

REPORT

Protocols for action to combat school attendance problems in Italy

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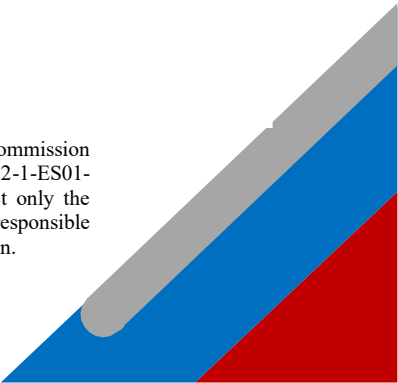


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1. Impact of School Attendance Problems

Attendance at school is generally considered a prerequisite for academic, social and emotional development. However, school absenteeism is a problem in many countries and can take many forms and causes (Havik & Ingul, 2021). Early School Leaving (ESL) is a very common and well-known indicator for measuring school attendance problems (SAPs). ESL is based on the percentage of students, aged 18 to 24, who have completed compulsory education but have not enrolled in post-secondary education. In Italy, this corresponds to young people who have at best completed lower secondary school and are not attending – or have stopped attending – upper secondary school. In Italy, the Statistical Service of the Ministry of Education (ISTAT) monitors ESL every year. According to the most recent survey (ISTAT, 2021b), the overall ESL rate for lower secondary education was 0.64% (10,938 students) and for upper secondary education 3.79% (98,787 students). Therefore, including those lost in the transition from the first to the second cycle, about 110,000 students leave Italian schools every year (**Figure 1**). The data also show that ESL mainly affects males, with more pronounced differences in the southern and island regions of Italy. This is due to the existence of child labour in Italy, which mainly affects boys (14-15 years old) in the southern regions (**Figure 2**). In the southern regions of Italy, the phenomenon of early school leaving is more pronounced; one in five young people in the south left school prematurely (21.1%), compared with one in ten in the center and north (9.5% and 12.5% respectively). Sicily is the region with the highest ESL rate in Italy for lower secondary students, while for upper secondary students the ESL rates is over 5% in Sardinia and between 4% and 5% in Sicily and Campania.



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An interesting fact concerns foreign students. Indeed, foreign students leave school (lower and upper secondary school) at three times the rate of Italian students. Foreign-born students have more difficulties, accounting for 4.1% of the total, compared to 1.8% for Italian-born students. These data thus underline that second-generation students appear to have fewer difficulties, as they are generally fluent in Italian and were born immersed in Italian culture (ISTAT, 2021a). Further differences emerge at the upper secondary levels, where ESL rates vary according to the course of study. The lowest ESL rate is in high schools (1.8%), followed by technical schools (4.3%) and vocational schools (7.7%). There are no significant difference in the incidence of ESL according to the degree of urbanization of the territory (large cities/small towns and suburbs/rural areas), with the exception of the regions of southern Italy, where the incidence of ESL is significantly higher in large cities.



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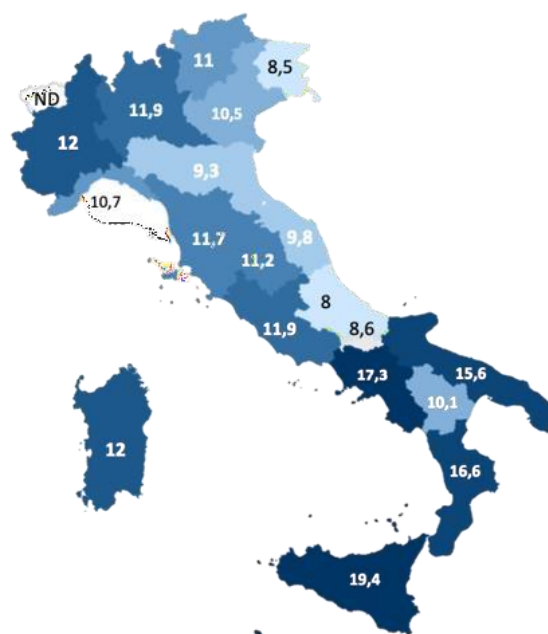


Figure 1. Percentage of students, aged 18 to 24, who early leaving school in Italy.



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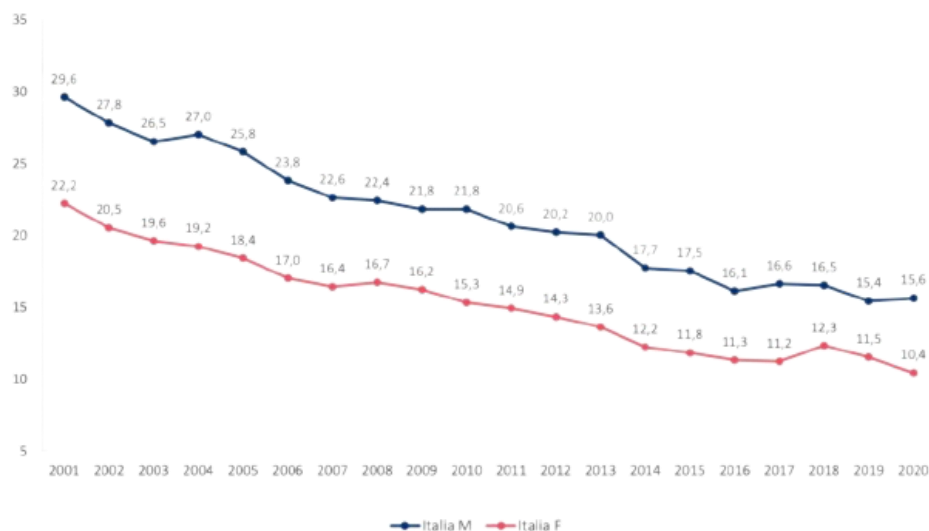


Figure 2. Italian share of early leavers (18-24 years) divided by males and females.

ESL is thus a complex and articulated phenomenon that appears to be caused by a number of factors, including the person's socio-economic situation, family educational background, labour market pulls factors, relationship with school and the educational programmes offered, and individual and character traits. Although Italy has made significant progress in terms of ESL since 2010, the ESL rate is one of the highest in Europe (ISTAT, 2010). In 2020, Italy will rank fourth to last in term of ESL rate (13.1%; about 543,000 students), well above the rates of other European countries (9.9%) (ISTAT, 2020).



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2. Framework and Scholar Absenteeism in Italy

Beyond its numerical representation, ESL is a complex phenomenon affecting young students aged 15 -29, known as NEETs (Not in education, employment, or training) who are neither working nor in attending education or training. Italy's NEET rates are among the highest in the EU (ISTAT, 2021b). For these reasons, responses to the phenomenon cannot be unidirectional, but must be multiple and multidimensional, involving educational, social, labour, and health policies.

