

National State of the Art and Gap Analysis - Data Collection and Analysis in Italy

Output 1.2. National PASSAGE Ecosystem of Needs, Practices Target Groups, Stakeholders and Mode of Work Report

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Introduction

Within the PASSAGE consortium, Slovenia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Lithuania will be taking appropriate measures to cope with increased level of third country nationals arriving in these destinations. In turn, this increase has been instrumental in revealing several limits of existing policies (either national, regional, or European) and current capacities for migrants' integration to local societies, in the field of educative integration. This gap was especially evident in the case of the early stage of arrival (i.e., reception), where integration action needs to be reinforced and supported to promote basic EU values and principles of inclusivity, diversity, and civic openness.

This document will serve as basis for further elaboration and could serve as comprehensive reference on the level of understanding, knowledge, and awareness of youth in all European participating countries, in issues related to pedagogies and pedagogical integration in the EU.

Within this document, partners will conduct a literature review of the pedagogical models and administrative structures and practices in securing the integration of children from a migrant background who enter new school environment. All partners will collect data from various resources, which will be summarized in the present report for further development. Part of this activity is the analysis of the limited findings available so far regarding comparative approaches and the utilization of integration in schools. Ecosystem Mapping State of The Art and Gap Analysis Report will be further developed into the compilation of national reports and a Transnational PASSAGE Ecosystem of Needs, Practices Target Groups, Stakeholders and Mode of Work.

Texts included in this Report should not be older than 2000, including books sections, scientific articles, policy briefs, policy documents (e.g., parliament reports, etc), grey literature (e.g., project reports).



1. Literature Review

State of The Art and Gap Analysis

Introduction to the national school system

In Italy, the education and training system is organized according to the principles of subsidiarity and the autonomy of educational institutions, based on the **Italian Constitution, art.117**:

1. subsidiarity means that the State has exclusive legislative competence for the "general rules on education" and for the determination of the essential levels of services that must be guaranteed throughout the national territory. The Italian State defines the fundamental principles that the Regions must respect in the exercise of their specific competences. The Regions have "shared" legislative power regarding the fundamental principles set by the State and "exclusive" legislative power in the field of education and professional training;
2. Public educational institutions enjoy autonomy in didactic, organization and research, experimentation and development (**L.59/1997**).

The National School System is organized as follows:

- **Nurseries** for children from 0 to 6 years old, not compulsory. They fall under the competences of the municipalities;
- **Kindergarten** for children from 3 to 6 years old, not compulsory. They fall under the competences of the State, although the institutions providing pre-primary education are managed by municipalities and private entities as well.
- **First cycle of education**, which is divided in:
 - primary school for children from 6 to 11 years old (5 years);
 - 1st grade secondary school for students from 11 to 14 years old (3 years).
- **Second cycle of education**, which is divided in:



- 2nd grade of secondary school (5 years), for students from 14 to 19 years old (high schools, technical institutes, and professional institutes)
- three-year and four-year vocational education and training courses (VET). These are of regional competence and are addressed to students who have completed the first cycle of education.
- **Higher education**, offered by universities, the institutions of High Artistic and Music Education (AFAM), and higher technical Institutes (ITS).¹

Compulsory education lasts for 10 years, from 6 to 16 years of age, and includes the 8 years of the first cycle of education and the first 2 years of the second cycle which can be attended, as already highlighted, in secondary schools or in vocational education training and course (**Law No 296/2006**). For all young people the right / duty of education and training applies for at least 12 years or, in any case, until the achievement of a three-year professional qualification by the age of 18 according to the provisions of **Law 53 / 2003**. Compulsory education can be carried out in state schools and “equals” schools (**Law 62 of 2000**), which are part of the public education system, but it can also be fulfilled in private schools (**Law 27 of 2006**) or through family education. In the latter two cases, however, the fulfillment of the education obligation must be subject to a series of conditions, such as the carrying out of suitability tests.

At the end of the compulsory education period, usually at the end of the second year of upper secondary school, if the student does not continue their studies, a certification of the skills acquired is issued (**Ministerial Decree 139 of 2007**). After passing the final state examination of upper secondary education, the student can access tertiary education courses (university, Afam and ITS). Some university courses are limited in number, and students must pass an entry test.

In conclusion, pupils from 6 to 14 years, the target of the present research, are included in the compulsory pathway, precisely in the **first cycle of education**, divided in elementary schools and first-grade secondary schools. According to **Article 33 of the Italian**

¹ <https://www.miur.gov.it/sistema-educativo-di-istruzione-e-formazione>



Constitution it is a duty of the State to offer a public school system to all young people. However, natural and legal persons are free to create schools and educational institutions with no charge for the state (Constitutional principle of freedom of education). Equal schools are authorized to issue qualifications with the same legal value as those of the corresponding state schools; have full freedom with regard to cultural orientation and pedagogical-didactic direction and benefit from a more favorable tax treatment if they are not for profit.

Regarding the organizational structure, Miur (Ministry of Education, University and Research) is responsible for the administration of the education system at governmental level. At a decentralized level, the Miur operates through the Regional School Offices (USR) which in turn are divided into sub-territorial areas at the provincial level.²

Systemic regulation on the education of newly arrived immigrants and refugees

In Italy, according to the **Guidelines for welcoming and integrating foreign students (MIUR, 2014)**, foreign minors who are newly arrived from their country of origin and enrolled for the first time in the school system, are commonly referred to as NAMS. However, what defines the condition of NAMS, it is not the period of staying and the legal status, but the level of Italian speaking. Therefore, the same Guidelines are applied in a variety of cases with different migration backgrounds such as:

- Non-Italian citizens, even when born in Italy;
- Children reunited with one or both parents;
- Children born in Italy, but entrusted for a period to relatives in the country of origin and then returned to Italy;
- Alone foreign minors (or Unaccompanied Foreign Minors) from non-EU countries;

² indire.it



- Minors arrived in Italy for international adoption, Italian citizens, often arrived in Italy in early childhood, whose level of Italian speaking generally depends on the period of early childhood exposure to Italian as a second language.

