a fundamental role in fighting emargination) and informal socialization and meeting venues (that are a natural complement to schooling) is essential , because the firm educational belief is that through interpersonal relationships, working together and sharing of playing and leisure environments that adolescents' development and growth within a cultural context thrive.

#### *1.4 Conclusions: possible counter-inclusion mechanism*

To sum up: first, for pupils at risk of school failure for different reasons, it is feasible to hypothesize that these young people grow up in a context characterised by the lack of strong identification models. Family is weak because, in most cases, it holds a marginal position in the society (low capital and socio-economic status) as well as not possessing the cultural tools useful for promoting school paths and the success of their children.

Second, there is a scarcity of external aid, essential for survival, combined with adolescent crises and the process of elaborating one's own school and society experience. Often, the pupils at risk do not have models or places where they can express discomfort, worries and problems.

Finally, there often is, in the socio-educational world, inadequate support, which seems still ill-equipped for the management of the continuous challenges facing adolescents especially those living in the suburban and socio-economic deprived areas. In these conditions, their growing process can increase the generational gap and negatively influence school and socio-integration paths.

The Italian case shows that there are contexts in the process of activating positive collaboration, using the various links of the education network to lead this youth in the three facets of the growing process: training, identity recognition and integration. Educational programmes external to the school perform a key role, especially with regard to the integration in a "positive" peer group. Transversal to school time and free time are youth workers, associations (both ethnic and intercultural), parishes and ngos continuing to play a significant role in the Italian scenario but whose role, when performed within the integration perspective, could be helpful for parents on one hand, and on the other hand, for teachers, in decoding those identity dynamics, that are a potential source of inter-generational conflict and of anti-social behaviour.

Finally, we must keep in mind that no action can ignore a combined effort between the different actors working in the leisure time and the family, which often the youngsters consider as a deprived (different from infancy) and disappointing place (not as rich and well settled as previously hoped for) that nevertheless remains the place for daily interaction, rules and moral position.

So, in order to improve the integration of foreign children and youth into different school system, it is considered useful to:

- design specific sub-policies (sub-practices) aimed at the different immigrant groups;
- better support foreign families and promote the potentially crucial role they play in furthering their children's education: in this way an initiative could contribute to avoid the risk of reproducing exclusion over generations in a knowledge-based society and of stabilizing stratifications along ethnic lines;
- establish initiatives at local level promoting the positive interaction between pupils of different origin and the process of secondary socialization to tolerance, pluralism and democratic values.

## Section III

### Bullying

With regard to institutional interventions, it must be remembered what was said in this Report's introductory section, namely that according to Italian Law No. 59 of 15 March 1997, its Article 21 establishes the autonomy of scholastic institutions in ensuring freedom in teaching and cultural pluralism and the Decree of the President of the Republic No. 275 of 8 March 1999 rules the autonomy of schools in their educational methods, organization, research experimentation and development.

Therefore, in the case of bullying the Institution Regulations apply and, if necessary, the guidelines provided by the local USPs (Ufficio Scolastico Provinciale) [Provincial School System].

However the Associazione Sosbullismo is promoting an "Anti-Bullying" campaign at the website [www.bullismo.com](http://www.bullismo.com).

In recent years the Ministry of Public Education has issued guidelines for certain important issues, amongst which bullying.

#### *1.1. Intervention of the Ministry of Public Education in 2006*

The Ministry of Public Education, in Protocol No. 5843/A3 Rome of 16 October 2006, presented the guidelines for democratic citizenship and legality which refer to the recommendations of the UNESCO and EU directives.

In this document the Ministry starts by affirming "the widespread adversity of young people in schools and society at large expressed through many forms and dimensions: early dropouts, poor scholastic progress, learning difficulties, dodging rules of civil and social coexistence, all of which give rise to phenomena of bullying, micro-delinquency and conflicts that are sometimes manifest and sometimes latent".

Therefore the Ministry covers many issues in these guidelines: scholastic problems (dropping out), bullying and delinquency, and also considers the effects of "poverty, discrimination and criminality" and the "increasingly [...] multicultural" nature of local communities. As expressed in the document, it does not specifically target the problem of bullying but refers to it for an interpretation of the context in which it occurs. Moreover the issue of legality and democratic participation are posed as the antidote and/or solution to bullying.

Considering social, cultural, economic change and the need for innovation in the school system, the Ministry suggests that we need to redefine the concepts of citizenship, legality and democracy starting with an acknowledgment of the vital role played by the student body in the life of the

school and the community.

Therefore the school has the “responsibility to contribute to social cohesion by paying attention to the differences between generations, genders, ethnic groups, languages, religions and cultures; to commit itself to interpret the formative needs of the reference community in relation to the broader context of the nation, Europe as a whole and the world; to search for suitable strategies to foster the participation of all students in their own educational-formative processes and in the life of the scholastic community”.

Therefore the guidelines of the Ministry of Public Education aim to “boost the opportunities of the school for opening up to the outside world as an educational community within which the students are the main focus and actors of education and training”.

Schools must promote legality and democracy “with the goal of forming citizens who are united and responsible, open to other cultures and free to express their feelings...”. The Ministry connects the more general issue of promoting legality and democracy from a multicultural and intercultural perspective and indicates the need to extend the meaning of citizenship.

The Ministry of Public Education suggests promoting events/actions for informal learning to make sure the rules are understood and accepted and to foster participation by creating ongoing interaction with families and the community. It asks for concerted plans and the development of joint projects on an interinstitutional level.

The document focuses especially on:

- Acceptance/welcoming actions as a way for the school to “become aware of and value all contributions from all students, even the ones of a different culture and different abilities”;
- The organization of scholastic activities, regarding didactics, extracurricular activities, evaluations, the use of spaces, the school calendar, the tasks and functions of the school staff/faculty, communication in the school, with families and outside entities, administrative and didactic documentation. “Each member of the school, as part of their own tasks and roles, should be a part, and feel themselves a part, of the overall organization and its operations”;
- The network of relations as “basic opportunities for creating and developing positive attitudes to social rules and practices”;
- Approaching knowledge by using “methodologies favoring a proactive approach that fosters a spirit of curiosity and a desire to learn”;
- Understanding legality (by learning about history, the Constitution, institutions, social settings and dynamics in Europe and throughout the world, other languages, cultures and religions), also involving universities, youth gathering centers, etc.;
- The evaluation (or self-evaluation) “of the efficacy, efficiency and fairness of the educational

service being provided by each individual”;

- Training the school faculty/staff (with ongoing programs);
- Opening the school to families and the community (including sensitization and training actions on the problems of young people and the issues of civil and democratic coexistence);
- Students and associations, by implementing “pilot programs that involve young people directly at their various gathering places and through various forms of expression” and testing “new strategies for intervening at school and after school, locally, nationally and throughout Europe”;
- European and international cooperation (e.g. with participation in European programs);
- National, regional and provincial actions.

The Ministry of Public Education, on its part, promotes the work of schools by implementing the following actions:

- “Agreements with the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Policies and the Equal Opportunities Office to carry out joint and coordinated actions in their respective areas of competence/jurisdiction aimed at removing obstacles that can cause adversity, the denial of rights, criminality”.
- Institute a National Day of Citizenship and Legality.
- Coordinate actions to monitor and evaluate school experiences.
- Launch collaboration agreements with Associations/Entities/Institutions that deal with education about legality and the fight against the Mafia.
- Reinforce the role and tasks of the Forum of Student Associations, Provincial Student Councils.
- Promote a culture of participation and collaboration.
- Foster the establishment of workgroups on a national and regional level with periodic meetings and discussions, also via Internet, and a service “intranet” to exchange information among partners.

In conclusion, with these guidelines the Ministry is confronting various issues, correlating them to the development of legality and democracy. It proposes we take a look at the complexity and interconnection of these various problems to see how they come to bear on each other. Likewise it perceives the need to work in a network and recommends such a modality not only to schools but commits itself to implement such a network to the extent of its own powers and abilities.

### *1.2. Intervention of the Ministry of Public Education 2007*

The Ministry of Public Education in 2007 (with Protocol No.16 drafted in Rome on 5 February, 2007) wrote to the General Regional Directors and Provincial School Directors and the Superintendent of Schools for the Province of Bolzano, the Province of Trento and Regione Valle D'Aosta, school principals, presidents of provincial student councils, the National Forum of Student Associations, parent associations and the National Forum of Professional Associations of Teachers

and Principals.