In accordance with Law no.112 of 2011 (European Commission, 2011) and with the EU Convention on the Rights of the Child and Adolescent (UNICEF, 1989), the Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP, 2021), in the part of Mission 5 "Inclusion and Cohesion", foresees an investment in "special interventions for territorial cohesion" to combat educational poverty by strengthening of socio-educational services and funding third sector initiatives, with particular reference to social services for the 0-6 age group and those combating ESL, and improving educational provision for the 5-10 and 11-17 age groups (ISTAT, 2020). On the basis of the document edited by the Commission established by decree of the Children and Adolescents Authority in collaboration with the Office of the Inspectorate (AGIA, 2022b), Italy intends to bring the phenomenon of ESL to the attention of political and institutional actors, sectoral stakeholders and the entire educational community, as well as to promote reflection on possible preventive measures and to identify good practices, both from the territory and from the school itself.

In addition, the Supervisory Authority for Children and Adolescents (AGIA, 2022a), in accordance with Art. 3 paragraph 1 letter g of the Self-Regulation Code, has decided to promote the prevention of ESL. 3 paragraph 1 letter g of the Founding Act of 12 July



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2011, No.112, has “The task of reporting to the Government, the Regions and the Local Authorities all the initiatives aimed at promoting and protecting children’s rights, with particular reference to the right to education and teaching”. These interventions to prevent ESL and promote school attendance are based on the idea that “education is a fundamental, universal, inalienable and indivisible human right”. The right to education is defined as such in several international treaties and conventions (European Commission, 2019, 2021a, 2021b), in particular in the Constitution of the Italian Republic (1984) and in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 28 and 29 (UNICEF, 1989). The Constitution of the Italian Republic (1984) states: “The Republic must remove economic and social obstacle which, by effectively limiting the freedom and equality of citizens, prevent the full development of the human person” (Art.3); “It is the duty and right of parents to maintain and educate their children” (Art.30); “Schooling shall be open to all” (Art. 34). Some of the national policies in the educational, social, and health fields are:

- The National Plan of Actions and Interventions for the Protection of the Rights and Development of Persons of Developmental Age 2022-2023, approved by Presidential Decree on 25 January 2022 and published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Italy on 13 April 2022;
- The National Plan of Social Interventions and Services 2021-2023, which regulates the financing of the National Fund for Social Policies and plans and finances the Essential Levels of Social Services (LEPS), including some that specifically concern children and families;



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- The National Poverty Plan, an integral part of the National Plan of Interventions and Social Services, regulates the policy of the Citizen's Income, with a very important part concerning "the instruments and financing of social services for the construction of Pacts of Inclusion" (PaIS) with families in situations of greater vulnerability (e.g., economic vulnerability and with minor children between 0 and 3 years of age).
- The aim of these pacts is not only to provide these families with economic support, but also strengthen their ability to build a new life project through self-determination, to take charge of educational poverty and its consequences. Accompaniment is a right that the State must make practical. Article 33 of the 2022 Budget Law (Law No. 234 of 30 December 2021) allocates significant resources to the Educational Poverty Fund for the years 2022-2023.
- The Italian Plan for Recovery and Resilience (PNRRP, 2021) devotes several actions to children, people and families. The actions concern the construction of kindergartens and school cafeterias, the strengthening of the school (e.g., reform of school orientation) and the university system, and the targeting of families in a situation of educational vulnerability and poverty, through the Prevention of Institutionalization Intervention (P.I.P.P.I). The methodology on which P.I.P.P.I is based has been used in Italy for more than a decade and is effective in preventing and combating educational and social poverty.



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In addition, a great deal of attention is paid to implicit dispersion in Italy (INVALSI, 2019). These are students who attend school but do so poorly or irregularly. Although these young people are not included in the mainstream statistics on explicit ESL, Italy includes them among the "missing" students. These are students who, even if they succeed in obtaining a diploma, face adult life without possessing the minimum skills needed to exercise active citizenship, continue their studies or start a career (Ricci, 2019).

As these students are not classified as ESL, they are very unlikely to benefit from support measures to improve their skills. Indeed, in 2019, the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training System tried to measure the number of students who leave school without having acquired basic skills. According to this Institute, it is estimated that the overall ESL rate (implicit and explicit), exceeds 20% nationally and that 14.4% of students leave the eighth grade with insufficient skills in mathematics, Italian, and English (Ricci, 2019).

3. Method of research, revision and analysis of protocols for action to combat school attendance problems in Italy

In Italy, the fight against ESL has for years been the focus of numerous experiences by a wide range of actors, with different proposal, different geographical horizons, and different methods of intervention. The various action protocols and information on ESL in Italy are regularly published on the website of the Ministry of Education and Research (MIUR). The various action protocols reviewed have been refereed to as examples of good practice in the document produced by the Childhood and Adolescence Authority (AGIA, 2022b) or have been uploaded to the MIUR website. In addition, the action



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protocol called “#resto a scuola” is being implemented in the city of Messina by the I.S. “Bisazza”, coordinated by Professor Pina Fillippello (I.S. Bisazza, 2023). These documents have allowed us not only to collect data on the current problem of school absenteeism in Italy, but also to identify some proposals and protocols for intervention, considered as examples of good practice by the Italian Minister for ESL (AGIA, 2022b; Direzione Istruzione e Formazione Italiana, Servizio Inclusione Intendenza Scolastica Italiana, Ufficio orientamento e Progettualità Scolastica, 2019; Manassero et al., 2018; Miletto, Avetta & Comba, 2019; MIUR, 2014; MIUR, 2018b; MLPS, 2022).

In Italy we are not at year zero in the fight against school dispersion, but rather many indications and proposals, already collected and disseminated in previous years, have not yet found a frame of reference, a direction, a common definition of governance, or systematic responses. Many experiences and reflections have not been fully taken into account, but already point to possible solutions. For this reason, in 2022, the Authority Guarantor for Childhood and Adolescence (AGIA), promoted the realization of a well-known survey on the phenomenon of ESL in Italy. The aim of this work is twofold: on the one hand, to take stock of the Italian situation and the institutional initiatives proposed so far; on the other hand, to make proposals and suggestions, through a series of recommendations, both from the territory and from the educational institution, in order to reduce ESL.