In Italy the school system is overall inclusive (**Constitutional Art 3, 33, 34**) and “the school is open to all”. Separate educational tracks or institutions for children with special needs do not exist in Italy. When a school receives an application from a migrant child, the same documents as the ones required for Italian children should be asked. The lack of identity documents, health documentation, and school certificates should not preclude the child from enrolling in the school. Also minors over 16 have the right to be enrolled in the compulsory educational path (6-16), in case they prove self-preparation for the class they want to attend. In any case, the Teachers’ Board can decide the assignment to the class immediately below or above, depending on the curriculum of the country of origin of the children (MIUR Guidelines for welcoming and integrating foreign students, 2014)

According to **Article 38 of “Testo Unico dell’Immigrazione” - TUI (Migration Paper)**, which provides the overall framework, in fact: 1) foreign minors on the national territory have the right to education regardless of the regularity of their position regarding their stay, in the forms and methods provided for Italian citizens; their enrollment in Italian schools takes place in the manner and under the conditions provided for Italian minors and can be requested at any time of the school year (even beyond the annual deadline, only for new arrivals); foreign minors without personal data, or in possession of irregular or incomplete documentation, are enrolled with reserve, without any prejudice to the achievement of the final qualifications of the study courses of schools of all levels. The necessary adaptation of teaching programs is defined in relation to the **level of competence of individual foreign students**; for this purpose, specific individualized interventions for groups of pupils can be adopted, to facilitate the learning of the Italian language, using, where possible, the professional resources of the school.

Moreover, **Reception Decree 142/2015** establishing rules relating to the reception of applicants for international protection, establishes that Asylum seeking children have access



to the same public schools as Italians and are entitled to the same assistance in case of special needs. The aim is to integrate all children in schools and to grant unaccompanied minors' access to Italian language class, as established by the **Migration Paper**. The effectiveness of the right to study is guaranteed by the State, by the Regions and by local authorities also through the activation of specific courses and initiatives for learning the Italian language. These initiatives and activities are carried out on the basis of a survey of local needs and an integrated territorial planning, also in agreement with the associations of foreigners, with the diplomatic or consular representations of the countries of origin and with the voluntary organizations.

An important step for migrant students' inclusion are the "**2017 Guidelines on the right of study for pupils out of family of origin**" (**Law 47/2017**, which includes the ones in family custody, in protection shelter or unaccompanied minors). Indeed, the Guidelines formalized the right to education for this target, who has to be enrolled in the formal path equal to other students, stating that "no child should be barred from enrolling to school due to lack of residency documentation, and schools are not required to inform immigration authorities." Moreover, the document addresses psycho-emotional problems of pupils, provides administrative indication on school enrollment and integration, such as facilitated inscription at school and the possibility to be enrolled even after the deadline; addresses clarifications on the governance among MIUR, USR, Headmaster, CPIA, teachers, families and all relevant stakeholders involved in the educational paths of the pupils, highlights the importance of networking among all of those actors.

Decree Law 113/2018 and **L 132/2018 ("Security Decree")** requires a knowledge of the Italian language of at least B1 level in order to present the request of Italian citizenship, which has to be attested through certifications or qualification of an educational institution recognized by the Ministry of Education (MIUR) or the Ministry of Cooperation and Foreign Affairs (MAECI). The Ministry foresees 8-10 hours per week dedicated to Italian language labs (about 2 hours per day) for a duration of 3-4 months. These courses are usually provided by CPIA.



Moreover, the **Circular of the Ministry of Education of 8 January 2010** states that the number of non-nationals in school classes should be limited to 30%.

Finally, in 2014 was established the **Permanent Observatory for integration of Foreigners Students**. in order to "identify operational and organizational solutions for an effective adaptation of integration policies to the real needs of the multicultural and constantly changing school". The members, appointed in the decree, are representatives of research institutes, associations and bodies of national importance engaged in the sector of integration of foreign students and intercultural issues, experts from the academic, cultural and social world and school managers, who will remain in office for three years. The consultative and propositional tasks of the new body - chaired by the Minister or the Undersecretary with responsibility for integration issues - concern, in particular, the "monitoring of the school integration process of foreign students", the "interinstitutional agreements for taking charge of the global project of life and integration of foreign students" and "experimentation and methodological, didactic and disciplinary innovation". Furthermore, the Observatory can express opinions and formulate proposals on regulatory and administrative initiatives within the competence of the Ministry of Education, University and Research.

Limited findings and evaluation of existing pedagogical integration models and practices

As an introduction, it is important to underline that, in the 2018/2019 school year, out of 8,580,000 students, about 860,000 were non-Italian citizens. Compared to the previous school year 2017/2018, the school population fell overall by almost 85 000 units, equal to 1.0%. Students with Italian citizenship recorded a decrease of over 100 thousand units (-1.3%) compared to an increase of 16 thousand students with non-Italian citizenship (+ 1.9%), so the incidence of foreigner students on the total passes 9.7% to 10.0%. Despite this data, Italy is the EU country that allocates **the lowest percentage of public expenditure to education**, equal to 7.9% (Open Polis, 2018). Moreover, there are no specific estimates of public resources employed/destined to the school integration of pupils with no-Italian citizenship.



Over 64.5% of students with non-Italian citizenship are represented by the **second generation**, while the number of Newly Arrived Migrants entering in school for the first time is decreasing: unlike students born in Italy, for whom the growth trend is a constant figure, students who enter Italian schools for the first time have a rather unstable trend. Overall, in the five-year period considered by the following data, new entrants recorded a decline of over 10 thousand units.

Focusing on their inclusion at school, according to the autonomy principle, in 2015 a duty was introduced for schools at any level to draft the Triennial Educational Policy Plan (PTOF), which includes the Annual Plan for Inclusion (PAI). The PTOF is the programmatic document which describes the curricular, extra-curricular, educational and organizational resources and activities provided autonomously by each school. At the end of each school year, schools have to monitor and to evaluate the efficacy of the Plan. The **Annual Plan for Inclusion** is the fundamental pillar for the development of a careful and respectful teaching for each pupil, based on which the improvement objectives and subsequent actions are outlined in order to provide adequate responses, especially through the development of “personalized study plans” for students with disabilities and with “**special education needs**”. Among them are included those “**with difficulties derived by the lack of knowledge of the Italian language and culture**”.

Newly arrived children are directly included into ordinary classes, with the support of a multilingual teacher or a two-teacher system; and outside of the classroom through extra-curricular activities. With regard to the length of time in which newly arrived migrant students can follow some separate lessons parallel to the mainstream education, Italy set a period from 16–24 weeks. During this period, newly arrived migrant students may benefit from 8 to 10 Italian language lessons. The curriculum **guidelines for teaching Italian as a second language for NAMS³** defines two learning stages: learning Italian to communicate and learning Italian for study purposes, the 'bridge stage': 1) during the first phase lasting a few months, the efforts and privileged attention are directed to the acquisition of the language

³ <http://www.centrocome.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Scuole-aperte-Piano-L2.pdf>



to communicate. The student must be supported in the activities of comprehension, oral production, creation of a basic vocabulary, acquisition of reading and writing techniques; 2) during the second phase, which can extend up to the entire first year of insertion, the acquisition of the language for basic interpersonal communication continues and expands and the learning of common disciplinary contents is inaugurated, starting from the subjects a less "verbal" character, relying on targeted tools such as bilingual glossaries and simplified and linguistically accessible texts. In this "bridge" phase, laboratory modules can function, that is, blocks of interventions on specific themes and topics (linguistic and / or disciplinary), as well as participation in after-school activities in which the pupil is followed in doing his homework and in the studio; 3) in the third phase, the foreign pupil follows the common curriculum to peers and is supported through forms of educational and linguistic facilitation, study aid initiatives in extra-school hours.

Regarding teachers' professional development, **Law 107/2015** in Italy foresees **continuing professional development (CPD)**, in order to improve their competences and to make them more aware in addressing students' needs and more updated on technology and on advanced didactic methods. In particular, the **National plan for CPD activities 2016-2019** aimed at strengthening teachers' ability to encourage pluralism, respect for all and empowerment. The CPD activities focus on increasing the effectiveness of relations between schools and migrant families, as well as relations between peers. Participation in CPD activities, in Italy, is "mandatory, permanent and strategic". While higher education institutions have certain autonomy in designing teacher education and training programmes, authorities take decision on teachers' knowledge and skills to be developed in order to address the holistic needs of students from migrant backgrounds in classrooms such as their intercultural competences, their understanding of language and culture of origin, basically to build their multicultural identity and so facilitating their integration in school.

In Italy, official guidelines promote tutoring and mentoring activities, learning support and counselling, sports activities, as well as actions involving students' families, mainly on academic issues and information to be provided when their children enter school. Schools are required to inform parents about pedagogical and subject-specific objectives, the types of support available and also about their child's educational progress. The aim is to encourage parents to have a positive attitude towards the



education of their children and establish a partnership between schools and parents (Eurydice Report 2019).

To sum up, many gaps can be pointed out within the Italian system in integrating NAI in schools, such as:

- The **lack of funds**. There is no way to trace public resources specifically designated to the integration of migrants in schools. Funds, in fact, came mainly from different Institutions, such as the EU (through AMIF, PON projects ecc...), the State, the Regions and municipalities. The result is, therefore, a **fragmentation of choice and opportunities** depending on the geographical area of the schools and often changing due to the political orientation of the Institutions. The major role is often played by **Civil Society Organizations**, which collaborate with schools in order to provide them services to meet the needs of students with migratory background in general, especially in the Regions where the presence of migrants is particularly strong. Traditionally, schools (and institutions) have delegated the assistance to NAI to organizations and networks within the territory, which usually are able to provide overall support (cultural mediation services, language and legal support, extra-schools activities, support to families...);
- As highlighted as well during the interviews with teachers, beside the already mentioned **Guidelines**, which are **not developed enough in practice**, there is lack of coordination at Central Level and the State did not provide mandatory didactic indications on migrant's student inclusion at school nor provides enough resources for Italian classes;
- Difficulties in entering in schools/descholarization: usually NAMS come to Italy after the beginning of the school and, therefore, they are refused to enter in school, as those claim to be already "full". What happens is that pupils are "bounced" from class to class. For middle school they are considered too old, while secondary schools considered their Italian level not developed enough. Those pupils find themselves out of the educational system for a long time. This phenomenon raises the risk of losing motivation and contacts with their peers;



- Reduced or lack of Italian competence for study schools;
- **A lack of adequate and specific training for teachers on multicultural issues.**
Modern schools and teachers should promote an intercultural society in order to overcome prejudices and stereotypes and the ethnocentric vision, in order to give value to diversity of any kind. The competences of migrants and their language diversity should be recognized and validated in a proper manner. Regarding this issue, only in 2017-2018, through a FAMI project, a national and wide training has been organized for the first time. Italian Universities organized upgrading courses for teachers of all levels on the theme of inclusion and reception of NIC students;
- There is a need for more cooperation for extra-school activities between schools and local communities, in order to provide social activities (such as sport and cultural activities) which can help NAI to improve the language, to have more social contacts as well as to involve migrant families.

Good practices from the third sector:

MEDIS (Mediterranean Inclusive School) is an Erasmus + project, implemented by CESIE in Palermo and by other 5 countries, that aims to make local schools more inclusive and welcoming through teacher training and the adoption of innovative methodologies. In the first phase of the project, the consortium collected the so-called "good practices of inclusive and intercultural schools" and created an online platform and e-learning course for teachers; . The MEDIS MOOC was subsequently deepened through face-to-face capacity building sessions, which were organized in 2020/21 in 4 Palermo schools.⁴

INTEGRATED (A learning space to everyone) is a project, funded by AMIF, with the general aim to strengthen the successful participation of newly arrived third-country national children in education and to contribute to the combatting of discrimination against third-country national children in the educational environment in Greece, Italy & Spain, and the EU in general. The project developed an action plan based not only on the recognition of skills, but

⁴ <https://cesie.org/project/medis/>



also on support for the management of cultural diversity. The objective was reached through the involvement of the entire school community through:

- a mentoring program to support students in their school career and support the school in managing cultural diversity;
- a training courses for teachers and school staff on intercultural skills and management of intercultural environments;
- the involvement of parents, in particular those of third-country students, in school activities and in meetings between parents themselves and school staff;
- an educational support platform that allows students, in particular those from third countries, to be followed and supported even outside the school context.⁵

CLIO is a project, funded by the Minister of Interior and the EU Fund for integration of foreigners from third-countries, which involved Save the Children as a coordinator and a network of Institutional and private partners, such as in the Province of Rome and the U.O Minors from the Promotion Department of Social Services and Health of Roma Capitale and three important universities: the Sapienza of Rome, the University of Parma and the University for Foreigners of Siena. The objective was to develop good practices in teaching Italian as a way to promote intercultural citizenship.⁶

Also at Institutional level, some good practices were collected in a document by the **“Miur Observatory on integration of foreigners students and intercultural”**(2017)⁷ named “Italian of proximity: attention and proposals for the language of integration” which contains some recommendations such as 1) a platform containing the legislation and clear indications for welcoming the teaching / learning of the Italian language for pupils and students of recent immigration, and examples of planning and organization of effective and ordinary workshops in school and out of school time; 2) the need of specific training for teachers; 3) the need to take into account, in Curricular and extracurricular activities, learning needs,

⁵ <https://www.integrated-project.eu/>

⁶ <https://s3.savethechildren.it/public/files/uploads/pubblicazioni/clio-cantiere-linguistico-integrazione-e-lorientamento.pdf>

⁷ https://www.unipa.it/strutture/scuolaitalianastranieri/content/documenti/Ongini_Osservatorio-Italiano-L2-e-plurilinguismo--NOTA-1.pdf



different linguistic backgrounds and be based on specific training, focused on teaching Italian as L2 to children / adolescents.

Even more important are, in the same document, the reference to the techniques to be used, such as learning by doing and ludic language teaching and the use of multimedia supports (for example, videos, interactive games, flash cards) as well as cooperative language learning and the use of facilitators.

LITERATURE LIST AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

National and local policy documents supporting integration of immigrants and refugees into national school system. Please name the documents and the scope (local, regional, national) and the main contents of the document.

- The already mentioned **National Observatory for the integration of foreigner student and interculture** (MIUR) addressed in 2015 "Different from whom?", a vademecum with recommendations and operational proposals derived from the best school practices for a more effective and correct organization of the reception and integration of pupils with non-Italian citizenship. Explicit reference is made, in the priority training objectives to the establishment in schools of permanent language laboratories animated by teachers specialized in teaching Italian, capable of coordinating the work of linguistic simplification of the contents of the various disciplines and facilitating the learning of the specific languages of the study disciplines. This implies a systematic commitment to the training of teachers, but not only of Italian teachers, as the responsibility for learning the language of instruction cannot be delegated to them alone.
- Document of the National Scientific Committee for National Guidelines for the nursery school curriculum and the first cycle of education "**National guidelines and new scenarios**"(2017) recommended that "The new reality of multilingual classes requires teachers to be prepared, both to teach Italian as L2, and to practice new integrated and multidisciplinary approaches"
- At **Regional** Level, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia planned a series of funds in within a specific framework in order to: a) support the educational institutions in Friuli Venezia Giulia, through projects aimed at overcoming the linguistic and training difficulties of foreign students and to combat early school leaving; b) facilitate information, guidance, dialogue and relations between school, family and territory in the sector of welcoming foreign students and their families, by supporting "school networks" formed by educational institutions and



partnerships territorial, for the creation of shared and complementary paths, in order to obtain greater effectiveness of the activities.

In conclusion, it is important to underline again that, according to the principle of educational institutions autonomy, plans and policies regarding the NAMs inclusion in education are included in the PTOF program of each schools.



2. Field Research

Analysis of the focus group research with teachers

Introduction questions:

Two focus groups have been conducted:

- The first on 19 May 2021, with 3 teachers: a primary teacher from Vicenza, who gained her experience from a period of high-level migration in that area and told us about a strong collaboration between institutions, schools and citizenship; and 2 CPIA teachers from Palermo.
- The second on 25 May 2021, with two teachers from Genoa: the first one who told us about a different kind of “wave” of migration, which is the one involving South American citizens in Genoa in the 90’s; the second was a University Professor in Languages involved in a research project on plurilinguisme as a way to involve migrants and refugees within schools.

People with different backgrounds and from different cities have been involved, and it allowed us to have a broad view on the issue and to collect different points of view from all over Italy.

To sum up their experience:

1. Primary school teacher in Vicenza, involved in teaching to migrants 20 years ago, due to the “wave of new arrival”. She used to be the referent of interculturality within her school;
2. CPIA (school of alphabetization for people over 16 years. She started 10 years ago, teaching italian and geostory);
3. CPIA, She started in 2014;
4. Primary teacher in Genoa: involved in teaching immigrants and refugees pupils in 2000, she has worked for 18 years with newly arrived migrants’, especially from South-America;
5. University Professors, she has taught Spanish in secondary school for ten years (1991-2001). She collaborated with the Genovese teacher from 2008 to 2013 in the experimental project regarding plurilinguistic curricula.



Self efficacy

All the teachers developed specific techniques and good practices, which will be further explained, in order to integrate at the maximum possible extent newly arrived immigrants and/or refugees and their parents in the classroom. This approach and their enthusiasm ensure their self-efficacy.

Also, in case they cannot work with mediators in alphabetization courses, teachers try to create peer-to-peer supported groups, where students help each other. They did not mention specific tension with immigrants' parents, They highlighted a trust in the teacher's work instead, especially in relation to some ethnic groups. Within primary schools where specific innovative were implemented, such as good networking with the citizenship, a multilingual staff of teachers and cultural mediators, and where sperimental educational path for intercultural knowledge were created, this issues did not raise.