The Ministry, in response to several news stories about bullying, emphasized the severity of the phenomenon and invited schools to sensitize young people and adults about the issue and acknowledge the need for punitive measures as “reparation-compensation” that would also be educative.

The document examines the D.P.R [Decree of the President of the Republic] regarding the subject of punishments and educational opportunities of schools, pointing out in particular:

- the *Statuto delle Studentesse e degli Studenti* [Statute of Students], D.P.R. No. 249 of 24 June 1998, surpasses a punishment model that is exclusively repressive-punitive (contemplated in the Royal Decree No. 653 of 1925) and affirms that the punishment must hold students responsible and have an educational function.

The D.P.R. No. 249 of 1998 (Statute of Students) under art. 4 contemplates that schools adopt their own disciplinary code and asks that they be severe while stating that “temporary suspension of students from school can be applied only in cases of serious and repeated disciplinary violations for periods no longer than 15 days” (art. 4 paragraph 7 D.P.R. No. 249/1998), unless crimes have been committed or other persons are in danger.

The Ministry of Public Education then points out that public education must respond to bullying with cultural-educational actions.

- D.P.R. n. 275/99 establishes the importance of the *Piano dell’Offerta Formativa* [Educational Offer Plan] for drafting cultural, pedagogical, organizational and operative guidelines. It is the responsibility of each individual school to determine its own most appropriate and effective educational strategy.

- Regulation 567/96 and later amendments, which governs the afternoon opening of the schools, the Ministerial Directive on constitutional culture (D.M. No. 58/96), the Directive on Student Participation (D.M. No. 1455/06), the “Guidelines for Democratic Citizenship and Legality” (D.M. No. 5843/A3 of 2006) all ask that students actively participate in their civics education and in preventing/countering acts of bullying and violence.

Therefore in this regulatory panorama the Ministry of Public Education warns that it is necessary to confront bullying with clear-cut punitive measures that express the refusal of such behavior, as well as educational/cultural actions that help students to grow and learn the importance of civics as well as prevention measures.

Moreover the Ministry commits to create television/radio commercials, TV programs and websites as well as permanent Regional Observation Groups at the Regional School Boards to prevent bullying. Its goal is to disseminate studies and projects on this issue and promote a connection

among institutions to raise awareness of the problem so that this behavior is more noticeably refused. The underlying idea (implicit) is that bullying is confused with other frequent behaviors among young people and is therefore underestimated or, what is worse, legitimized.

The Directive reiterates the importance of interpersonal communication and dialogue in kindergarten and primary school, especially the expression of all kinds of emotions, even negative ones.

It asks the staff of elementary and middle schools to collaborate with parents', students' and teachers' associations.

It frequently reaffirms the need to work in a network involving schools, afterschool entities, the Local Authorities, the Local Health Office, the University, etc..

The Ministry of Public Education also affirms its own need to work with the Ministry of the Interior and the police force to act in terms of prevention and investigation in designing security systems to protect the school's networks from illegitimate usage of its terminals.

The role of observers who monitor the phenomenon was instituted to prevent and eliminate bullying, promote processes of legality and collect evaluations of the projects carried out.

The Ministry also set up a hotline with a toll-free number<sup>17</sup> and, in agreement with other entities and associations, drafted a protocol to safeguard minors who access the Web: with the Ministry of Communications it aims to implement initiatives to help children and young people understand the world of mass media and technology and the importance of privacy. Moreover, again in collaboration with the Ministry of Communication, it pledged to give more attention to television programs.

In agreement with the AESVI (*Associazione Editori Software Videoludica Italiana*) [Association of Italian Videogame Software Publishers] a campaign is being discussed to educate people on how to choose video games.

In conclusion, we can state that the Ministry of Public Education has maintained that preventing and countering bullying should be systemic actions carried out as part of a comprehensive program of interventions and general activities. Therefore we need an integrated and coordinated anti-bullying policy capable of involving the entire staff/faculty, the principal's office, students and parents.

On 8 March 2007 the Ministry of Public Education with the Regional School Board [*Ufficio Scolastico Regionale*] of Lombardy, the Central Board of the Provincial School System [*Direzione Generale Ufficio Scolastico Provinciale*] of Bergamo and the Office for Student Activities and Parent Participation summarized the results of the national convention held in Rimini on 6-8 March and again used the Guidelines of the Ministry (website, observers, other). It stated that the

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<sup>17</sup> A brief summary of the initial data gathered by the operators working at the listening posts set up by the Ministry of Public Education can be found at [www.informagiovani-italia.com](http://www.informagiovani-italia.com)

underlying philosophy is to create settings to deal with the issue of bullying, develop positive values and behaviors in students, foster solidarity, cooperation, reciprocal respect and help.

The Ministry of Public Education specifies that the main actions it has put in place are those of creating a communication campaign, a toll-free number and regional observers<sup>18</sup>, i.e. multipurpose centers to serve scholastic institutions in conducting systematic and structural initiatives. The Ministry of Public Education also plans to create a centralized evaluation team for the projects carried out.

### *1.3. The goal of sensitization*

As stated earlier, many efforts by the Ministry are aimed at sensitizing citizens to the problem of bullying.

Several actions have been launched to achieve this sensitization, including the following:

- Websites have been set up by institutions, such as [www.istruzione.it](http://www.istruzione.it) and [www.smontailbullo.it](http://www.smontailbullo.it) of the Ministry of Public Education; [www.poliziadistato.it](http://www.poliziadistato.it); <http://www.comune.torino.it/novasres>, by other organizations or private agencies: [www.indire.it](http://www.indire.it); [www.bullismo.com](http://www.bullismo.com); [www.facchinetti.net](http://www.facchinetti.net); [www.informagiovani-italia.com](http://www.informagiovani-italia.com); [www.aquiloneblu.org](http://www.aquiloneblu.org); [www.bdp.it](http://www.bdp.it); <http://www.edscuola.com>; [www.liguri.org](http://www.liguri.org); [www.cppp.it](http://www.cppp.it))
- Books have been published that tell real-life stories or accounts that can be helpful to minors: Buccoliero (2006), Cappelletti (2007), De Bode, Broere (2002)
- Advice is given to: students, teachers and/or parents ([www.poliziadistato.it](http://www.poliziadistato.it); Di Pietro, Dacomo, 2005; CRIAF et al., 2007; Cattenati, 2008; Police Stations and Headquarters run social communication campaigns and disseminate brochures and booklets, make visits to schools).
- Some USPs, like that of Brescia, have set up a telephone number and an e-mail address where you can send anonymous reports of bullying.
- Regione Lombardia proposed “Un gioco per conoscere il bullismo” [A game for learning about bullying] (by Iannaccone, 2005).
- Regione Lombardia organized an interactive exhibit on the phenomenon of bullying (*Bulli e pupe* by Iannaccone, 2004).
- Conventions have been held and sometimes the proceedings have been published, e.g. *Il bullismo a scuola: fattore di rischio evolutivo?* edited by Belacchi, the Proceedings of the Convention held on 15 December 2000, Ancona; Baraldi C. Mancini T. Menesini E. Prina F. 2001 *Ragazzi a scuola: regole, conflitti, prevaricazioni* Proceedings of the Convention held on 10/10/2000 by the

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<sup>18</sup> The observation group should have relations with the toll-free hotline and website.

Education Superintendence of the Modena Province, Modena; Province of Bergamo, Social Policies Department, *Bullismo pensieri e strategie*, Proceedings of the Convention held on 8 November 2001 Stampa Ferrari grafiche, Bergamo; National Convention held in Rimini 6-8 March 2007.

#### 1.4. Bullying and immigration

##### 1.4.1 Introduction

Studies of bullying began in Italy in the 1990s based on an international tradition and using English terminology. However, certain difficulties arose from the translation of English terms and some aspects of the methodologies. The term “bullying” is translated into Italian with the word “*bullismo*”, but the word “*bullo*” means arrogant and hooligan as well as a vain male person (Regione Lombardia, 2005; CRIAF et al., 2007).

There are numerous Italian studies but they have certain drawbacks:

1) They refer to several local settings but rarely do they study the entire country; in response to this problem the Ministry of Public Education requested a nationwide study in the near future.

