

9. Youth and the World

Young people in Italy are involved in global issues in various ways, from volunteering activities to formal and informal education, while also being targets of specific youth policies, notably in the fields of sustainable development, the environment and ecological transition as well as public diplomacy at an international level.

In this context, since 2015, young people have been not only beneficiaries of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development but also active players of its implementation. The 2030 Agenda and its national implementations require the development and activation of youth policies and actions to ensure their full implementation. Most of the active policies and programs through which young people are involved in global issues at a national level are inscribed in the logic of environmental, social, and economic sustainability as promoted by the 2030 Agenda.

In Italy, young people are currently involved on three main global issues: the National Sustainable Development Strategy, which includes exchanges with policy makers at a global level, and climate change. In this context, the main actions and initiatives include the activation of a youth group within the Forum for Sustainable Development, promoted by the new Ministry for Ecological Transition, taking part in the revision process of the National Sustainable Development Strategy; the organization of the Y7 and Y20 summits by the Young Ambassadors Society, in the UK and Italy respectively, with Italian youth delegations; the organization of top-level events for young people and their inclusion in preparation of the United Nations Conventions on Climate Change Pre-COP26 (Milan 2021) and COP26 (Glasgow 2021).

1. Youth Policy Governance

In Italy, youth policies are developed at various levels. There are many national laws in favour of young people in different fields, such as education, employment, health, culture, etc. The organizational system is a multilevel governance, with it being a democratic form of government in which decisions arise from the collaboration of many actors that influence each other.

At the central level, the [Department for Youth Policies and the Universal Civic Service](#) of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers deals with the promotion and connection of the Government actions aimed at ensuring the implementation of youth policies, while also managing the [Universal civic service programme](#).

Youth policies are based on the principles of concurrent jurisdiction and subsidiarity. Therefore, the central Government, the Regions, and the Autonomous Provinces concur in drafting youth legislation, while local authorities, the Third Sector and youth organizations are actively involved in both its bottom-up design and implementation.

The “Unified Conference” (Conferenza Unificata), that includes the National Government, the Regions, the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, the [National Association of the Italian Municipalities](#) (Associazione Nazionale dei Comuni Italiani - ANCI) and the [Union of the Italian Provinces](#) (Unione delle Province d'Italia - UPI), allows for a dialogue on youth among the different policy making actors.

2. Voluntary Activities

At a national level, volunteering is a widespread phenomenon with a long tradition. The national legal system recognizes the social value and function of volunteering as an expression of participation, solidarity and pluralism.

The provisions of the Third Title of the Third Sector Code (l.d. 117/17) also apply to youth volunteering. The article of the code on the promotion of the culture of volunteering invites public administrations, within the limits of available resources, to support volunteering among young people, also through specific initiatives to be carried out on the premises of schools and universities, and with the involvement of organizations volunteers and other entities of the Third Sector.

On a national level, one of the main tools for promoting youth volunteering is the Universal Civic Service - Institute of the Republic regulated by a specific law (Legislative Decree 6 March 2017, n.40) which was established as an instrument of the unarmed and non-violent defence of Homeland - accessible to young people between the ages of 18 and 28, managed by the Department for Youth Policies and Universal Civic Service of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

3. Employment & Entrepreneurship

In Italy, the young people's transition to work is a priority, since the country has been facing high rates of youth unemployment and inactivity for a long time. Moreover, the ratio of NEETs (*Not in Education, Employment or Training*) is ??among the highest in Europe.

As a consequence of the aging population and low birth rate that also characterise Italy, along with the increase in the retirement age, the lengthening of educational pathways, as well as the difficulties of entering the labour market, the proportion of young people among the employed is decreasing. In contrast, the precariousness rate and instability of professional careers is growing.

On the other hand, the education attainment level increases among young people employed. Those who have at least graduated have higher employment rates, as well as lower unemployment and inactivity rates. A tertiary level qualification, however, rewards in terms of employment and salary less than the European average. The production system struggles to increase the demand for high-skilled workers, that is why young graduates often risk being over-educated.

Several measures have been taken by the Government and public authorities to promote youth employment: tax incentives and hiring subsidies for employers taking on young people; work-based learning programs and measures to facilitate job placement (skills certification systems, continuous vocational training, school-work experience, internships, apprenticeships); self-employment. The main pillar of youth employment policies is represented by the Youth Guarantee program, managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies through the National Operational Program (PON): Youth Employment Initiative. Some other significant measures aimed at sustaining employment and, in particular, entrepreneurship, are not specifically *targeted* at young people, since there is no age limit, even though young people are often among the main recipients.

4. Social Inclusion

Poverty and social exclusion are complex phenomena, which depend on many factors. They are linked to the lack of income, but also to access to opportunities and participation in the economic and social life of the country, to the system of relations in which individuals are embedded and to the set of constraints and opportunities - economic, social and cultural - present in the context of their life. Therefore, **national policies for social inclusion** are characterised by a wide range of different initiatives, interventions and tools.