4. Characteristics of the protocols of action

4.1. Nomenclature and terms used

The various documents presented in Italy on school attendance problems refer to them under the term school dispersion (*dispersione scolastica*). School dispersion has been



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defined as the missed, incomplete, or irregular use of education and training services by young people of school age; it can occur at different stages of the school career and can consist of abandonment, early exit from the education system, absenteeism, passive attendance or the accumulation of gaps and delays that can compromise the student's academic success (D'Arcangelo & Giuliani, 2022; MIUR, 2019). While in some action protocols the term school dispersion is used in an indistinct sense, in others on a non-specific meaning, referring to manifestations of irregularities in the course of study (e.g., prolonged absences, interruption of attendance in a course before its completion, poor performance, non-admission to exams and failures) that may prolong its duration and/or prevent its completion (Morgagni 1998).

In a narrower sense, however, some action protocols understand early school leaving as the definitive and premature abandonment of compulsory education and training. In this way, the concept of early school leaving coincides with the concept of school abandonment. In order to avoid these terminological differences, other action protocols prefer to use the term early school leaving, as an indicator of school dispersion. This indicator is based on the percentage of 18-24year old who have completed, at most, compulsory education but are not in higher education (AGIA, 2022). In Italy, these are those students who have completed, at most, lower secondary school and who are not attending – or have stopped attending – upper secondary school. The approach used by the MIUR to study school dispersion is based on the quantification of the abandonment that occur both during the school year during the transition between school cycles (MIUR, INDIRE, 2014). According to the Ministry's Information and Statistical Assets Management Office (ISTAT, 2021b), the following categories are included in school dispersion:



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- Students attending lower secondary school and who interrupt their attendance without good reason before the end of the school year, in any year of the course (abandonment during the year - lower secondary school);
- Students who have attended the whole of the 1st or 2nd year of lower secondary school and who do not progress to the 2nd or 3rd year, or to the 1st or 2nd year as repeaters, or to the upper secondary school on the basis of merit (abandonment between one year and the next - lower secondary school);
- Students who have fully completed the 3rd year of the lower secondary education, have passed the final exam of the first cycle and do not pass the next cycle of upper secondary education in order, are repeaters, do not enroll in vocational education and training courses (IeFP), nor in first level courses (CPIA), nor in second level courses in second level educational institutions (abandonment during the transition between cycles);
- Students attending secondary education and who interrupt their attendance without good reason before the end of the school year, in any year of the course (abandonment during the year - secondary education);
- Students who have attended the entire school year (1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th year of the secondary school education) and who do not pass in the following year or the 2nd, 3rd, 4th or 5th year in good standing, in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th year as repeaters, they enroll in IeFP courses, in first level courses at the CPIA or in second level education courses at second level educational institutions (abandonment between one year and the next - upper secondary education).



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Official data, at the national level, come from three main sources: the Ministry of Education, INVALSI, and ISTAT. In line with the data from these sources and the action protocols reviewed, in Italy the terms used to refer to problems related to absenteeism are school absenteeism, school dispersion, abandonment during the year, abandonment in the transition between cycles, and abandonment from one year to the next (Morgagni, 1998; Salatin, 2022; Santagati, 2015). The classification, which distinguishes the phenomenon of school dispersion in 5 different categories, is quite recent in Italy. With its introduction in 2013, it has become a reliable tool that can enrich the study of school dispersion. With the introduction of this new classification, not only absenteeism during the school year is taken into account, but also that which occurs between years, both within the same school system and during the transition between school cycles (MIUR, 2019; MLPS, 2022).

4. 2. Objectives of the action protocols

Promote a model of prevention and intervention to contrast educational poverty and ESL is the objective on which most action protocols are based (INDIRE, 2016; Pandolfi, 2016; Regione Piemonte, 2019). In particular, MIUR (2018b) underlines the importance of promoting structural measures capable of (a) modifying contexts and promoting early prevention, (b) sustained, targeted and multiple promotional and reparative actions, elaborated not only on the needs of the different schools, but also on the needs of the context and the students. There are several action protocols that have been born since 2013 until today, and on the basis of which, in 2022, the Authority for Childhood and Adolescence (AGIA) promoted a survey on the phenomenon of ESL and the good intervention practices to address the problem. The objectives of the investigation are: (a) identify participatory processes, tools, and good practices aimed at preventing ESL; (b) suggest a replicable action plan; (c) formulate recommendations for the Government, relevant institutions, local authorities, and civil society.



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The reports produced by AGIA (2022b) and MIUR (2018a, 2018b, 2019) on ESL have allowed us to identify and review the protocols currently used to combat ESL. From this analysis it was possible to improve established good practices, to identify critical points in the protocols, to delve into the social and extracurricular causes of the phenomenon in the Italian context. This analysis has made it possible to improve existing good practices, to identify critical issues in the protocols, to examine the social and extra-curricular causes of the phenomenon in the Italian context, to identify examples of effective ways and tools in cases of school dispersion and to propose ways of improving the quality of students who stay in school, to identify and propose ways of changing the school from the point of view of teaching methodology and the school environment, and to identify practices that promote participatory processes centered on the active role of students in guiding decisions related to daily school life, which act as a deterrent to the ESL phenomenon.

4. 3. Design and characteristics of the protocols for action

The action protocols examined were structured according to the perspective of Bronfenbrenner's (2010) bio-ecological theory of human development, in which human development is seen as the result of a dynamic and gradually more complex interaction between the network of interacting systems that make up the environment or ecosystem in which the child grows up. Therefore, in order to identify the causes of early school leaving and, in particular, the opposite phenomenon, school success, it is appropriate to refer simultaneously to the complex environmental systems in which children grow up. Given the complex and multifactorial nature of school absenteeism, it is essential that intervention and prevention programmes take into account not only the individual variable but also the relationships between the family, the classroom, the educational system, and school policies. This set of relationships should therefore be used as a lens



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for interventions to prevent and/or combat school dispersion. We can briefly summarize the objectives of the 17 action protocols presented in 4 salient and fundamental points: (1) Promoting the full participation of parents in educational and training institutions; (2) Strengthening guidance from the first cycle of education, promoting student protagonism in the decision-making process; (3) Strengthening secondary prevention measures to reduce and combat school absenteeism and dispersion, at the structural, pedagogical-didactic and organizational levels; (4) Establishing priority educational areas in areas of the country at greater risk of social exclusion. Integrating the different activities and methodologies applied in the 17 action protocols covered, we can summarize some of the activities to be pursued for each of the 4 objectives mentioned above. To achieve the first objective, activities have been proposed to structure formal and informal relationship practices with parents in schools so that parents can participate in their children's school experience. Specifically, the following were proposed: a) personalized interviews between teachers and parents (to be held before the start of the school year, in the middle and at the end of the year), in which the children/adolescents will also participate; b) participatory class assemblies to encourage parent-teacher exchanges and the creation of social networks between families; c) groups of teachers and parents to develop coeducational practices; d) periodic social group meetings (parties, outings, theater performances, etc.) and familiarization meetings to enable parents to get to know their children's school experience (through the experience of "open classes"). We also identified several interventions that were common to the different protocols: informational interviews for parents, during which information material was distributed and information about coeducational approach was provided; co-construction of personalized educational pacts of co-responsibility with each family; construction of a personalized intervention project with each family in a vulnerable situation, involving the intervention of a multidisciplinary team; specific training, for educators, teachers and all staff, on communication with parents and early intervention with children and families in



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a vulnerable situation.

To achieve the second objectives, activities are aimed at ensecuring educational continuity between the various cycles and levels of education, from kindergarten to the last year of secondary school, with particular attention to the initial classes - in terms of reception - and at the end of each cycle. In addition, the action protocols addressed to students in the final year of the upper secondary education are focused on supporting the transition from school to the world of work. Therefore, school orientation tutoring activities and Job Orientation, are essential tools to reduce ESL at different levels of education.

In order to achieve the third objective, the activities are aimed at investing in the renewal of teaching and educational methods, and at promoting informal learning and community environments in schools and local authorities in the area. Moreover, many protocols highlighted the importance of school psychology services for children and adolescents in schools at all levels, the presence of cultural mediators in schools to promote the acceptance and integration of foreign minors, and the increase in the number of full-time schools and/or the possibility of extending the opening hours of schools at all levels of education.

In order to achieve the fourth objective, the importance of identifying functional indicators was highlighted to map the areas at greatest risk of social abandonment and thus be able to define the areas and micro-areas of intervention. At the same time, the importance of implementing structural and coordinated interventions to create increasingly excellent educational infrastructures and to systematically monitor the processes and results of interventions in terms of results and outcomes has emerged.

In order to achieve these objectives, a series of necessary and mostly common steps were identified for all the protocols studied.



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Phase 1: Preliminary analysis and necessary actions to better prepare the public tenders, such as identification (schools signalled students and collected adherents, in addition, for each adherent subject a series of information on academic performance, material/emotional/educational deprivation and socio-demographic data was provided) and baseline analysis (adherent students completed both standardised and ad hoc baseline questionnaires designed for the different projects);

Phase 2: start-up phase (randomization of groups or pairing to allow comparison between control and intervention groups; followed by monitoring tests and integrity of randomization) and implementation of the selected projects (based on the specific needs identified).

Phase 3: Monitoring and reviewing the level of implementation of the projects to identify the most effective ones to be promoted and replicated.

Phase 4: Follow-up and collection of satisfaction data (which only took place for a few projects; e.g., Educational Archipelago).

With regard to monitoring, evaluation, and proposals for improvement, protocols using funds allocated to the operation of schools (Law No. 440/1997) or MIUR budgetary resources are required to submit detailed and specific reports on the results achieved. In fact, for central government initiatives (PON), as required by law, an analytical monitoring system is provided and developed within school information systems. Therefore, there are no particular critical issues in obtaining detailed information on the effectiveness and criticality of the various interventions implemented by the Ministry to combat early school leaving. Conversely, for some action protocols that are not directly linked to ministerial funds, it is not possible to access complete and detailed reports, but only partial data on the objectives achieved.



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5. Limitation and future proposal

Therefore, the documents proposed by AGIA (2022b), MIUR (2018a), MLPS (2018, 2019, 2021) and INVALSI (2022) have identified several fundamental objectives for the implementation of actions to prevent ESL in Italy. The 17-action protocol provides a series of useful indications and recommendations to detect, prevent, and reduce ESL among students at different school levels (from the first year of primary school to the end of secondary school). Based in the action protocols implemented so far in the Italian context, it is possible to draw an overview of the main elements of reflection and proposal that have emerged. First of all, the different experiences presented have highlighted the need for actions that focus not only on the child, the student, and the school, but also on the territory and the different actors involved in it. Acting on the phenomenon of school dispersion means acting above all on the contexts and, therefore, also outside the school. Indeed, interventions targeting the territorial context and families are necessary, including through concrete supports (D’Arcangelo & Giuliani, 2022; Istituto comprensivo “I.Silone” Montesilvano, 2016). With regard to the teaching staff, interventions should be aimed at didactic and teaching methodologies, as well as at combating school absenteeism through research-action activities and the construction of common tools and practices. As for to the students, in addition to interventions focused on the educational-didactic sphere, it is useful to implement interventions aimed at strengthening basic and supportive skills, with the contribution of psychologists, educators, and teachers. These interventions should be targeted not only at students who manifest poor school attendance, repetition, demotivation and low school performance, but also at younger students, from a preventive perspective (INDIRE, 2016; Manassero et al., 2018; Miletto et al., 2019; MLPS 2021; Patto Educativo di Comunità del distretto sud-Est della provincial di Ferrara, 2017; Pandolfi, 2016; Regione Piemonte, 2019).



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However, despite the are many efforts to combat the phenomenon of early school leaving, and despite the great efforts made by AGIA in 2022 to identify objectives, practices, and recommendations to reduce this problem, there is still no standard action plan to combat early school leaving in Italy. The lack of a standard action protocol is probably due to the complexity, multifactorial nature, and heterogeneity of the phenomenon, which often takes different forms and nuances not only from region to region but also from district to district (MLPS, 2022; Santagati, 2015). However, some firm points regarding methodology and tools, which are repeatable and achievable, can guide the construction of new and more comprehensive action protocols. Firstly, it is essential to implement both preventive and compensatory measures aimed not only at early action based on common risk indicators, but also, where prevention has not been possible, at recovering those who have left the school system. School orientation interventions, on the other hand, are aimed at reducing school dispersion during the transition from one study cycle to another, both in the form of student accompaniment with family involvement and educational orientation. In all the protocols examined, the centrality and importance of the student is always highlighted, giving space to his or her motivations, expectations, potential, attitudes and choices (AGIA, 2022; Pandolfi, 2016; Salatin, 2022). This means not only improving basic skills, but also transversal and social skills, making space not only for cognitive skills, but also for socio-emotional, behavioral and relational skills, and thus for both formal and informal learning. The role of the social context and the local area, in combating ESL, is highlighted by the establishment of educational facilities (e.g., educational garrisons) in the most at-risk areas, in order to create physical places where children can grow both educationally and personally, and to provide the family with services and support (AGIA, 2022).



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Just as the school alone cannot combat ESL, the territory and the social context also cannot do without school. For this reason, the various action protocols emphasize the importance of creating alliances between school and territory. In any case, the effectiveness of the interventions requires the integration of different skills and professionalism, with particular attention to the collaboration between schools (teachers and educators), cultural mediators, and social workers; in addition, the management of activities by multidisciplinary teams (psychologists, educators, teachers, and pedagogues) is essential. Another limitation is the lack of access to some evaluation reports of the protocols. These reports are essential for assessing the effectiveness of action plans in quantitative and qualitative terms. However, in many action protocols it is not possible to analyze the results and evaluate any negative or positive effects. In addition, in some protocols do not have an evaluation section that allows for pre-post or follow-up comparisons. A problem also highlighted by many protocols in their reports concerns a more methodological aspect related to the difficulty of carrying out experimental type designs, but having to limit themselves to quasi-experimental type designs. In order to avoid the difficulties of conducting a randomized controlled trial, many projects (especially those conducted by Save the Children) preferred to opt for quasi-experimental designs, which allowed them to obtain the most credible estimates of the impact of the proposed interventions. Specifically, a quasi-experimental impact estimation model called difference-in-differences was used. This predicts that if there had been no intervention, the outcome of the treated group would have followed the same trajectory over time as that of the control group. This was possible because the different schools and institutions involved in the different projects had information on the indicators of interest (socio-demographic and background) that allowed each individual in the treatment group to be compared with his or her "clone" in the control group (propensity score matching), who differed only in whether or not they had participated in the activities proposed by the project.



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6. Funds allocated to early school leaving

TITLE: *“Piano contro la dispersione scolastica e per il superamento dei divari territoriali”* provided by the Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)

BUDGET: 1.5 billion

PERIOD: 2022- 2026

OBJECTIVE: The first 500 million will be used to fund projects in 3,198 schools with male and female students between the aged of 12 and 18. These are resources allocated directly to educational institutions, based on precise indicators related to dispersion and the socio-economic background. This first step will be followed by two more tranches of funding, the first dedicated to promoting the acquisition of a diploma for young people, including those aged 18-24, who dropped out of school early, while the second will activate projects for strengthening basic skills to overcome territorial differences and also some national projects in the most peripheral areas of the cities and of the country. More than 50% of the funds are earmarked for southern Italy. The "#restoascuola" project, coordinated by Professor Pina Filippello at the Bisazza High School in Messina, was financed with these funds.

LINK: <https://www.miur.gov.it/-/pnrr-1-5-miliardi-per-il-piano-contro-la-dispersione-scolastica-il-ministro-bianchi-ha-firmato-il-decreto-con-i-primi-500-milioni-per-interventi-sulla>

<https://pnrr.istruzione.it/news/disponibile-il-riparto-delle-risorse-per-le-azioni-di-contrasto-della-dispersione-scolastica/>



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TITLE: “*Agenda Sud: actions to combat early school leaving*” provided by the Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)

BUDGET: 2.5 billion for schools in the South

PERIOD: 2023- 2025

OBJECTIVE: Agenda Sud intervention are aimed at overcoming the territorial gap between northern and southern Italy, ensuring equal educational opportunities for students throughout the country. The goal is to counter early school leaving starting from elementary school, with targeted interventions on Southern institutions. The institutions involved are 50 elementary schools, 50 lower secondary schools, and 50 upper secondary schools, and were chosen by INVALSI on the basis of the data on ESL rates during the year, absenteeism, weakness in learning outcomes, and socio-economic context. The *Agenda Sud* is based on the principle of personalization of teaching, to put students' needs at the center, through orientation and tutoring activities extended to the first cycle as well and in line with the Guidelines for Orientation and Family Support Activities. Innovative and laboratory-based teaching will be promoted, with the introduction of new methodologies, schools open all day, activities even during the suspension of classes, more flexible schedules, and the strengthening of full-time and school canteens. The staffing of teachers in lower and upper secondary schools will be strengthened in the basic subjects: Italian, mathematics, and English (on average 4 more teachers per school) and teachers who perform additional duties beyond school hours will be paid. Special educational with regional presidents and local entities, to take full advantage of the potential of the areas concerned.

Link: <https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/-/scuola-il-ministro-valditara-ha-presentato-l-agenda-sud-azioni-per-il-contrasto-della-dispersione-scolastica-valditara-strategia-per-collimare-i-ritardi>



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TITLE: Decree 65/23 resources for “Nuove competenze e nuovi linguaggi” provided by the Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)

BUDGET: 750 million

PERIOD: Ongoing

OBJECTIVE: Creation of educational, training, and orientation paths for students of all school cycles, aimed at the promotion and development of STEM, digital, and innovation skills, as well as language skills, with special attention to ensuring equal opportunities and gender equality. Resources can also be used for extra-curricular orientation activities on scientific subjects. Teacher training on multilingualism with the implementation of one-year language and methodological training courses aimed at strengthening teachers’ language skills and improving their teaching methodologies. 40% of the allocated resources will be reserved for schools in southern regions.

LINK: <https://www.miur.gov.it/-/decreto-ministeriale-n-65-del-12-aprile-2023>

TITLE: Ministerial Decree 63 of 5 April 2023 – “Tutor e docente orientatore nelle scuole superiori” provided by the Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP).

BUDGET: 150 million

PERIOD: 2023- 2025

OBJECTIVE: Reform that establishes tutor teachers and guidance teachers on an experimental basis (52,176 tutors and 4,252 guidance teachers) to start the virtuous path of personalizing teaching and guidance through support to students and families aimed at identifying and enhancing the talents of all young people, in order to make informed and thoughtful choice consistent with students’ potential, aiming to achieve the reduction of early school leaving and school failure.

LINK: <https://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/-/docenti-tutor-aderiscono-oltre-52-000-insegnanti-valditara-importante-risultato-la-scuola-protagonista-del-cambiamento->



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ANNEXES

Table 1.

The main characteristics of the protocols in Italy.

Name and date of the protocol	Authors	Objective/s	Target population	Terms and definitions	Personnel/ Professionals involved	Procedure	Materials	Assessment System
Oltre i Confini. Un modello di scuola aperta al Territorio 2016-ADN-00279	C.I.D.I. Milano. A project under the Child Educational Poverty Alleviation Fund.	(a) Upgrading of learning environments (b) Teacher training (c) Flexible learning strategies (d) Active involvement of students' families in the area of dispersion (e) Opening the school to the local area	A total of 7,000 Students aged 11 to 17 years: a) BES, DSA, and DVA; b) Minors of non-Italian citizenship; c) Repeat students; d) Students who attend school intermittently.	Preventing and combating school dispersion.	Teachers, educators, families and private and public agencies.	(a) Creation of multifunctional laboratory classrooms rather than traditional classrooms. (b) Provision of instructional planning tools focused on Units of Learning and the use of active methodologies; (c) Development and enhancement of basic and transversal skills (organized in 20- and 10-hours modules) aimed at small groups of students. (d) Personalized support for school leavers; (e) Development of educational principals.		Impact evaluation was carried out 2 years after the conclusion of the project by Milan universities. - Construction of 45 Educational Principals; - 550 remedial and reinforcement courses; - of the children involved in remedial activities, 95.75% of middle school students were promoted and 3.37% were rejected; - 80% of high school students were promote while 16, 67% were rejected.



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**Centro
d'Istruzione
dell'Adulto e
dell'Adolescen-
te CIA
Manzoni –
Comune di
Milano**

Municipality
of Milan –
Scholastic and
Educational
Services Area

To promote the return to education through remedial school-years courses aimed at obtaining a technical or vocational education diploma. The goal is to raise the educational level of the most easily excluded population.

Day courses:
adolescents
16-18 years
old;

Evening
courses:
young and
adults.

Contrasting
school
abandonment

Multidisciplinary
team: teachers,
educators, and
psychologists.

(a) Instructional approach aimed at achieving the minimum learning objectives;
(b) Transversal skills and orientation;
(c) Personalization of teaching;
(d) Small or very small work groups and individual or quasi-individual activities.
(e) Blended teaching pathway, integrated with face-to-face teaching, to facilitate the diverse needs of an extremely varied audience.

70% completed the school year.

75% of those who took the exam passed it.

This percentage for day courses reaches 80%, while for evening courses it is around 70%.

Impact assessment and an internal observatory

**Con I bambini
impresa sociale**

The nonprofit company was formed to implement the programs of Child Educational Poverty Fund.

Countering student educational poverty. Public action using private funds to test innovation in countering student educational poverty in areas of poverty will then hopefully need to be transformed into public policies.

0 - 17 years
old

Contrasting child
educational
poverty

Teachers, educators,
families, private and
public entities.

(a) Early childhood services;
(b) Actions to counter educational failure and educational poverty (juvenile distress and delinquency);
(c) Support for child victims of maltreatment and orphans of victims of femicide;
(d) Inclusion of unaccompanied foreign

Reports



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minors; (e) Construction of life projects adolescents who have committed crimes.

Provaci ancora Sam!

Fondazione per la scuola-Compagnia di San Paolo, in agreement with educational institutions and the Municipality of Turin, Ustr Piedmont.

- (a) Promote school success by experimenting with new teaching methodologies aimed at learning and inclusion.
- (b) Strengthen the synergy with extracurricular resources and stimulate interprofessionalism and integration between the work of teachers, educational workers in the school setting, volunteers, and educators to consolidate the "educational community"
- (c) Spread the PAS (*Play it again Sam*) approach.
- (d) Carry out specific orientation actions with the collaboration of vocational training agencies, artisans, and COSPs.

- (a) Classes IV and V of Elementary School;
- (b) Classes I, II and III of Middle School
- (c) Foreign minors

Preventing and combating school dispersion.

Vocational training agencies, teachers, educators, families, private and public agencies.

Primary prevention:

- (a) Educational and training activities carried out by educational workers, together with teachers and class groups, during school hours, in the 4th and 5th grades of the Elementary School and the 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades of the Middle School.
- (b) Activities, outside school hours, with local organizations.

Secondary prevention:

- (a) Process of Integration and Inclusion of unaccompanied foreign minors;
- (b) Integrated protection (second chance) takes place over 2 years. At first, support is offered to students between the age of 14 and 15 with a basic knowledge of the Italian language, multi-repeated and who have not obtained the middle school diploma.

Evaluation and monitoring activities showed the following results:

- (1) Reduction in explicit and implicit school dispersion;
- (2) Return to school of students who had not obtained the middle school license and attainment of the license itself. In some cases, continuation of studies;
- (3) Reduction of ESL in the years 2019-20 and 2020-21
- (4) Diffusion of interprofessional working methods among teachers and educators.



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(c) mainstreaming. The following year, the actions focus on students who have obtained the middle school diploma in the Integrated Tutela course and who need support to continue their studies.

Interventions at Provincial Centers for Adult Education (CPIA)

to student aged 16-18 years:

(a) structured and personalized intervention aimed at a pathway of citizenship and socialization and the attainment of a license and the possible continuation of studies through higher education or vocational training courses.

Arcipelago Educativo

Save the Children

(a) Reduce the ESL among children and adolescents in educational poverty; (b) reduce learning loss during summer breaks.

9 -14 years old

Contrasting educational poverty

Teachers, families, volunteers, tutors, educators, social workers, and local authorities.

(a) Development several "Educational Archipelagos". (b) Each *Educational Archipelagos*" includes workshop, play and meta-cognitive activities to strengthen learning motivation and basic skills. (c) Minors involved in face-to-face activities are also followed through

Workshop, games, exercise, videos, books, mobile applications, articles, music, video games, and podcast.

Games and activities are

(a) More than 950 children and adolescents were involved in the activities (b) 240 teachers were involved in educational monitoring (c) 900 parents received the messages (d) 640 members follow the webinar cycle.

The project was evaluated by an independent



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Fuoriclasse in Movimento

Save the children

Facilitating students' academic well-being to reduce ESL. Three objectives:
1. Encourage student participation.
2. Improve teachers' knowledge of participation-based instructional and teaching approaches;

Primary and lower secondary school students.

Preventing and contrasting school dispersion, abandonment of the course of study, early leaving from education and training.

Teachers, managers and educational community.

(a) Courses managed by teachers and student representatives, to identify solutions for improving school spaces, peers and adult relations, and collaboration with the local area.

(b) Pedagogical tutoring: training course for teachers aimed at

personalized online tutoring.

(d) Educational co-responsibility pacts are signed between teachers, families and associations involved in the implementation and monitoring of pathways with children and adolescents.

(e) A messaging service translated into various languages is active for parents, through which they can receive cue and ideas for educational activities to be carried together with their children.

to be carried out indoors and outdoors.

external body (FBK - Irvapp) through an experimental impact evaluation. The results show that project participants return to school in September with higher levels of learning than those who did not participate in the project.

The estimation of the effects of the project on the outcome-variables is based on a randomized controlled design. the evaluation has six phases: 1) Reporting of students by schools and collection of accessions; 2) Collection of baseline data; 3) Randomization; 4) Monitoring of randomization integrity; 5) Analysis of intervention implementation; 6) Survey of follow-up data

(a) 250 schools;
(b) Over 15,000 students, 5,000 teachers, 2,000 families;
(c) 500 school improvement change actions were promoted.

The evaluation revealed that: late admissions to classes have halved, with a



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3. Strengthened the exchange of best practices between teachers and school administrators on innovative teaching; Making the student a protagonist in the educational community.

promoting educational innovation, based on students' requests.
(c) Networks and communities: local tables, seminars, twinning, city and national exchanges between schools.

drastic decrease in chronic latecomers as well. Middle school students have reduced their year-over-year absences by as much as 6 days (-30%) partly due to a renewed interest of families in their children's academic performance. The increased regularity in attendance is also beginning to bear fruit in terms of school performance, which is improving by 5%.

The methodology used for the evaluation is based on a quasi-experimental design. By means of the matching procedure (propensity score matching), individuals were compared who were "identical" to each other in terms of observed characteristics and who differed only in terms of whether or not they participated in the project.

Volontari per
l'Educazione

Save the
children

Improved learning and
school participation of

9- 17 years old Contrast

Volunteers, teachers,
local services, regional

(a) Identification of
children most at risk;

An
appropriately
trained

Results:
Improvement in each
component of self-



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4,500 children and adolescents.

school offices, universities and tutors.

(b) Participation in activities that promote not only academic success but also self-efficacy (academic, emotional and social) and a sense of belonging.

volunteer accompanies an individual student or small group of students for individualized online support.

If the child does not have a device and connection, these will be provided by the project.

efficacy, in particular among student foreign.

Volunteers and tutors recognize personal growth.

Preparation of weekly reports by volunteers on their activities with minors.

Futuro prossimo

Save the children

Countering educational poverty and ESL through the testing of an integrated, replicable, and sustainable intervention model.

This intervention model is based on the synergistic involvement of all local actors and on making the students themselves protagonists of change.

11-17 years old

Tackling educational poverty and school dispersion.

Teachers, volunteers, mentors, and local actors.

(a) Development and implementation of Integrated educational interventions
(b) Implementation of quality educational activities chosen together with the adolescents.

Inclusive educational methodologies

The intervention is accompanied by constant technical-scientific and research-action support, to make the action replicable.

The project was monitored through the impact evaluation entrusted to two qualified entities, Ricerca Azione Onlus and Fondazione Agnelli.



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I CoroNauti

Maestri di
strada-
ONLUS

Initiatives on various social channels (Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, the blog, web radio), to combat isolation and discouragement through a social and educational contagion of proposals, initiatives, art, and solidarity.

11- 17 years old

Educators, psychologists, experts, social parents, organizational staff, families, teachers, and schools

(a) Tutoring
(b) Video challenges through the reading, storytelling and recording traditional stories.
(c) Photo contest "The world from here has no borders"
(d) Poetic challenge inspired by Giacomo Leopardi's "The infinite", asking students to look beyond the window hedge and search for signs of infinity.

(a) SoundCloud for music podcasts and narrated stories
(b) WordPress for "typed" content
(c) Youtube for videos
(d) "Pacco viveri per la mente"

Centro di
formazione
professionale
Mater Dei

Sister of the Order of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul and Campania Region.

To promote, in young people who for various reasons (personal or family difficulties) have not been able to complete a schooling path.

Students age 14-17 years characterized by the rejection of the school context and traditional teaching methodologies.

Countering school dispersion (young people who despite being enrolled in a state school for a variety of reasons do not complete their schooling).

Rapprochement to the educational pathway.

Teaching is accompanied by a wealth of laboratory activity, to enable young people to 'learn by doing' and to approach the world of work, including through the 400 hours of school/work alternation. In particular, the activities are focused on:
(a) Enhancing personal design, guiding student in their choices;
(b) Attention to the students-teachers relationship;
(c) Hours of socially useful work in the school



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Apprendere per crescere

Associations Network—Coop dedalus

The project aims to promote the processes of emancipation and social integration of foreign youth living in Naples.

Foreign minors and young

Teachers, mediators, and educators.

- (a) Italian language (L2) literacy course;
- (b) Enrollment and accompaniment to the junior high school exam;
- (c) Accompaniment to services and registration at the employment center
- (d) Cultural mediation;
- (e) Listening and job orientation.

Programma Frequenza 200

WEWORLD (ONLUS foundation)

Counter the phenomenon of ESL by increasing students' motivation towards schooling through strengthening/promoting student-school-family-community ties. Improving skills in the critical transition between the first and second grades of secondary school, considering the time when which the school dispersion rate occurs.

11- 14 years old

Preventing educational poverty and school dispersion. School dispersion refers to all those phenomena that: slow down the formal course of study; non-compliance with compulsory schooling; dropping out in itinere or at the end of the year in the different compulsory or post-compulsory grades, before obtaining a qualification within the different school cycles.

Teachers, family, educators, and psychologists.

- (a) Activities aimed at supporting students in their academic and interpersonal skills and ensuring greater continuity in their educational paths;
- (b) Activities aimed at increasing families' participation in their children's educational path and strengthening teachers' ability to read and enhance students' skills and aspirations, including promoting mediation between students, parents and teachers;
- (c) School and psychological support;
- (d) Guidance in choosing post-school education courses;
- (e) Non-formal education workshops (art, comics and photography, chess,

At the end of each year, monitor the achievement of identified goals.



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Networks for Educating Adolescents through Community and Territory (R.E.A.C.T.)

WEWORLD (ONLUS foundation)

Validate an innovative national model of Reaction (REACT) to educational poverty and estimate its impact, making it an exemplary experience for other contexts.

Students 11 – 17 years old

Combating educational poverty (student's right to learn, train, develop skills and competences, cultivate their aspirations and talents is denied or compromised; they are deprived of educational opportunities).

To prevent and combat school dispersion (school careers can be challenging when they result in not achieving qualifications. This can happen due to delays in formal education (repeated absences, poor attendance, or poor performance), failing to complete compulsory

Teachers, families, Third Sector, practitioners, informal educators, "Community worker", and the introduction of an "extracurricular time" manager hired in the same manner as school principals and in charge of enhancing the educational offer and organizing extracurricular activities, in collaboration with the Third Sector.

guitar, or circus arts workshop).