Interestingly, all teachers reported more tension with national parents, which are used to raise worries or even being against the inclusion of a newly arrived migrant in the classroom, for racism or because they are worried the pupil could cause problems within the class. However, in conclusion, as long as specific good and innovative practices are implemented and a constant dialogue between parents and teachers and among parents is stimulated, there are no specific concerns regarding relationships with immigrants' parents. The true challenge is to include migrants' parents in the group class, as they are used to staying more with their connationals, helping each other and feeling more comfortable. The workload could be heavy, in case you are in a school environment which does not support some kind of initiatives, which often require extra-training and extra work.

Implementing Practices

All the interviewed teachers tried **new/innovative approaches and practices/tools** for better integration of newly arrived students, due to contingency and the arrival, 20 years ago, of a high number of migrants. Two of them used to work, in Vicenza and in Genoa, in peripheric neighbourhoods particularly involved by the phenomena. Therefore, on a



voluntary basis, they decided to implement good practice. One of the primary teachers, with the involvement of territorial institutions and citizens, managed to create a **network for alphabetization from kindergarten school until secondary school**, thanks to some institutional funds for projects to be carried out also beyond school-hours, with the object to straighten their self-esteem and inclusion. However, with children from primary schools, playing and a natural approach in writing and reading, leaving them free to use symbols and draws, is considered as an easy and effective approach. The involvement of Institutions and citizenship is always important in order to ensure migrants' inclusion: in one case an efficient and wide network was created for the alphabetization from kindergarten to secondary schools. They also received institutional funds for a project regarding integration as well beyond the school hours, with the objective to raise the self-esteem of pupils and involve them in after school activities, such as sport and music, using these funds with the collaboration of associations and organizations. Society was more open and many people tried to give their contribution: an interesting practice was developed such as the "**nest of reading**", where children could go, "hide", and read to each other, using a peer to peer approach which strengthened each other's creativity and reading skills. The network used to organize also "**ethnic parties**" within schools, as an occasion for intercultural exchange, However, it was highlighted the fact that politics and society have changed in the last years and, even if the percentage of newly arrived migrants are way less than 20 years ago, these kind of collective initiatives are more difficult to carry on.

In another case, starting from a **major arrival of south-American pupils**, some primary classes of **Spanish bilingualism** were created, sponsored by the municipality. Gradually, the school curriculum gave more attention to intercultural awareness, studying the different disciplines in a global view and creating illustrating books available for all and providing books in diverse languages to give to immigrants' parents, in order to maintain contact with their mother tongue and give values to their roots.

Also, **illustrated books** were provided for non-alphabetized children. This approach, burn on a voluntary basis, became, finally. an **experimental project about**



plurilingualism, approach which is also strongly recommended by the Council of Europe, and involved a research of University of Genoa for 10 years (2008-2018), This approach, where each students learn many languages in a basic way, could resolve structural problems regarding migrants' inclusion in schools and society as well as stimulate italian students in developing curiosity and knowledge of different languages such French, Arabic, Wolof... Unfortunately, once the teacher changed the school where she used to work, the experimental project was no longer carried out, due to the lack of willingness of colleagues and the Headmaster.

In conclusion, to develop good practices is essential the **commitment and motivation of teachers** on one hand, supported by the overall school system. In both cases, the change of society played a major role in the possibility to carry out further new practices.

Cultural competency

All the interviewed teachers do not consider cultural differences as a barrier, but as an opportunity and a resource. They all consider **diversity as a pedagogical approach** to keep always in mind, in every educational field and therefore especially dealing with migrants. For sure, cultural differences can raise more challenges, related to trauma of students and they required negotiation skills, empathy and respect for every individual situation as well as the capability of managing dynamics within the class, Overall, this issues are perceived more as opportunities for dialogue and not as a barrier, Moreover, all the primary school teachers highlighted the fact that in classes with a strong presence of immigrants, national students have a **wilder vocabulary and easiness in learning grammatic**, thanks to the sharing, intercultural exchanges and the use of different didactic tools, such as gestures, colours and images. In conclusion, even when there are no specific modules, programmes or innovative practices, **cultural differences are considered as always enriching and stimulating** and are perceived as not a barrier in the integration process.



Competency/Preparation

Regarding their university preparation, the interviewed teachers all came from different backgrounds (ie Anthropology studies, Humanities, or non-graduates). Despite these differences, they all highlight a **lack of in-service professional development during their studies**, and especially in the recent period, since SISS (Specialization school for teachers, addressed to future teachers and issued by other teachers) has been cancelled, SISS used to provide, in fact, some **interesting courses on intercultural issues**. One important issue raised is the fact that University Professors do not come from schools, and in many cases never have been in contact with students and they do not pay attention to foreigners within their curricula, but only to Italian students.

They all attend seminars or training to further develop their competences, on a voluntary basis, However the main training is on the field and the main stimulation comes from students and environment. Some teachers are also trying to **create networks and involve some non-formal educators** in order to learn more about intercultural approach, storytelling and the use of images, movies, non-verbal communication as well as exchanges of good practice with other teachers through the Erasmus Programme.



Student needs

Generally speaking, **teachers do not consider the system, and specifically, the school system as refugees friendly**. Refugee pupils are often more isolated, due to social dynamics and the lack of opportunities outside the school to be engaged in, as they often do not have the economical possibility to be involved in activities such music and sport. Also, immigrants' children are labelled in Italian Schools as a target with BES (Special Educational Needs) instead of resources, this can **low their self-esteem and isolate them** from the rest of their peers.

Even in "after school" hours, offered by schools, there are not "ad hoc" pedagogical paths and approaches addressed to the target. This integration process is left to **volunteer initiatives and networking among schools, associations and organizations**, but nothing which can be considered as institutional or systemic. Schools, in the state of the art, have less resources (except for some which are addressed to alphabetization, however with no attention to specific targets and levels). Moreover, there are **no mediators** who could connect schools with immigrants' families.

Compared to other students, immigrants' ones can have more difficult family situations, in some cases due to the absence of parents, in other cases due to a deep sense of shame within them. This is another reason why there is the **necessity to overcome the idea of non-Italian speaking as a people with "special education needs"** and to give them the opportunity to be welcome in the classroom and give their support.