Some attempts at a nationwide sampling can be found in the *Rapporti Nazionali sulla Condizione dell'Infanzia e dell'Adolescenza* [National Report on the Condition of Childhood and Adolescence] conducted by *Telefono Azzurro* and by Eurispes (cit. in Regione Lombardia, 2005 and at <http://www.edscuola.com>). The questionnaire of the Third National Report on the condition of childhood and adolescence (conducted by Eurispes and Telefono Azzurro) distributed throughout Italy seems to indicate that bullying is a widespread phenomenon throughout Italy:

- over 40% of all children and adolescents have threatened or hit a peer;
- over 30% say they have witnessed threats or acts of force at their school;
- 15.5% of the younger children and 10.8% of adolescents say there are continuing acts of physical violence;
- about 40% of elementary school students and 28% of middle school students say they have been the victims of bullying “sometimes or quite frequently”; 20% and 15% respectively say that they have inflicted physical violence on their schoolmates sometimes or quite frequently.

Information published in the “*Quinto Rapporto*” (2004) indicates that 33.5% of those questioned (12-18 years old) declare that there are continuous acts of bullying against their schoolmates; that the phenomenon affects males as well as females; and that among the females it occurs indirectly and verbally.

In any case we have data regarding many Italian cities throughout the entire peninsula (Fonzi, 1997a; Marini, Mameli, 2004a; Buccoliero, Maggi, 2005 and so on) and we can conclude that

bullying is widespread in Italian schools, though it differs considerably among the various provinces and this indicates the influence of environmental factors on its manifestation.

2) Bullying in Italy is studied mainly at schools: only recently has it been studied in gathering places and at sports events (Menesini, 2001; Regoliosi, 2001; Castelli, 2001; Gini, 2005) and very rarely have prevention measures been implemented in these settings (Leo, 2004).

3) As regards the instruments for measuring this phenomenon, a clear prevalence of questionnaires was observed. In addition to using the Anonymous Questionnaire of Olweus (e.g., Fonzi, 1997a; Marini, Mameli, 2004a; 2004b), some authors (Gini, Rossi, 2003) used a self-administered questionnaire such as "*La mia vita a scuola*" [My Life at School]. This last-mentioned questionnaire differs from the one used by Olweus because a) it asks students to evaluate exclusively their own behavior in the past week; b) it discriminates between various forms of bullying; c) it includes prosocial behaviors.

Likewise for teachers the questionnaire "*La percezione del bullismo da parte degli insegnanti*" [Teachers' Perceptions of Bullying] (Bacchini et al., 1999) was used to examine their evaluation of the frequency, forms and severity of bullying in their class in the past three months.

Other researchers (Anagni, Baiocco, Crea, Giannini, Gurrieri, Laghi, 2003) used different questionnaires, "*Sullo stile di coping in relazione al bullismo/SCB*" [Styles of Coping with Bullying/SCB] to detect bullying at school and the "*Questionario di Personalità/BLG*" [Personality Questionnaire/BLG] to study certain personality traits.

In some cases this questionnaire was used with another instrument, as in the case of Bacchini, Valerio (1997) who also used two discussion groups to talk about the issue, or Bacchini, Fiorito (2003) and Castorina (2003) who used projection tests. The contribution from Fonzi (1999a; 1999c) sometimes uses standardized tests (scales, questionnaires) and sometimes projection tests and autobiographical accounts.

Another well-known instrument is the *Nomine dei Coetanei* [Naming the Schoolmates] test, which asks students to single out the persons involved in cases of bullying (Fonzi et al., 1996; Genta et al., 1997). However, as noted by Menesini, Ciucci, Tomada, Fonzi (1999), this test is difficult to correlate to instruments based on self-evaluation.

In one study (Benelli, Menesini, Gini, 2001) structured observations were made to study the relationships and communications between young people, some perpetrators/victims of bullying, in an imaginary situation.

As noted by certain authors (Castorina, 2003) and pointed out recently by some researchers who use the same instrument (CRIAFA et al., 2007) the questionnaires have some limits, such as social desirability. We would like to add that this method limits the depth of the study and runs the risk of

silencing the voice of the perpetrators.

#### *1.4.2 Historical Excursus*

Here is an overview of the studies conducted to present.

The first research project to study bullying in Italy dates back to the 1990s and it was conducted by Ada Fonzi and her colleagues. They designed an anonymous questionnaire to be administered to the classes by adapting the questionnaires of Olweus (1993) and Whitney and Smith (1993) to the Italian situation.

The research target of Fonzi (1997a) consisted of students of elementary and middle schools of Florence and Cosenza. The results revealed that in both cities a rather high percentage of students at the elementary schools declared they had been the victims of bullying by their schoolmates (about 46% in Florence and 38% in Cosenza) “a few or several times a week”. In the middle schools the percentage decreased but was still high with respect to other European countries (about 30% in Florence and 27% in Cosenza).

This initial study induced the researchers to broaden their sample. The new set of measurements covered a large part of Italy and provided, firstly, an estimate of the extent of the phenomenon and then contributed to the study of peculiar aspects of bullying (gender differences, school size and location as well as family education styles, personality traits, as well as the first intervention efforts). These studies, in addition to others by the same authors (Genta, Menesini, Fonzi, Costabile, Smith, 1996; Genta, Menesini, Fonzi, Costabile, 1996), immediately indicated that the phenomenon in Italy is more widespread than in other European countries. The reasons for this difference may be found in the difficulty of translating the term ‘bullying’ as well as cultural reasons: in Italy it appears that ridicule is the most frequent form of bullying.

#### *1.4.3 Awareness of the issue*

The magazine *Psicologia contemporanea* was one of the first to introduce the issue of bullying and featured articles that, though aimed at the general public, were written by scholars who are experts on this problem. Their analyses should be taken into account when tracing the development of interest in this issue.

In 1995 Fonzi explained the importance of dealing with this phenomenon and showed examples of bullying in literature (such as the famous XIX century book *Cuore*) and presented an initial comparison of studies in Italy with studies conducted abroad. The researcher maintained that the term “bullying” does not correspond exactly to “prepotenze”. The following year Dan Olweus (1996) explained the extent of the phenomenon and suggested it was the consequence of oversized

classes, competitive attitudes to avoid failing and a difference in the outward appearance of students (skin color was not mentioned).

Caprara (1996) speaks about the generalizations and reliability of statistics on bullying but also examines all the changes that might affect the phenomenon (globalization, a different transition from adolescence to adulthood, the mass-media, etc.) but dissuades his readers from seeing a causality between hardship (family, personal, etc.) and violence. He advised that we focus on the various ways young people can make their voices be heard.

In 1997 Fonzi (1997b) shed some light on certain news stories and the results of the first Italian researches on this subject. In fact the problem is much larger here than in other European countries but the latter started studying the phenomenon much earlier. In order to understand the causes of this delay in interest on the part of Italian researchers, Fonzi points to cultural reasons. In Italy there is more tolerance of conflict. She indicates that adults acknowledge it only when faced with sensational cases.

Menesini (1998) specifies that the concept of bullying, which involves an asymmetrical relationship between the victim and the bully, was recently supplemented by a reference to group dynamics since most cases of bullying occur in the presence of onlookers. Therefore the researcher states that the phenomenon is correlated to “the group climate and dynamics” and proposes interventions aimed at the group and not at the individual. In fact the evaluation of the efficacy of these projects shows that young people are made more aware of the importance of witnesses in curbing (or not curbing) bullying.

In 1999 Bonino wrote an article on the presumed increase in deviant behaviors in the transition from childhood to adolescence. The article denies “the need to transgress” and maintains that studies prove bullying is less frequent in middle school than in elementary school. Psychology maintains that adolescents with deviant behaviors are children who were earlier involved in these types of episodes. It says they seek self-absolution through various mechanisms of “cognitive consonance” (advantageous comparison, distorting the consequences, blaming the victim, spreading out the responsibility).

In the same year Fonzi (1999b: 55) addressed bullying again and pointed out that bullies and victims have numerous “convergences”, including “a sort of illiteracy in certain sociocognitive areas”. Retracing the progress of studies on this subject we find variability in gender, age, regions/neighborhoods and that personal/family characteristics and class are important. However one question remains unanswered: what are the causes? The answer is that there is no one single cause. Some studies shed light on parenting styles, others focus on personality and still others on class dynamics. Therefore, instead of speaking about causes, it is better to speak about

“psychological correlates of the phenomenon”.