The project system aims to operate on two levels:
1) Strengthening adolescents, especially the most vulnerable ones (strengthening competencies, understood as skills that enable the subject to be autonomous and assertive in different life contexts, especially in the critical transition between the first and second grade of secondary school);
2) Strengthening the subjects that represent, in various capacities, the educational resources in the area. Family Group Conference (FGC) are individualized projects and family support paths for vulnerable students.

-Community worker
- Case Manager (individualize d path for each, builds an educational pact with families and teachers, activating all available resources and services)
- U Game (urban games)

Monitoring of the progress of activities and chronogram, technical and administrative monitoring administrative monitoring with data collection on the progress of activities, continuous monitoring and analysis of the achievement of results, with possible redefinition of strategy and priorities.

Implementation of an online platform for the registration of different interventions and monitoring of project beneficiaries.



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education, or dropping out during or at the end of the year at the different levels of compulsory or post-compulsory education before receiving a qualification within the different school cycles.

Proposal for an integrated plan to combat early school leaving in the province of Cuneo

Miletto, I, Avetta, S., & Comba, S.

Funded by the backing of the European Commission.

- 10 Lessons Learned:
- 1) Benefit all students
 - 2) Value education as a tool for personal and social development
 - 3) Transform learning gap assessments and avoid failures
 - 4) Grant autonomy and responsibility to students
 - 5) Reduce the generation gap between students and teachers
 - 6) Focus on relationships
 - 7) Promoting innovation with a “bottom-up” approach
 - 8) Listening to young people
 - 9) Working in partnership to ensure educational success
 - 10) Facilitating a return to the classroom

Students 12 – 22 years old

Preventing, Combating, and Recovering Early School Leaving (young people aged between 18 and 24 who did not attain a higher education or vocational qualification and are not currently engaged in any form of education or training).

Actions against school dispersion

Teachers, trainers, educators, and extracurricular workers.

- (a) Experiences in teaching-methodological innovation and experiential learning (in formal and informal setting)
- (b) Strengthening of existing networks working on the topic to increase their effectiveness (promote Piedmont orientation and transition support activities).

- (a) School-based training workshop for repeat students
- (b) Afternoon remedial and reinforcement workshops (basic subjects, expressive art, music, coding)
- (c) Math support desk with peer-to-peer mode
- (d) Peer-education on bullying issues
- (e) Pathway of choice education

Qualitative and quantitative monitoring with standardized tools.



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Guidelines for the prevention of early school leaving and abandonment of education and training pathways

Patto Educativo di Comunità del Distretto Sud-Est della Provincia di Ferrara (2017)

To combat ESL, it is necessary to work mainly on three fronts:
 1) Prevention: an effective school guidance system
 2) Intervention: countering students' difficulties as they arise by improving the quality of education and training and providing targeted support.
 3) Compensation: creating new opportunities to obtain a qualification for those who left education and training early and helping them re-enter the system through vocational and school training pathways.

High School and Middle School Student

School abandonment prevention and recovery actions;

Preventing early school leaving.

Prevention and combating school dispersion.

Teachers, educators, psychologists, and families.

(a) Orientation helps students understand their strengths, talents, study options, and employment prospects, and navigate through transitions in education and life.

(b) Individualized pathways for students at risk of ESL to improve learning and increase their social integration.

(c) Parental involvement to encourage and motivate young people to learn.

(d) Parental outreach can help identify learning difficulties and early signs of disengagement so that early intervention can take place.

(f) Pathway for redesign and individual tutoring
 (g) Courses for the development of orientation skills
 (h) Courses on career orientation.

(a) Intake-integration procedures and then in-progress and final monitoring of learning.

(b) Social gathering centers;

(c) guided study and learning support school activities; home-based educational and welfare services; in-school educational support service; listening desks.

The Technical Operations Committee will set up a system with relevant forms for capturing quantitative and qualitative data. The following aspects will be monitored:
 - number of schools and professional figures/services involved
 - number of pupils at "risk of abandonment" and their characteristics;
 - the main risk factors adopted to prevent school dispersion;
 - results;
 - resources used;
 - degree of involvement of territorial "actors";
 - conclusions and directions for the implementation of the system.



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Reception and integration protocol for foreign pupils

Istituto comprensivo "L.Silone" Montesilvano

Define shared practices within the school in terms of welcoming foreign pupils:

- Define the roles of school workers and linguistic-cultural mediators;
- Facilitate the entry of foreign students and support in the adaptation phase to the new environment;
- Promote social integration by adapting activities;
- Entering contact with the immigrant or other ethnic family;
- Promote collaboration between school and local area.

Elementary and middle school students

Reduce the risk of school dispersion.

Reduce the risk of school abandonment.

Teachers, parents, cultural mediators and students who can support the newcomer through knowledge of the same language.

1) Analysis of the Institute's needs in relation to issue related to the reception, integration, and teaching of foreign students and preparation of detection tests;

2) Reception and integration of students into the class with the intervention of a language mediator; possible support for students lacking the materials necessary for the regular conduct of teaching activity; communication with the family

3) Individualized paths for literacy and remediation of school discomfort; identification of suitable tests for the detection of skills; search for appropriate teaching material.

Monitoring the progress of Italian language learning, acquired by the foreign pupil.

#resto a scuola

I.S."BISAZZ A" (Messina, Italy) based on funds allocated by the Ministry of Education (M.D. 170/2022) for the implementation of actions to

To convey the value of study, promoting motivation and cognitive and application skills, in order to promote, in pupils at risk of school dropout, life projects.

High school students

Preventing and combating school dispersion.

Students at risk of dropping out.

Students in default of compulsory education.

Teachers, families, social workers, and public and private agencies.

(a) Mapping the risks of school dispersion within the school

(b) Mentoring and orientation paths

(c) Pathways for basic skills enhancement, motivation and accompaniment

(d) Orientation paths with family involvement

(1) Design of individual mentoring and coaching actions for students who show fragility, risk of ESL or who have interrupted school attendance.

Monitoring of absences, discussion with class coordinators, administration of screening tests with objective evidence and to the analysis of results using specially written worksheets.



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prevent and
combat early
school
leaving.

Pupils with
fragility in
learning.

- (e) Co-curricular training and laboratory paths
- (f) Technical activities of the School Dispersion Prevention Team.

- (2) Form student groups to support color who show fragility and who need to be addressed and motivated.
- (3) Dialogue frontal lecture/explaining, cooperative learning, peer tutoring.
- (4) Workshops for in-depth study and methodological-disciplinary reinforcement
- (5) Exercises for INVALSI tests
- (6) In-depth studies for students nearing maturity
- (7) Music, theater, cinema, sports and artistic-expressive area activities



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