Social problems for immigrants are especially related with the social environment, which changed through time, even if the percentage of newly arrived immigrants in the past were much higher, society in the last ten years has changed, it is more closed and more racist, This shift is having consequences both on the activities implemented on a territorial and school level, and on more social problems for immigrants.



Motivation

All the teachers feel **extremely motivated to teach newly arrived immigrants and refugees**, despite some systemic difficulties, such as social problems, the lackness of tools and materials and, focusing on CPIA, the constant exchange of students (which are allowed to start classes in any period of the year). Also, they highlight the **lack of institutional Guidelines** (at least not implemented further with tools and materials) and as a demotivating factor being in a school environment where Headmasters and other colleagues do not support nor recognize their ideas for integration of newly arrived students in the class.

What motivated their work the most is the **“happiness of the children” and the enthusiasm of the students and their willingness to learn**, as they considered alphabetization important at a higher level for their future. Also, teachers are motivated by their own curiosity: teaching to migrants/refugees is considered as a non-stop journey, a daily experience.

The organization of simple activities such as “social dinners” and modules on traditional holidays involving people with different backgrounds is extremely interesting and exciting for teachers, as well as for students.

They are aware as well of the fact that they have the chance to change other people’s lives.

However, they all highlighted the **lack of communication channels with Institutions** and shared the feeling of **not having a clear voice into school management** by the Ministry for refugee pupils; initiatives and good practices are always on a personal basis.

Finally, they all mentioned the **lack of resources, guidelines and materials**. There is a need to provide materials to teachers, which are frequently busy and absorbed by everyday life.

3. Analysis of the focus group research with stakeholders

4 interviews have been conducted:

- 1) the first one with a representative of CPIA in Palermo;
- 2) a written exchange with the Assessor of the Municipality of Torino (Piedmont);



- 3) Interview with a political representative from the Municipality of Palermo;
- 4) Interview with the ex-referent of migrants' inclusion from Regione Liguria, who also contributed in drafting the "Guidelines for welcoming and integrating foreign students".

This allowed us to have a special focus on the local level and to investigate opinions and good practices from professionals with different political points of views and from all over Italy.

Local strategies and Guidelines Existing Practices and Future Previsions

As already highlighted, at the National level in Italy, at the moment, beside the Migration paper, which establishes some general rules for migrants and Asylum Seekers, the only document regarding NAIMS inclusion at school are the **Guidelines for welcoming and integrating foreign students.**

The ex-representative of Liguria Region, however, highlighted how, in the past (2000-2010) a consistent work has been done as well at **Governmental level** regarding this topic, due to the new "wave" of migration of hundreds of foreigners pupils who arrived in Italy during the 90's, most of them when the school year already started. An overall coordination at Central level was established and a **Committee with Regional Representatives** was founded, which used to meet regularly in order to discuss and exchange ideas on this topic. The work that has been done during those years, resulted in the aforementioned Guidelines.

However, at the moment, the general feeling at a "root" level, is a **lack of political coordination** at the Central level on migrant's inclusion at school. In fact, the Councillor of Torino highlighted that the principle of autonomy leaves schools to develop the **Triennial Educational Policy Plan** autonomously, which may include specific projects for migrants' inclusion as well. The mentioned Plans cover different topics, especially depending on the area where the school is based and the numbers of foreigners students who live there (based on this, schools may have additional funds).

As highlighted by representatives of the City of Palermo and Torino, Municipalities in Italy have direct scholastic competences only regarding schools from children kindergarten to 1st grade secondary schools (0-14) and in providing facilities and infrastructures (for example



some Municipalities provide locals for CIA lessons). However, **Municipalities play an important role in migrant students' inclusion**, as they can provide support to “ad hoc” initiatives, working with non-profit organizations, schools, or other institutions. Municipalities are the institutional organ able to **promote and create an effective and proactive network in the territories** and, therefore, to help in providing the first and most useful support to foreigners on many issues. In the case of Palermo, the Municipality works as a **facilitator** between schools and organizations within the territory, It provides, in fact, support and participation to some interesting initiatives, such as ***Beyond Lampedusa (2018)***. In this case an agreement was stipulated among Municipality, CIA and the “Beyond Lampedusa” organization, for including a group of MSNA in the care of a school’s garden, where many public initiatives were conducted as well. The objective was to involve the pupils in the citizenship environment, provide them useful exchanges with the residents as well as to disseminate to promote the activity. Moreover, an interesting good practice promoted and created by the Municipality is the ***Council of Cultures of Palermo***: born in 2013, it is the representative body of all those who have a nationality other than Italian or who have acquired Italian citizenship and is a consultative and proactive body for the administration's choices of government.

Networking at local level has been highlighted as the most important policy, which can lead to an effective migrant’s inclusion by all the interviewed stakeholders, especially by Liguria Region: the main action that was taken was the drafting of **Inter Institutional agreements** among the Region, the Municipality and the University of Genoa for teacher’s trainings on Italian as a second language. Moreover, other initiatives have been carried out, such as the “Centro Nuove Culture” (still operating): an open space in the historical centre of Genoa where many intercultural laboratories were proposed to pupils and the “Centro Nuove Risorse” (New resources centre), a place aimed at supporting schools within the city through the creation of materials and working groups. The overall policy was to **investigate step by step the needs** and try to **answer through “ad hoc” initiatives**, starting from the one of training teachers and the necessity of speaking



“a common language”. Other examples are: a project carried out in order to help young working migrants from Maghreb to be able to attend schools, offering them scholarship (in agreement with their families); and also the creation of a multidisciplinary *équipe* with teachers, educators, as well as University, in order to try to answer to the need of South Americans migrants to attend school - an environment where they did not want to be involved in for a number of reasons.

As already mentioned, migration is a continuously evolving phenomena and in the last years has changed, involving more adults than minors. Therefore, there is **the need for more coordination among CPIA and other voluntary schools**, in order to create a network and to allow the latter to be able to provide official certificates of Italian Language knowledge. In conclusion, according to the people interviewed, what is needed is **more investigation and exchange** among territories and policy makers rather than more resources, in order to be able to cope with an evolving issue. For the same reasons, it is extremely difficult to draw future previsions.

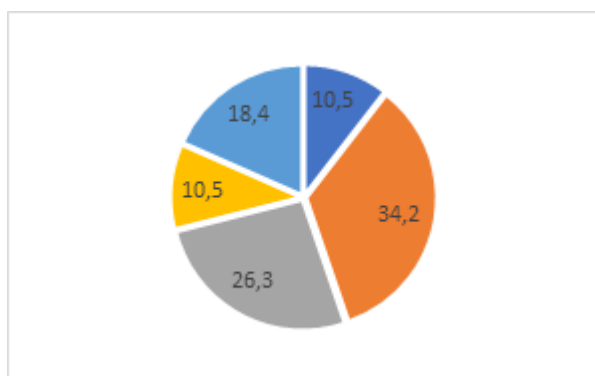


3. Analysis of teachers' perspective on integration of immigrant children and refugees

In April/May 2021, CESIE disseminated through its network of teachers and educators an online questionnaire on integration of immigrant children and refugees (available here: <https://1ka.arnes.si/a/20973?language=8>), which was answered by 51 people.

The high majority of the respondents was female (84, 6%) teaching in high school (86,6%), while the rest of them are teaching in elementary schools (13,2%). 71, 8% have been a teacher for more than 11 years.

The following graph shows, out of the years of work, how many have included teaching refugees and immigrant population.



Teachers answered a series of questions, divided in categories, highlighting to which extent they agreed with some specific statements. The first category of questions regarded their **motivation** and to what extent they consider efficient their work in helping migrants' students and in encountering their needs.



The results show a general **moderate positive approach** and the belief regarding **their ability to involve migrants' students in their activities**, and especially a positive attitude towards future improvements. More specifically, the 59,1% is convinced to a moderate extent about their ability to successfully teach all relevant subjects to refugee and immigrant students and the 54,4 % is convinced to be able to reach refugees and migrants' children to a moderate extent, if they try really hard. Moreover, the 51,1% is convinced to a great extent that, throughout time, they will continue to become more and more capable of addressing refugee and immigrant students' needs. 53,3% of teachers know that they can help to involve migrants in innovative projects to a moderate extent, while the 27,9 % to a great extent.

Finally, interviewed teachers are confident that they can exert a positive influence on both the personal and academic development of refugee and immigrant students. Also regarding relationships with migrants' and refugees' parents, 68,8% are convinced to be able to maintain a positive relationship, even when tension arises.

The second category of questions regarded their willingness to straighten their competencies and training, through innovative approach, new kinds of tools and research, in order to address the target's needs in a more efficient manner.

The results show their strong motivation and openness in using these tools, and their conviction about the **usefulness of specific practices and didactic tools in order to address migrants' needs**.

Generally speaking, half of the interviewed teachers would be open to trying a new practice or intervention for refugee and immigrant students even if different from what they are used to doing, changing their approaches.

In fact, the **55,8% would be willing to use new types of practices to help refugee and immigrant students to a great extent**, and the 54,8% would be open to trying new types of practices for refugee and immigrant students even in case they have to follow a treatment manual.

Analyzing the kind of tools they would be willing to use, the majority of them are open to



using new tools when based on a **research approach**. The 61,9% would be willing to use research to learn how to implement practices for refugee and immigrant students **to a great extent** and the 57,1 % is willing to use new and different types of practices for refugee and immigrant students developed by researchers and believe that research-based practices and interventions are useful for refugee and immigrant students.

The 54,8% would be willing to use manualized practices or interventions for refugee and immigrant students to a great extent.

The third category of questions regarded **their intercultural awareness** and the **need to be aware of the cultural diversity of migrants and refugees** and, even more important, the **need to adapt teaching methods to the target**. They also consider it to a great extent. 75,6%, in fact, answered "to a great extend" to the following questions: "I am aware of the diversity of cultural backgrounds of refugee and immigrant students I am working with"; "I can learn a lot from refugee and immigrant students whose cultural background is different from mine"; "Teaching methods need to be adapted to meet the needs of refugee and immigrant children";

65 % feel the responsibility to be aware of their refugee and immigrant students' cultural backgrounds to a great extent and 43,9% instils pride in refugee and immigrant students' cultures to a great extent.

These data show, beyond the considerations made above, the vision of diversity as a **resource** and a factor to be proud of, instead of a weakness, and also the teacher's effort to give value to migratory and all kinds of different backgrounds.

Referring to their **training and University preparation**, data highlight an **insufficient didactic preparation and professional development on how to meet the needs of migrants and refugees**. In any case, they feel to have gained most of their preparation within the classrooms and took dedicated coursework in culturally responsive practices for students from diverse cultural backgrounds.



As data shows, 41% of teachers think their University preparation program adequately prepared them to meet the needs of refugee and immigrant children. However, **almost the same percentage (38%), answered “not at all”**.

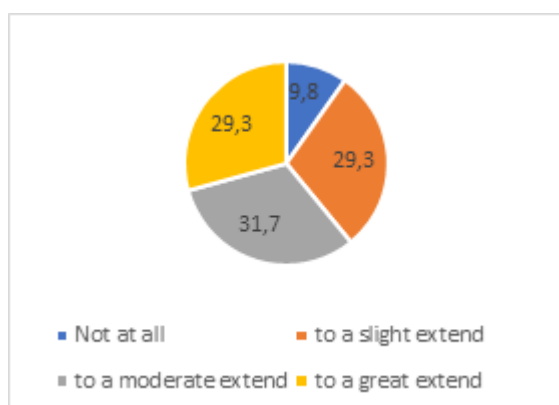
The main training they received was throughout their professional path and due to their professional interest. In fact, 58,5% of teachers, believe to have received an in-service professional development on the issue “to a moderate extent”, the 53,3% gained a lot of experience working with migrants and refugees to a moderate extent (while the 41,5 % “to a great extent”).

43,5% have taken dedicated coursework in culturally responsive practices for students from diverse cultural backgrounds “to a great extent”, while 29,3% “to a moderate extent”.