A few years later Fonzi (2006) readdressed the subject in the same magazine to evaluate the state of progress of the studies conducted up to that point and confirmed that many questions about bullying are still unanswered. The researcher insisted that it is better to talk about “correlates of the phenomenon” (rather than “causes”) and indicated some divergent results which had emerged from different studies.

### *1.5. Research Results*

#### *Where and when bullying occurs*

The many studies conducted so far have shown that bullying occurs in central and southern Italy and on the islands (ibid; Fonzi, 1997a; Smorti et al., 1997; Bacchini, Valerio, 1997; Caprara, Pastorelli et al., 1997; Marini, Mameli, 2004a, 2004b; Vergati, 2003; Oppo, 2001; Baldry, 2001) as much as it does in northern Italy (Marini, Mameli, 2004a; Prina, 2000; Fonzi, 1997a; Gini, 2005) and this challenges the hypothetical correlations between bullying and the Mafia (Occhiogrosso, 2000; 2007).

Though the first studies (Fonzi, 1997a; Menesini, 2000) showed that the percentage of victims of bullying decreases with age, in actuality some authors noted that forms of bullying change with the passing of time: physical aggressiveness becomes less frequent as subtle harassment increases (Tassi, 2001; Tani, 1999; Fonzi, 2006).

Menesini (2001) noted that at middle schools and high schools there is a greater intentionality and the attacks are more persistent and severe though the methods are indirect and verbal.

For high schools, although large-scale studies are few and far between, we notice a differentiation depending on the type of school. For example there are fewer cases in Lyceums [college prep schools] and more frequent cases in vocational schools (Belacchi, Benelli, Menesini, 2001; Menesini, Nocentini, 2004; Istituto degli Innocenti of Florence, 2006).

Moreover, whereas in elementary schools most cases of bullying occur in the classrooms and rarely on the schoolyard, in high schools most cases occur outside of school, i.e. on public transport (19.8%), on the street (34.6%) and during after-school activities (37.5%) (Istituto degli Innocenti of Florence, 2006; Ciccotti, Sabbadini, 2007; [www.sbulloniamoci.org](http://www.sbulloniamoci.org)).

#### *Forms of bullying*

Italian contributions have shown that the most widespread form of bullying at all ages is verbal (offenses, threats) with an incidence of 45-50% in all school grades and equally spread among genders; however physical bullying (battery, theft) becomes less frequent as age increases (from 42% in elementary school it becomes 20.7% in middle school) and it is reported more frequently by

males. The indirect abuses (gossip, slander and discrimination), as well as verbal attacks are more often reported by females and increase or remain the same as age increases (from 27.8% in elementary school to 30% in high schools) (Istituto degli Innocenti of Florence, 2006; Castorina, 2003).

The *Istituto degli Innocenti* in Florence (2006) and Saulini (2007) also speak about new forms of bullying (on the Internet or cell phones) and refer to them as *e-bullying* or *cyberbullying*.

### *Gender*

In relation to gender differences, more males play the role of bully at all ages while there were no significant differences between the number of males and females as victims (Fonzi, 1997a; Gini, 2005). Nonetheless Fonzi (2006) claims that in some situations girls declare themselves bullies more often than males. Baldry (2004b) also notices a different degree of social acceptance between male and female bullies.

### *Causes*

To determine the conditions that facilitate bullying, the Italian studies mainly examined:

- 1 Personality traits (Caprara, Pastorelli, Barbaranelli, De Leo, 1997; Tassi, 2001; Benelli et al., 2001; Regione Lombardia, 2005; Menesini, Sanchez et. al., 2003; Fonzi, 2006) or neurobiological or neuropsychological conditions (Fedeli, 2007). Articles have also been published that show a lack of awareness of the emotions of bullies and victims (Fonzi, Ciucci, Berti, Brighi, 1996), and so on.
- 2 Family relationships. Baldry (2003), conducted a study on a Roman youth and correlated bullying with the exposure in childhood to domestic violence: 17.4% of kids had been subjected to psychological violence or exposed to physical violence between their parents. Other studies showed a correlation between parenting styles and the role of victim or bully (Fonzi, Ciucci, Berti, Brighi, 1996; Genta, Berdondini, Brighi, 1997; Menesini, Giannetti, Genta, 1999)
- 3 Class dynamics. Ciucci, Smorti (1999) report the unpopularity of the victim in the class. Fonzi (2006) and Cattenati (2008) point out the existence of many socio-psychological mechanisms that act in a school to legitimize (or not legitimize) bullying (e.g. social contagion, spreading out the responsibility, etc.).

The attention of researchers has focused more on single individuals than on socio-cultural factors (Vacatello, 2001). Some studies have shown that the local culture may legitimize bullying behavior among peers (Bacchini *et al.*, 2000; Istituto degli Innocenti of Florence, 2006 ) and there appears to be a connection in bullying and certain aspects of the macro-system (Tassi, 2001; Fonzi, 1999a; 2006). Studies have also been conducted on the negative influence of video games on children,

showing that they affect the bullying phenomenon (Carovita, Bartolomeo, 2005).

Regione Lombardia (2005) considers a recent cultural change: though the “warrior figure” used to be accepted, today it is believed that being subjected to bullying is not a “vaccination”.

Russo (2001) says that the risk factors are closely related to each other: the school environment is influenced by the family and social environments and vice versa.

According to the Ministry of Public Education (February 2007) bullying is a complex phenomenon that cannot be explained merely by the conduct of individuals but pertains to the group of peers as a whole, and therefore bullying should be considered a dynamic, multidimensional and relational phenomenon (Ministry of Public Education, 2007)

Vergati (2003: 9; 16) in a study on elementary and middle schools (of Rome) sets out to analyze “bullying as a social phenomenon” and “antisocial behavior” that can spread according to the “predominant models of socialization” at the schools. This study shows that bullying is a group action whose purpose is to destabilize the modalities of social interaction.

Therefore we can say that a tradition of research has been consolidated regarding individual causes of bullying while it is consideration of social and group aspects is more rare. Likewise the role of cultures is not always taken into account, cultures that might legitimize (or delegitimize) this type of conduct and influence the ways in which it occurs and its severity.

#### *The role of adults*

Though Tassi (2001: 47) has observed that parents and teachers are “unaware of the importance of this phenomenon”, some studies (Fonzi, 1997a; 1999a; Anagni et al., 2003) showed that the victims tend not to speak about it with adults. Nonetheless the victims hope they will get help from adults, though they do not ask for it, trusting that the adults will realize their adversity. However, the fact is that adults respond rarely do and when they do they often merely reproach the bully and tell the victim to fight back. What is more important is that they underestimate the situation because they are not witnesses on the scene (Buccoliero, 2000).

Those who investigate the different definitions of bullying agree that teachers and students have the same ideas about physical bullying but not about other types of aggression or verbal and psychological attacks (Menesini, Fonzi, Smith, 2002). The children interviewed by Bacchini and Valerio (1997), perceive that adults are aware of the problem but are not able to deal with it.

#### *3.6 Foreigners: bullies or victims?*

Often studies, for example the one conducted in 2005 at Soliera ([www.sbulloniamoci.org](http://www.sbulloniamoci.org)) with questionnaires given to the students, families and teachers of a primary school and the first year of

secondary school present the various traits of bullies and victims<sup>19</sup>, but do not specify the causes of these traits or explain whether the phenomenon is affected by national, cultural, religious or other differences.

Even when the title of an essay implies cultural diversity (Pinto G., Pistacchi P., Malvagia S., 1999 *Quando i “diversi” incontrano i “diversi”: uno studio sulle rappresentazioni mentali*) [When “outcasts” meet “outcasts”: a study on mental representations], the thing that constitutes the outcast is drug addiction and the kids are the problem. Likewise specific contributions have been made about bullying that targets homosexuality (Galvani, 2005), while there seems to be a dearth of publications that deal solely with the theme of bullying against immigrants.

Rarely are there any explicit references to the types of diversity that most likely trigger episodes of bullying, for example Menesini (2003b) notes that bullying often occurs against minority groups, other “ethnicities” and disabled persons. Menesini speaks of “racist” bullying that includes racial slurs and isolation (*ibid.*: 13). Some of the kids who answered the questionnaire of the Eurispes Report 2002, noted acts of discrimination against their foreign schoolmates (<http://www.edscuola.com>). Likewise Castorina (2003) mentions the link between bullying and racism but research data on this aspect is hard to find. Even in cases where a correlation is made, it seems to be only hinted at and not demonstrated or interpreted. Thus, in the study on bullying funded by Regione Piemonte (*Familiaramente per i diritti dei bambini*, 2006: 5) focusing on types of bullying, most of the answers indicated ridicule or slander. Among the responses we see the indication “due to skin color”. Therefore we can presume bullying occurs against non-Italian students. These episodes take place mainly at school among classmates and therefore assumedly the contact theory is disproved.

By using stories Buccoliero (2006) introduces the theme of bullying from different points of view and also shows some episodes where there may be a connection between bullying and immigration. In one of the stories we meet Amina, a young Albanian girl, who helps a victim of bullying because she remembers having been ridiculed as a foreigner. Another story describes a boy from Costa Rica adopted by an Italian family. His story starts in the present, and the psychological adversity of drug addiction, and then shows us the bullying behavior of his past.

To be more specific we must admit that it is easy to find references to the deviance of foreign kids (Istituto degli Innocenti of Florence, 2006; Eurispes, Telefono Azzurro, 2006; Russo, 2001; Prina, 2000) and at [www.educare.it](http://www.educare.it) there is an article by Modesti about bullying with foreign children playing the role of bullies. In this regard Omodeo (2002) notes that the perception of bullying

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<sup>19</sup> The study conducted by Maggi in Soliera, considers empathy, self-esteem, the moral conscience of the kids, their needs and problems, as well as factors involving their families (economic problems, relational problems, family status and so on).

differs according to whether the bully is Italian or foreign. The hypothesis of this researcher is that native Italians are better able to hide the evidence of their behavior.

Though not much attention is given to bullying against immigrant minorities, Italian studies show that much Italian literature about immigration points to difficulties in relationships between Italians and non-Italians.

Colombo (2004) points out that the fragility of foreign minors at school is mainly in their relations with their peers. Though immigrant students express an understandable need to be “accepted and socialized within their peer groups”, they are actually at high risk of isolation (*ibid*: 121). The researchers indicated several difficulties, some associated with practical reasons for isolation in afterschool activities (and this makes it difficult to observe and properly interpret the norms of informal gatherings) (Cologna et al., 2003; Bertozzi, 2004; Valencia Leon et al., 2005; Galloni, 2007a; 2007b; 2008) or cultural reasons (e.g. a huge difference in customs) (Lagomarsino, 2005), or linguistic reasons (Ricucci, 2005). Isolation is increased by the tendency to stay within one’s own ethnic group or culturally homogeneous circuit (Colombo, 2005; Colombo, 2004; Quadrelli, 2003; Cologna et al., 2003; Ambrosini, Queirolo Palmas, 2005; Pozza, Ravecca, 2005; Dallavalle, 2008), and residential segregation is one of the reasons for this.

Though there are studies that show positive cross-sections, as in the case of the teachers interviewed by the Censis (2008) who believe relations between foreign and Italian students and relations of foreign students to each other are usually good or satisfactory, a recent ethnographic study (Galloni, 2006) showed that the attitude of Italians to young Sikh immigrants is sometimes quite hostile and discriminatory.

Moreover there seems to be a hypersensitivity of students to verbal attacks regarding their difference (Colombo, 2004) and also a personal uncertainty of the foreigners regarding their own definitions of themselves and their future (Secchiaroli, Mancini, 2002), which could then affect their relational well-being.

Saulini (2007) points out that the United Nations Committee has expressed concern for the increase in bullying in Italian schools and notices that the integration indicators of foreign minors are based mainly on scholastic achievement, while relations between students, and between students and teachers, are given little importance. Consequently the Workgroup for the Rights of Children and Adolescents promotes the use of integration indicators that take into account not only scholastic achievement and linguistic competence but also relationships in the classroom.

Recently more attention has been given on an institutional level to bullying against immigrants in Italy. In fact at the website of the Ministry of the Interior we find the words: “Bullying, discrimination and anti-Semitism”. In the face of serious episodes of violence, humiliation and

abuse and the consideration that bullying is spreading, the Ministry of the Interior has declared we need to be able to “recognize the red lights and intervene promptly to safeguard children’s development and social integration”. Therefore it states that the actors who should intervene in these cases are:

- The Inter-Ministerial Committee against Discrimination and Anti-Semitism (an inter-ministerial body) whose task is to monitor all forms of intolerance, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and single out educational tools to effectively counter all forms of violence.
- The Minister of Public Education which has a website and blog “that represents the first step on a path towards integration and tolerance within the large virtual workshop that is ‘with’ and not ‘for’ the kids”.

### *1.7. Analysis of the latest studies*

The latest well-known study was conducted in the Province of Brescia by CRIAF, the Provincial Authority of Brescia, and the *Centro Formativo Provinciale Zanardelli* (2007). It set out to describe (explore the spread of bullying in the schools of the province of Brescia (northern Italy)), evaluate the differences in gender and age, investigate the quality of social relationships between the students at school, etc.) and formulate new intervention proposals (e.g. single out pilot schools for research-actions). The investigative tool was an anonymous questionnaire about bullying by Olweus (1978) with the addition of certain items, but the authors admit this questionnaire is liable to produce responses that are socially desirable.

The study group is made up of students of the schools of the Province of Brescia attending the academic year of the first-grade, the first year of middle school and the second year of middle school.

The data showed that the kids involved in episodes of bullying make up 50.4% of the total student body with 25.1% of the sample as victims, 17.7% as bullies and 7.6% as provokers/victims (attacking and being attacked simultaneously), while 2.0% gave no answers.

Females are more frequently victims and spectators but this decreased with age. The number of bullies, on the other hand, tends to grow with age: 11.4% at elementary school, 18.2% at middle school and 22.4% at high school. In high school the number of bullies exceeds the number of victims: there are 22.4% bullies versus 14.2% victims. The authors interpret this ratio by saying that the victims are targeted by a group with an ever greater number of bullies which makes it more difficult for the former to defend themselves.

The study notes a discrepancy between self-reporting and secret reporting which pointed to the limitations of the tool, the difficulty in defining bullying and the denial of the phenomenon

altogether. However some forms of bullying (exclusion, theft, gossip/rumors) are hidden and therefore in these cases greater awareness of the problem must be promoted in order to be able to deal with it.

Abuse occurs mainly in the form of ridicule (over 50%) and practical jokes (around 20%) and occurs for the most part in the classroom (38%), but also in route between home and school (21%).

The correlations demonstrate that bullying is a group phenomenon in which all the participants play an essential role. The desire to be accepted and the consequent behaviors favor the spread of bullying. The research shows a connection between the passive reactions of teachers and the probability that the victims will react aggressively and feel more alone.

In response to these results, the CRIAF proposes:

- Raising the awareness of adults (including school janitors)
- Favoring disclosure
- Sensitizing the kids to the pernicious effects of verbal abuse
- Surveillance at school
- Mixed gender classes
- Work in small supervised groups
- Involving the parents.

Specifically it proposes working on the affectivity of the class as a group, and one way of doing this is to implement peer education programs.

### *1.8. Interventions*

There are some well-known projects that deal with bullying in several Italian schools. Marini and Mameli (2004b) give examples of interventions against bullying and mention those that promote prosocial conduct; the systemic-ecological approach; the CORT (Cognitive Research Trust) program; the Gordon method; mediation; but also martial arts. In addition they give a description of the anti-bullying projects elaborated in England (Capezzoli, Pollo, 1996).

The Istituto degli Innocenti of Florence (2006) has noticed that several initiatives in Italy have followed a diversity of approaches.

For the most part the projects involve a single class, single individuals and often even schools, families and other settings. From a historical perspective, according to the Istituto degli Innocenti of Florence (2006), there have been two different waves of testing interventions:

- The initial period aimed initiatives mainly at elementary and middle schools (1995-2002);
- The second period, more recent (starting in 2002), shifted the focus to high school students.

Among the Italian studies aimed at the class to sensitize and use the group as a resource for

preventing/ curbing the problem, the Istituto degli Innocenti (2006) points out the project of the IRRE Veneto (Menesini, 2003a; Lazzarin, Zambianchi, 2004); a project funded by the European Union involving the cities of Turin, Modena and Ferrara (Prina, 1998; Buccoliero, Maggi, 2005); and the Milan study which has been conducting training and interventions in all school grades for many years and promotes an interactive exhibition *Bulli and pupe* (Iannaccone, 2004).

The experience of the Novas Res project (conducted in Turin, Ferrara, Modena) is well known thanks to its website <http://www.comune.torino.it/novasres>. This project was part of a network of good practices among the partner countries of the European Community. The goal of the project is to spread the more significant experiences for preventing and responding to bullying. In addition to its website it creates educational materials. The goal of building a *European network* that connects pre-existing networks is to allow people from different countries to work together on the subject of violence at school to improve the actions being taken.

The program of Milan involved several different actions, especially in the area of training and sensitizing through interactive exhibits and games (by Iannaccone, 2005).

The book by Menesini (2003a), like other contributions (Rubinacci, 2000; Costantini, 2002; Lazzarin, 2003; Cattenati, 2008), presents many models for actions to implement in different schools: quality clubs, educational activities, role-playing and theater, creative writing, dialoguing, etc.).

An extremely popular method (considered quite effective) is the curricular one: the teachers have the students contemplate certain cultural stimuli (e.g. excerpts from literature) to raise their awareness of the problem (Menesini, 2000, 2003a; Iannaccone, 2004; Cattenati, 2008). Along similar lines Regione Toscana has a website [www.regione.toscana.it](http://www.regione.toscana.it) where it makes known the various anti-bullying projects conducted in several Tuscan Provinces and also provides information about plays produced by students on this theme.

Gini, Benelli and Casagrande (2003) present a combined anti-bullying project in which the curricular approach (literary and audiovisual stimuli, role-playing) is accompanied by socialization activities and "emotional alphabetization" games.

Regarding activities designed to acknowledge emotions as a way to counter bullying, we also have the writings of Pignatti, Menesini, Melan (2003), while a book on assertiveness training was published by Rubinacci (2000).

Another widespread model in Italy is that of help from friends (Menesini *et al.*, 2003; Menesini, 2003c; Cattenati, 2008): in this model a small group of schoolmates/friends prepare themselves beforehand and then involve themselves in actions to help others. The results showed the remarkable results of making the onlookers more responsible.

Likewise experiences of mediation at school involving students, teachers and parents (Coppola De Vanna, 2000) and Buccoliero (2000) proposes the establishment of rules and disciplinary measures for a given class, the organization of councils and peer-support meetings. There are other books that suggest techniques and strategies for various school problems, amongst which bullying (Mariani, 2005).

Recently the problem was also dealt with in high schools by setting up welcoming groups and prevention groups (Menesini, 2003a), empowered peer-education education (Pellai *et al.*, 2003) and school mediation actions (Baldry, 2004a; Menesini, Modiano 2003; Buccoliero, Maggi, 2005; Rubinacci, 2000).

The ARCI website [www.arci.it](http://www.arci.it) shows another project aimed at students and teachers of the high schools: “*Io non bullo ma ballo: Libertà individuale and convivenza civile*” [I’m not a bully, I dance: individual freedom and civil coexistence]. This action involves training the teachers and tutors (university students who undergo training and then produce documentary material and present the results to the students) and class groups. The last-mentioned group, under the guidance of tutors, thinks about the concepts of freedom and obedience of the rules.

However, the *Istituto degli Innocenti* (2006), after observing the various interventions carried out, warned that a nationwide evaluation of the projects is lacking. We would like to add that in many cases this need has been pointed out in the past but rarely has anything been done about it. In most cases the difficulties of planning and evaluation are thoroughly illustrated or it has been asked to avoid improvisation (Pellai *et al.*, 2003).

Often the local settings emphasize the importance of evaluating the efficacy of the interventions (Menesini, 2000). The more significant results are achieved through interventions implemented at school. Menesini (2000) mentions the project of Lucca which involved the whole school (teachers, parents, administrative workers, staff, principals) and points out that over a period of six years there was a 50% decrease in the number of perpetrators and victims of bullying.

In some situations quasi-experimental research was designed and implemented at the elementary and middle schools (including the case of Treviglio, see Marini, Mameli, 2004a; the case of Lucca, see Fonzi, 1997a; the case of Florence, see Berdondini, Fonzi, 1999; the case of Palermo, see Pisciotta, 2002). Though the interventions are often short-term, they frequently produce some improvement: the number of chronic victims in the pilot classes decreased; awareness among adults increased.

Gini, Benelli, Casagrande (2003) presented a program to intervene and prevent bullying in a primary school of Padua. After a preliminary evaluation of the presence of bullying (using a questionnaire) some classes in the study were compared with other classes (the control group)

which had not been involved in the actions. At the end of the project another evaluation was made using the same questionnaire. The four-month program, which also used curricular actions to make the students aware of bullying, games to increase self-awareness and body awareness, and activities to recognize emotions) had positive effects, to the point that reports of bullying increased.

A different approach was seen in the project conducted as part of the European project "Daphne 2000-2003" involving five Italian cities of different sizes (Rome, Bari, Foggia, Martina Franca, Crispiano) and two foreign cities (Barcelona, Charleroi). The primary prevention of bullying, starting with an analysis of the results of actions and studies already carried out, sets out to intervene at informal gathering places (streets, squares, etc.) through recreational-playful activities for minors. The project is innovative in its choice to deal with afterschool places.

As we see in Leo (2004) and Lallo (2003), the recreational project set out to improve conflict-management skills (alternative ways for acknowledging emotions and solving conflict) and implementing tools for learning to listen, appreciating/respecting freedom and solidarity. The tools used were a workshop, role-playing, games and theater, and they involved hundreds of kids aged 4-16.

The numerous publications, studies-actions and analyses of the Istituto degli Innocenti of Florence (2006) show that these interventions are effective in preventing and reducing episodes of bullying by "creating an ethics of coexistence and respect". They also showed that to these ends we need "a specific intervention aimed at practicing with kids the values of coexistence, respect and reciprocal help" (ibid: 220).

As pointed out by the Ministry of Public Education (February 2007), preventing and countering bullying are "systemic" actions to be carried out as part of the comprehensive program of interventions and general school activities, and therefore we need an integrated and coordinated anti-bullying policy involving the entire staff, faculty, principals, students and parents. There are many proposals (Rubinacci, 2000; Costantini, 2002; Menesini, 2003a; Lazzarin, 2003; Cattenati, 2008) but the researchers have singled out some weak points.

Russo (2001) notes that sometimes the school was "connected" to the outside world merely to avoid being accused of "closure" but without much conviction: the para-scholastic and afterschool activities were often considered merely occasions for the children to play.

Lambertini (2005) points out that educational experiences for learning relational skills are more concerned about conflict-solving than about analyzing the conflicts themselves.

Moreover, the request for an intervention by the school is often motivated by an emergency situation but an anti-bullying program that is effective requires the support of a long-term scholastic policy even when no blatant episodes have occurred. Dealing in an ongoing matter with bullying

becomes one opportunity for teaching students to become conscious citizens and therefore actions requiring participation and accountability must be promoted (Iannacone, 2005).

Costantini (2002) goes beyond the theme of interventions against bullying and suggests some activities for prevention. Nonetheless we believe it is appropriate to conclude with the indications of Menesini (2003d), i.e. that prevention is necessary to: identify the problem (with an adequate collection of data); analyze risk and protection factors with pilot programs; implement large-scale projects; spread information and conduct an evaluation on the work carried out. We agree with the suggestions of this researcher because they point to the importance of careful planning, avoiding improvisation and analyzing the actual situation.

### *1.9 Concluding remarks*

This detailed overview of research literature on bullying, as well as of the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education and of specific and various initiatives and associations against bullying indicates that anti-bullying programs will not be as effective as they could be if they are not accompanied (or even anticipated) by preventive actions and analysis of the nature of conflicts. The need to intervene in emergency situations or concern for solving conflicts, though necessary, may not be sufficient to understand actions that are, or are perceived as aggressive and abusive and whose complex reasons require a close attention.

## Section IV

### The school integration of disabled students in Italy

The Italian model of school integration for disabled students was enacted in 1977 with law no. 517: it was meant to realize the right to education for everyone sanctioned by the republican Constitution (article 34), but it was, and is, also based on extensive scientific research.

Law no. 104 (Feb. 5, 1992) established school integration in Italy for all disabled students from childhood education level to the university. It aimed to improve the quality of learning and education for these students. Their number was 140,000 in 2002 and has continuously grown during the last 5 years.

Nevertheless, besides many “good practices” and positive results there are still situations where the rights of those students are not yet fully recognized (cfr. Pavone 2007).

#### *1.1. Legislation and its impact on disabled students' schooling and school system*

The process of recognizing disabled students' right to education started when law no. 1859 was passed in 1962. Those students had the right to enrol into, and attend the different school levels (from primary to lower secondary schooling), but at that time they had still to do so in special education institutions. Even if at the time the educational opportunities were thus limited, teachers were not yet prepared to cope with the change. Furthermore it was soon realized that special education institutions were in fact segregating those minors and this acknowledgement hastened the legislative process for those institutions' demise.

Pupils and students with psycho-physical disabilities were able to access mainstream compulsory education in 1971 (law no. 118) while blind students have accessed those classrooms since 1976 (law no. 360) and deaf-mute students in 1977 (law no. 517). Special education institutions started thus to decrease in number and eventually they were closed.

The first years of disabled students' school integration process faced a school system yet unable to cope with their presence and their needs. However since the second half of the seventies much has been done to transform their enrolment and attendance into a real process of inclusion. For instance, the multidimensionality of the disabled students' special educational needs has required that health professionals, educators, administrators and families be all involved.

With law no. 517 the model of the inclusive school was based on educational planning, educational individualization, and evaluation forms instead of grades. Furthermore, specialized teachers (called “support teachers”) were introduced in classrooms to work with the classroom teacher. It was established that classrooms with disabled students could not have more than 20 students. Those

students, teachers and classrooms have always worked in conjunction with the health system operators, also cooperating with the interventions of different expert professionals and institutional, as it was already mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Law no. 517 required that specialized teachers be trained and be expected to support disabled students as well as to coordinate their work with that of classroom teachers. Thus two year courses were established in order to train those “support” teachers. Furthermore, indications to coordinate the efforts of schools, local administration and health system were issued so that they could be more effective. While many objectives were thus achieved, this complex process of organization and implementation for disabled students’ school integration has not yet addressed all the problems they face, even though it can be said that such a process has been strengthened by the curricular programs for lower secondary school, primary school, and childhood education, respectively approved by the Italian Parliament in 1979, 1985 and 1991.

In the eighties, the number of disabled students enrolled in childhood education and in primary school became somewhat stabilized, while their number increased at the lower secondary school level. A number of students enrolled also at the upper secondary school level.

As already pointed out, law no. 104, passed in 1992, takes into account the whole life of disabled persons and recognizes that their needs for health, social integration, education and vocational training, job, housing and transportation, mobility, communication should be addressed and answered. Such law, whose implementation has not been entirely successful, recognizes and defends the rights of disabled persons, including the right to attend university. Nevertheless, the aim of this law seems limited by the fact that all actions are dependent on the state decision and intervention. Subsequent legislation on schools has promoted and enacted a process of decentralization of the public administrations’ organization and management.

From the nineties onward, the number of disabled students attending lower secondary school has increased, as statistics show.

Table 1 – Disabled students’ enrolment in state schools from 1997 - 2005<sup>20</sup>

School years								
	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Total number of disable students	113,289	116,751	124,385	126,507	132,402	146,389	149,297	155,657
Percentage of disable students	1.49	1.55	1.65	1.64	1.81	1.92	1.95	2.00

<sup>20</sup> Data are available in: [www.pubblica.istruzione.it/dg\\_studentieprogrammazione/dati.shtml](http://www.pubblica.istruzione.it/dg_studentieprogrammazione/dati.shtml).

In 2005-2006 the Ministry of Education defined those students as “differently able” students and indicated that their total number had grown to 178,220. 17,481 were enrolled in childhood education institutions, 67,755 in primary school, 55,244 in lower secondary school, and 37,740 in upper secondary schools. Since 1992, when law 104 was passed, the increase of these students’ school enrolment has been of 70.48%.

In 1999, law no. 9 was passed that raised compulsory education to the age of 15, and the number of disabled students enrolled in upper secondary schools increased dramatically between 1998/1999 and 1999/2000.

These students tend to choose upper secondary vocational courses or art schools, presumably because this type of schools (1) allow students to get an intermediate degree after a three year program, and (2) because of families’ and students’ self-selection (cfr. Pavone 2007).

As it has been said the percentage of disabled students enrolled in special schools has decreased dramatically: 97.8% of them is today enrolled in mainstream schools, while only 2.2% is still attending a special school. Such institutions are 0.13% of all schools (cfr. Sistema di Informazione statistica sulla Disabilità, *Istruzione e integrazione scolastica delle persone con disabilità*).

Disabled students are also increasingly attending university, in fact their number doubled between 2000 and 2005. It is to be noticed that the highest percentage of disabled university students is composed of students with motor problems, while those with language or psychological difficulties are still few.

The increase of disabled students enrolled at the university level is connected with actions aimed to eliminate buildings’ architectural barriers and to support students in specific ways according to indications of law no. 17, passed in 1999. This law was meant to ensure that disabled students be provided with *ad hoc* technical and didactic resources, as well as support such as specialized tutoring and interpreting services during university courses, complemented by an individualized approach at the time of examinations.

### *1.2. Support teachers*

From the beginning, the role of the “support teacher” was introduced as a “systemic” role and was also intended as a resource for the schools that aimed at the “enrichment of the teacher’s role’s potential”, and at integration (see Circolare Ministeriale n. 199/79 and Curricula for Specialization Training Courses, ex Decreto Ministeriale 27 giugno 1995).

Data issued by the Ministry of Education inform that the ratio between support teachers and disabled students in state schools has consolidated along the years so that currently the national mean is 1 support teacher every 2 disabled students. In particular, the ratio is 1.6% in childhood

education institutions, 2% at the primary and lower secondary school level, 2.1% at the upper secondary school level. Consequently, the number of support teachers has increased during the years in connection with the increasing enrolment of disabled students at the various school levels.

Table 2 – Support teachers according to type of work contract<sup>21</sup>

Support teachers according to type of work contract. Total number			
School year	Work contract: temporary position	Work contract: tenured position	Total
1997/1998	33.561	23.020	56.581
1999/2000	37.700	22.757	60.457
2002/2003	42.639	32.649	75.288
2003/2004	43.051	36.793	79.844
2004/2005	41.506	38.464	79.970

As it can be seen, many support teachers have a temporary position, which doesn't ensure educational and didactic continuity for both disabled students and the classrooms they attend. In school year 2004/2005, the percentage of support teachers with a temporary position was 48% of the total number of support teachers. National statistics also indicate that uncertainty with regard to educational and didactic continuity is compounded by the fact that 45% of the support teachers tend to leave that function after 5 years (required in order to do so) and apply for a regular teaching position. From an educational point of view, the limited continuity that these support teachers can provide (due to their work contract) students with is associated with limited pedagogical planning, limited coordination with the classroom teacher, fewer relations with the rest of the classroom and fewer projects for the disabled students (cfr. Pavone 2007).

It must be added that a large number of support teachers – and especially those with a work contract that assign them a temporary position – has not been specifically trained to carry out that functional role. Furthermore, those who were trained may have gone through different kinds of specialized training depending on the time they were trained and got their degree. In fact, training seems to be influenced by the cultural orientation and specific contents characterizing the various training courses offered.

Pavone (2007) stresses that support teachers need in-service training, besides initial training, especially with regard to cases of sensory deficits or of particularly serious situations. Undoubtedly, support teachers have a significant and educationally important specific functional role, that they carry out successfully most of the times. She also points out that often the custody and care function

<sup>21</sup> Data elaborated by Pavone (2007) from [www.disabilitaincifre.it/indicatori/tabelle/ist54\\_1997-05.asp](http://www.disabilitaincifre.it/indicatori/tabelle/ist54_1997-05.asp)

tends to prevail, owing to the school or classroom context, limited resources, work uncertainty and educational discontinuity.

### *1.3. How to interpret the present situation?*

Pavone (*idem*) underlines how progressive and fair legislation, together with a host of good practices, has promoted and successfully sustained the continuing process of school integration of disabled students. Quantitative data about both the number and percentage of enrolled students as well as of support teachers are useful and instructive, yet they can give only limited information about the quality of the integration policies. The *Rapports* that the Ministry of Education issues every year give us relevant indications that allow further interpretations.

With regard to disabled students' school enrolment and attendance, their increase at the primary school level can be interpreted as (1) the result of the fact that a number of disabilities are often not diagnosed before schooling; (2) the consequence of a growing difference between the school expectations and those students' behaviour and of the inability of the school to provide the appropriate reception for the latter (cfr. Pavone 2007).

Furthermore it is not to be overlooked that every year about 10% of the disabled students are failed and must thus repeat the grade (*ibidem*). ISTAT (the National Central Statistics Bureau) informs that 26.3% of disabled students has been made to repeat at least a grade during their school career. The majority of the failed students are those with a serious impairment (see ISTAT, *L'integrazione sociale delle persone con disabilità*, 2004, also in [www.disabilitaincifre.it](http://www.disabilitaincifre.it)). The tendency to "delay" the school process for these students emerges clearly when students are expected to enrol into the lower secondary school level.

How can these data be interpreted? One interpretation is that slowing down their pace down the school path will be more effective in fostering the maturation of young persons, maturation which is favoured precisely by the child's slow moving from a grade to the successive. The second interpretation is that the adults fear that promoting these students from primary school to secondary school will prove difficult if there is not an appropriate reception of them at the secondary level.

### *1.4. Disability diagnosis and certification*

Diagnosing the different types of disabilities and then certify that this or that child is disabled (or differently able) is not a simple or easy task. On the contrary it implies a complex interpretation as the person's difficulties are connected with clinical and social questions, according to Pavone (2007). From this point of view, Italy shares many of the concerns that are present in other European Union countries and have been documented by OCDE (2000).

Up to now, data inform us that certifications of disability have constantly increased since the turn of the century (for instance they went from 1.5% in 1998/1999 to 1.9% in 2002/2003). The Ministry of Education *Rapport* issued in 2000 complained that there was not yet a national database of all disabled people. Furthermore, it complained that the data respectively in possession of the health system, school system, welfare system, as well as of the work sectors, make use of codes and data that are often not connected between them. To solve this problem the decree entitled “Regolamento recante modalità e criteri per l’individuazione dell’alunno come soggetto in situazione di handicap, ai sensi dell’art. 35, comma 7, della legge 27 dicembre 2002, n. 289” (DPCM 23 febbraio 2006, n. 185) aimed at indicating clear certification procedures and criteria.

### *1.5. Low educational levels of disable students*

Disabled students who are older than 15 years of age have mostly reached the degree assigned at the end of the compulsory education years. For instance, in school year 1999/2000 [when legislation made compulsory education one year longer] disabled students with such a degree were 56.5% of the total student population and only 10.4% of them achieved an upper secondary education degree or a university degree. The highest percentage of those who have such a degree is made of those who have a sensory deficit (see [www.disabilitaincifre.it](http://www.disabilitaincifre.it)).

### *1.6. Situations of gravity*

By considering the ratio between disabled students and support teachers it is possible to single out the situations of gravity, as they require a constant presence of the support teacher. In school year 2001/2002 childhood education institutions had 33.85% of 1 teacher/1 student ratio, which is almost double the percentage of such a ratio in other school levels (18.36% in primary school, 17.78% in lower secondary school, 19.97% in upper secondary school) (see MIUR, *Servizio per l’automazione informatica e l’innovazione tecnologica*, 2003, p. 29).

If we take into consideration the values at the upper secondary school level, and furthermore consider the type of school chosen, we see the following:

- 1) Classical and scientific high schools have a smaller percentage of disabled students enrolled but they are the ones for whom the support teacher’s presence must guarantee continuity (34% of 1 to 1 ration).
- 2) On the contrary, vocational institutions and art schools that have a higher percentage of disabled students show a lower value with regard to the 1 to 1 ratio (16.50% in the first ones, 18.68% in the second ones) (see MIUR, *Servizio per l’automazione informatica e l’innovazione tecnologica*, 2003, p. 28 and 31).

### *1.7. The quality of teachers' classroom pedagogy and their professional identity*

In Italy the quality of disabled students' school integration is connected more to the decisions and choices made by the various schools than to geographical factors, as it could have been expected [because of the historical divide between the North and Centre regions and the Southern ones]. A high differentiation between the Northern Italian regions with respect to the quality and quantity of the educational services and the Southern Italian ones has however been signalled.

The schools' ability to receive and educate those students seem to depend from the school levels: it is high in the childhood education institutions and low in the secondary ones.

Furthermore, the fact that a disabled student is assigned a support teacher often provokes feelings of marginalization, and delegation behaviour with regard to projects and evaluation in the former; also the "couple" composed of a disabled student and his/her support teacher experiences feelings of isolation and loneliness with negative consequences on communication skills and opportunities, autonomy and social relations.

A significant role towards the disabled students' educational and social integration process, as well as towards improvement of the quality of pedagogy, will be played by computer technology, as indicated by recent legislation (cfr. Law no. 4/2004 on "Disposizioni per favorire l'accesso dei soggetti disabili agli strumenti informatici").

### *1.8. Peer relations in the classroom*

Whenever the classroom peers respond to, and facilitate their disabled peers' needs, it can be expected that the classroom pedagogy and climate will be favourable to, and inclusive of disabled students (see Pavone 2007).

Schools tend to oscillate between a highly interactive pedagogical approach meant to promote disabled students' integration through their inclusion into *ad hoc* groups of peers, on the one hand, and on the other, a pedagogical approach based solely on the support teacher.

The latter usually works in a different classroom or enacts projects that are not meant to involve the classroom peers.

However, tutoring experiences are signalled that appear especially significant toward achieving the disabled students' school integration: they are usually carried out by former students or by classmates who help the disabled student to participate into the life of the classroom and/or to study.

### *1.9. Orientation to work and the relation school-work*

The fact that compulsory education has been extended to 15 years of age has greatly and deeply modified the process for school integration of disabled students, as it can be seen from the increase

in their enrolment at the upper secondary school level. A number of experimentations are being carried out mostly in vocational programs or art schools, in particular with regard to projects of school & work that are supported by regional and local policies (see Pavone 2007).

The longer compulsory education and the law concerning job placement (law 68/1999) will put under observation the certification models regarding the competencies acquired by disabled students during their educational and training path.

#### *1.10. Relations among schools, social services and families*

Collaboration between schools and families has been always considered crucial by Italian educators and researchers for the success of disabled students' school integration initiatives. As it may be expected, the encounter between educational and social operators and parents is often a problematic one. For instance, the support teacher is the only interlocutor of parents, as the latter don't have the opportunity to meet and discuss with all the classroom teachers. In turn, the support teacher does not always find the latter available for collaboration in the elaboration and writing of the individualized educational plan. Working together with other teachers (in terms of *équipe* or group work) is at times difficult, as are difficult the contacts with those colleagues involved in organizing and following the process of school integration. This is due more to organizational reasons and to the time pressure than to unwillingness to work together, in this case.

Still a sensitive issue that should not to be taken for granted is the inter-institutional collaboration among schools, local administrations and local social agencies because of their internal differences and because of legislative, administrative and organizational problems.

Pavone (2007) urges that both professional and political figures dealing with the process of disabled students' school integration work together to improve:

- 1) communication with the health system with which to share the functional diagnosis;
- 2) the different interpretations with regard to the needed competences in educational and social operators working with disabled students;
- 3) the system of inter-institutional relations and the coordination of policies and interventions;
- 4) the in-service training initiatives for both classroom teachers and support teachers;
- 5) the mobility of disabled students inside the buildings by further working on removing architectural barriers.

### *1.11. Future prospects*

University experts (see Pavone 2007) recommend that with regard to the school integration of disabled students it is necessary to intervene in the areas of educational and pedagogic action, work training, policy and organizational choices. Networking among these different areas and those working in them is considered positive and interesting.

Pavone (*idem*) makes the following proposals aimed to enhance:

- 1) training of personnel – headmasters, classroom teachers and support teachers, collaborators and administrative operators. The opportunity to promote specific actions aimed to involve health personnel, educational assistants and educators working for the local administration (see law no. 104/1992, art. 14, § 7) should not be undervalued or forgotten;
- 2) active and continuing monitoring of the developments in the quality of the school integration process. The experts of the National Permanent Observatory on Integration, located at the Ministry of Education, have stressed that it is urgent to define evaluation criteria in order to assess the quality of school integration. Such criteria should be considered as indicators of the process and achievement of the aim, as well as of the structural aspects;
- 3) maximization of the connections among different agencies, namely municipalities, provinces, regions, schools, firms, health system.

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