In Italy, anti-poverty and social exclusion interventions are promoted and carried out by different **institutional actors at the national, regional and local levels**. In addition, the **third sector** supports public institutions in the implementation of social policies and acts as a local mediator.

Social inclusion policies specifically targeting **young people** aim to reduce school drop-out, improve access to the labour market and reduce social inequalities, seeking to improve the living conditions of individuals and families who are below the absolute poverty line.

Italy, in allocating the resources of the **National Social Policy Fund (FNPS)**, has approved the National Social [Plan 2018 - 2020](#) in which it is expected that at least 40% of the share of the FNPS transferred to the Regions will be used for interventions in favour of childhood and adolescence. In particular, for the implementation of the guidelines on family custody, the reception in residential structures and for interventions targeting families in vulnerable conditions.

Italy has also approved a **national strategy to fight poverty and social exclusion**, which includes, among the main interventions, the establishment of the **Citizenship Income (Reddito di Cittadinanza)** through decree-law No. 4 of 28 January 2019, converted with law 26 of 28 March 2019, namely income support conditioned on the commitment to follow a personalized path aimed at social inclusion and employment. Italian citizens, including young adults and families in poverty can apply for it starting from 6 March 2019 (par.4.4).

The **Social Protection and Inclusion Network** is the national coordinating body for social interventions and social services. Chaired by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy and made up of representatives from different levels of government, the Network is a permanent structure for comparing and programming social policies, as well as a space of involvement of the third sector and other stakeholders in policy decisions. The Network is divided into technical committees (including the Committee on Fighting Poverty) and is responsible for the development of three national **plans**:

- the **National Social Plan**, in reference to the National Fund for Social Policy;

- the **Poverty Assistance and Social Services Plan**, in reference to the Poverty Fund;
- the **Non-self-sufficiency plan**, in reference to the Non-Self-Reliance Fund.

The Poverty Action and Social Services [Plan 2018-2020](#) is also an integral part of the poverty strategy.

The inclusion objectives are then met by the National Youth Policy Fund, as well as resources from the **Youth Employment Initiative** and the **Youth Guarantee programme** (Chapter 1and 3).

5. Participation

The aim of the [EU Youth Strategy 2021-2027](#) is to encourage "the participation of young people in democratic life", coupled with the desire to support their "social and civic commitment" and to "ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society."

Starting from this general objective, the [EU Youth Strategy 2021-2027](#) identifies **participation** as one of the guiding principles that "should be applied in all policies and activities concerning young people". The following is emphasized: "Recognizing that all young people are an asset to society, all policies and activities concerning young people should defend their right to participate in the design, implementation and follow-up of policies that affect them through a meaningful participation of young people and youth organizations. In this context, policies should be developed taking into account the changes caused by digital communication, which affect democratic and civic participation".

It is therefore important to remember that the current German - Portuguese – Slovenian trio of Presidencies (1 July 2020-31 December 2021) has placed [Youth Goal No. 9 "Space and Participation for all"](#) at the centre of its action. to strengthen democratic participation, autonomy and to provide spaces dedicated to young people in all sectors of society.

In this chapter, the term "participation" refers to a broadly defined concept: in addition to the political participation of young people in the formal structures of representative democracy (i.e. as an elector and/or candidate for public office), the term also refers to the civic commitment and participation in civil society in general.

6. Education and Training

The [Constitution of the Italian Republic](#) declares that school is open to all and that compulsory schooling is free of charge (Art. 34). The Italian education and training system is organised according to the principles of subsidiarity and autonomy of school institutions. The State has exclusive legislative competence for the 'general rules on education' and for determining the essential levels of services that must be guaranteed throughout the national territory. The State also defines the fundamental principles that the regions must respect when exercising their specific powers. The Regions have concurrent legislative powers in the field of education as well as exclusive legislative powers in the field of education and vocational training. State educational institutions have teaching, organisational and research, experimentation and development autonomy. Italian law stipulates that education is compulsory for at least 10 years, with reference to the age group between 6 and 16. The purpose of compulsory education is to obtain either an upper secondary school qualification or a professional qualification lasting at least three years by the age of 18.

In recent years, there has been a gradual transformation of the education and training system through, among other things, the launch of a number of institutional reform processes ([Law 53/2003](#); [Law 296/2006](#); [Law 107/2015](#)). In line with the treaties and EU indications, the Ministry of Education, in its regional and local branches and in its specific bodies, has been committed to promoting innovation processes in terms of technology (e.g. in the field of skills and digital schooling) as well as in terms of organisation and methodology, with a focus on the need to counter some of the criticalities that have historically characterised the Italian education and training system.