Even if teachers are willing to professionally grow and take courses in order to address migrants’ issues in a more effective way, the offers that schools provide to discuss effective practices to promote the well-being of refugees and immigrants are quite fragmented.

In fact, educational institutions are **autonomous** regarding the way they plan their actions and the following graph reflects this state of the art.

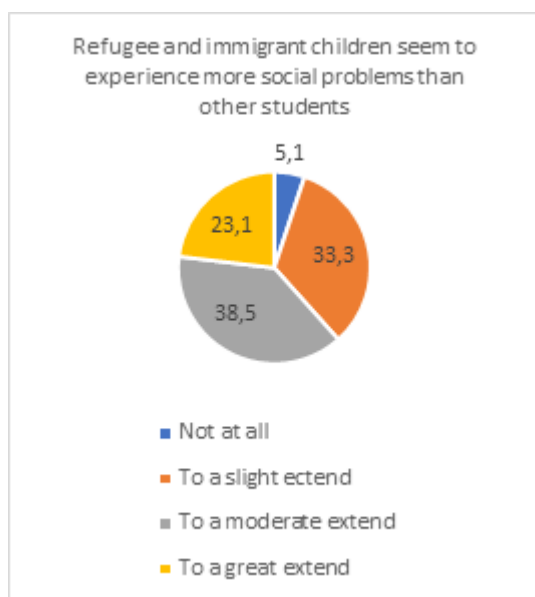
As it can be noticed, in fact, the answers to the question: “ My school devotes time and energy to discussing effective practices to promote the well-being of refugee and immigrant students” are quite fragmented.





Last category of questions was related to **students' needs and problems they may have connected to their background**.

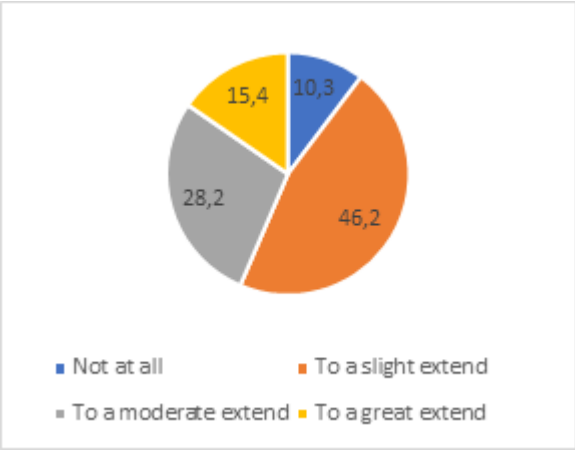
Half of the interviewed teachers (51,3%) believe refugee and immigrant children have unique social and emotional needs compared to other students "to a moderate extent, while 43,6% "to a great extent". Regarding social problems, there is more diversity in the answers.



It is positively interesting and important to highlight that teachers **do not notice** specific anxiety problems in the target: 23,1% answered "not at all", while the 46,2% "to a slight extent".

64,1% do not think refugee and immigrant children have more acting out behaviors than other students at all.

Only 5,1% believe "to a great extent" children are more depressed than the other students, 25,6% "to a moderate extent", while 48,7% "to a great extent". Another issue was the importance of **trauma** and how much it negatively affects refugees and immigrant children. As it can be noticed, 10,3% of teachers answered "not at all", and 46,2% "to a slight extent". These results are interesting and can show both a migrants /refugees resilience and an overcoming of the stereotype of the "traumatized" and socially isolated refugee.





4. Conclusion

The current report gives an overview of the inclusion of newly arrived migrants in schools in Italy, both analysing the legal and theoretical framework and investigating on a grassroots level the best practices carried out within the Italian territory.

The resulting framework is quite fragmented, with different opinions, resources and practices implemented depending on the Municipality, schools and even the autonomous initiatives of single teachers.

At institutional level, there is a **national legal background for migrant's inclusion**, even if often perceived by teachers as too flexible and, as described by the current report, some activities and guidelines are not implemented enough at local level nor known by teachers and policy makers. Therefore, there is a **need for implementing and reaffirming some principles, laws and guidelines** already existing, and also to invest in teachers' training: as mentioned in the report, **teachers are still not trained enough** on inclusive education (at any level) or intercultural education; they are not **updated enough** on other ways of thinking and creative didactic methods and practices which are recommended as well by the European Union, such as non-formal education, the importance of plurilingualism and peer- to-peer mentoring. An investment on teachers' capability to be able to have an enriching relationship with a diverse class is therefore needed, especially considering the transformation of the migration phenomena, always evolving and not easy to foresee.

Also considering teachers views, **schools are not inclusive enough** and the lack of Italian knowledge is considered as a special need, a problem to be addressed isolating the pupil from the rest of the class, instead of consider diversity as an enrichment for the whole class, in didactic terms as well. Schools need **institutional funds** on the issue, which are lacking (except for schools considered "at risk": schools, CPIA and organizations managed to carry out their initiatives often using European Union's funds rather than National ones. It also has to be taken into consideration that currently migration, at political level, is considered as a "dangerous" topic and that policies change continuously, depending on parties and politicians. This report emphasizes also the importance of sharing good practices and **networking**: schools should act within the territory with the support of non-profit organizations, Municipalities, sport and cultural organizations, as students and families need to feel welcome, to have fun and to develop



peer to peer relations other than in school. The majority of best practices pointed out, indeed, are related to **community-based educational support**, which is proven to be the most effective and a role model.

In conclusion, migration is a continuously evolving phenomena, which needs studies and investigation in order to address people's needs in the best way. In Italy there is an active reality of municipalities, Regions, non-profit organizations, schools, and teachers which have developed extremely interesting and effective practices. However, those initiatives still lack coordination and a theoretical-political framework where they could be inscribed, leaving the stakeholders involved with a feeling of Institutional abandonment.



5. Literature

Laws, guidelines and official text:

Italian Constitution;

Guidelines for welcoming and integrating foreign students (MIUR, 2014);

“Testo Unico dell’Immigrazione” - TUI (Migration Paper);

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Websites:

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