In terms of innovation, Italy has a national media literacy strategy contained in the National Digital School Plan ([Law 107/2015](#)). The Plan aims to create the conditions for all schools to access the information society, making the 'Right to the Internet' a reality and covering the whole chain of digital access in schools, so as to enable digital teaching. It envisages enhancing the presence of digital tools in schools and their connectivity through three actions, respectively the deployment of ultra-wideband fibre to the door of each school, the internal wiring of all school spaces, and the school connectivity fee. From a methodological point of view, among the transformations currently underway, it is worth mentioning the teaching of schools of all levels in the direction, which accepts the model based on the competences recommended by the European Union, with attention to the value of the heterogeneity of the educational experiences as well as the challenges of growth of the young generations, called to actively insert themselves in a social and work context that is constantly evolving.

One of the issues that Italian education and training policies are focusing on is the fight against early school leaving. The drop-out rate from education and training has been steadily decreasing for a decade but remains well above the European average. The drop-out rate of young people born abroad is about three times higher than that of young people born in Italy.

Regional differences in drop-out rates are also particularly significant. The drop-out rate in the South and islands is significantly higher than in the North. In order to counter these criticalities, a number of programs have been launched to address the issue starting from local contexts (e.g. [National Operational Programme For Schools - Skills and Learning Environment 2014-2020](#)). Similarly, in recent years, the fight against early school leaving has also involved the adoption of non-formal or informal educational strategies which have been able to count on the contribution and planning of training, research and third sector organisations committed to this front (e.g. [Fondazione Con il Sud - Impresa sociale con i bambini](#)). Within the Italian school system, the value of non-formal learning has been recognised with the introduction of clearly defined training itineraries integrated into the curricular path aimed at promoting School-Work Experience (ASL). The 2019 Budget Law provided for the renaming of the Alternanza Scuola-Lavoro routes under [Legislative Decree 77/2005](#) to Percorsi per le competenze trasversali e per l'orientamento (PTCO) and, starting from the 2018/2019 school year, they are implemented for a total duration redetermined according to the order of studies (Licei, Technical and Professional Institutes).

It is worth noting that Italian legislation has incorporated the perspective of lifelong learning ([Law 92/2012](#)), understood as a set of activities undertaken by people in a formal, non-formal and informal manner, at various stages of their lives, in order to improve their knowledge, skills and competences, in a personal, civic, social and occupational perspective. The concrete outcome of this process has been the recognition of the educational value of non-formal and informal learning proposals within the school system as well as outside school. Outside the school system and in collaboration with it, cultural and youth associations, foundations, NGOs and some training centres and volunteer networks have launched itineraries to promote the raising of young people's skills in the context of increasing study and work mobility, including and above all international mobility.

In 2013, the general rules for the operation of the National Skills Certification System were defined ([Legislative Decree 13/2013](#)). The System aims to bring out and improve the professional skills acquired not only at work but also in free time, so as to promote geographical and professional mobility, facilitate the matching of supply and demand in the labour market, increase the transparency of learning and the expendability of certifications at both national and European levels. In 2018, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was established as a tool for describing and classifying qualifications awarded under the National Skills Certification System. The NQF represents the national device for the referencing of Italian qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework, with the function of linking the Italian qualifications system with the systems of other European countries.

7. Health and Well-Being

This chapter describes the way in which the issue of health and well-being of young people in Italy is addressed, as well as the interventions and measures implemented in the national territory.

The Italian health system is a concurrent matter between the State and the Regions. However, numerous other public and private bodies are responsible for providing services aimed at the psycho-physical well-being of young people, in compliance with the idea that health promotion and protection must be configured as an interactive process between government institutions and civil society. The factors that negatively affect the health of young people are generally inherent in a particularly widespread lifestyle that includes malnutrition (often in excess), sedentary lifestyle, cigarette smoking, alcohol abuse and substance consumption. These are determinants that hinder the achievement of health to be understood, consistently with the WHO definition, as “a dynamic state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not mere absence of disease”

It is precisely on these factors that, through synergistic action and the transversal involvement of stakeholders, Italy is taking action, with projects and interventions that promote healthy lifestyles among young people, with a view to prevention and health education.

8. Creativity and Culture

This chapter describes the actions through which Italy promotes creativity and culture in the youth context, with interventions aimed at: creating tools and incentives; reduce obstacles in the access of cultural and creative processes; encourage the acquisition of skills; valorise talents; promote the development of entrepreneurial skills; improve social inclusion. All after promoting the use of new technologies.

Policies and actions dedicated to youth creativity and culture are planned by bodies operating at different levels. These interventions are integrated into regulations that refer to the following: youth policies, education and research, training and employment.

The use of digital and innovative channels has become more and more effective, launching specific initiatives that facilitate access to culture through new media.

At the national level, the main bodies responsible for promoting creativity and culture for young people are: the Department for Youth Policies and the Universal Civil Service, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of University and Research, the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism.