The pre-scholastic education in Italy is organized in this way:
- for 0 to 3 years old children: nursery school;
- for 3 to 6 years old children: childhood school.

Compulsory education begins at the age of 6 and it corresponds to primary and secondary school. These are organized as follows:
- primary school for 6 to 11 years old students;
- junior secondary school for 11 to 14 years old students;

At the end of secondary school students get the school-leaving certificate, that certifies the end of compulsory education (the actual reform plan will be described below).

Higher education begins after secondary school; students can choose between different learning pathways. There are four kinds of secondary school:
1) secondary school with an emphasis on humanities, sciences, art or pedagogy. These schools last five years, and prepare to keep on studying;
2) technical secondary schools; they offer a professional formation but even as well as cultural background. They prepare both for professional insertion and for the continuation of studies. These schools last five years, too. There are many kinds of technical secondary school and they cover many professional sectors: from chemistry to computing, from commerce to tourism;
3) professional secondary schools, organized in two cycles of studies: the first one lasts three years and the second one lasts two years. After the first cycle students get a professional qualification, after the second one they get a professional diploma that allows them to carry on studying (but normally these schools prepare to professional insertion). There are many kinds of professional secondary schools, and they cover many professional sectors partly corresponding with areas touched by technical secondary schools;
4) art schools, organized like professional secondary schools.

After getting a diploma, students can carry on studying in Universities or in other institutions.

University education is usually organized according to the European system: three basic years plus two specialization years. After the first step students get a general degree, after the second one they get a specialistic degree. Not all universities are organized in this way.

In Italy compulsory education ends when you get the school-leaving certificate after the junior secondary school or achieve the age of 14. A recent reform plan should modify the second condition and raise the age of compulsory education to 16.

2 The counselling system in Italy

2.1 The scholastic guidance

The city of Turin has created an institution, named COSP (Centro di Orientamento Scolastico e Professionale – Scholastic and Professional Counselling Centre) that offers to youngsters a support in their scholastic or professional choices. Seven orientation advisors work in this structure, whose competence covers all the metropolitan territory. The main intervention points are:
1) the last year of junior secondary school;  
2) the first two years of secondary school.

The COSP developed an analysis and evaluation methodology named *Arianna*. This methodology is composed by:
1) a theoretical model to analyse the cognitive potential of an individual, the skills requested by different professional roles, and the way to make them matching;  
2) some diagnostic tools, like a written test and a meeting methodology.

The written test is proposed to all students attending the second or third year of junior secondary school. “Arianna” test aims at discovering the potential of the students and verifying if it is compatible with their wishes and choices. If there are particular difficulties, a meeting with the counsellor and the family is organized.

In any case the COSP is a public structure, anyone (even adults) can ask for a meeting with a counsellor.

Another aim of the COSP is the monitoring of the dropping out of school in the city of Turin.

### 2.2 The professional orientation

Professional orientation in the last few years has become more and more important in Italy, because:
1) recent economic evolution made the not-qualified workers conditions become worse, because of the crisis of the big industries. Today qualified work demand (and conditions) has increased to the detriment of not-qualified one. So it is more and more necessary to increase and renovate one’s competences;  
2) the conditions of the work market have changed very much. New contracts make professional life less and less sure and easy to plan. So, in general workers (not only not-qualified ones) have to re-orientate their choices many times in their life.

In Italy the public structure managing professional insertion and orientation is the CPI (*Centro Per l’Impiego* - Job Centre). There is a CPI in every big city.

The CPI, even after the deregulation of the 90 (before everything was managed by the Work Minister, today CPI are under Provinces administration) has not been very efficient, specially about professional insertion.

The private sector, that after the deregulation developed very much, has taken charge of the professional insertion. But of course private job agencies do not have any interest in dealing with not-qualified workers or in general people with social insertion difficulties.

In general, we can say that those who have the biggest difficulties today are:
1) not qualified workers;  
2) aged people who lost their job and have to find another one in very different conditions;  
3) foreigners who don’t know Italian and local conditions very well (ways to find a job, laws and work contracts, etc.).

Today all these “weak” people cannot find a support neither in public nor in private job agencies.

In Turin associative reality is very important and strong. Even in this context, many associations try to help people in professional and social difficulties.

In Turin there are several “special” job offices managed by associations (for example Apolié or ASAI), that try to support these people in finding a job or a vocational training, in planning (where possible) their professional life.
2.2.1 The decentralized Job Centres of the City of Torino
In 2001, the Province of Torino jointly with the City of Torino created 3 decentralized Job Centres in 3 different districts of the city (districts 5-7-10) in order to support “weak people”.
Those decentralized Job Centres aim at giving unemployed the opportunity to find paper or E-information about jobs and vocational training, at counselling them about vocational and scholastic chances and at booking public calls.
The Province and the City of Torino work together in order to guarantee the uniformity of the actions.

2.3 Two projects managed by the city of Turin: “Prime ali” and “Mestiere in Prova”

2.3.1 Prime ali
This project is managed by a partnership composed by: the city of Turin, many associations and vocational training agencies, a job agency and some professional associations. This project is addressed to 200 youngsters without qualification or drop out, and to 100 unemployed adults.
It is an equal project, so it is co-financed by the European Social Fund.

The aim of this project is to help these people to have a practical orientation by trying some jobs.
The central element of the project is the MIP (Mestiere In Prova – Job Trial). It means, for the youngsters, one, or more, periods of 24 hours training (three days) in a company, to try and observe a particular job. Adults, instead, receive a competences reinforcement in a vocational training agency:
If this first experience is successful, it can be followed by a longer period of training (240 hours).

2.3.2 Mestiere in Prova (Try a job)
This project is similar to the first one. It is managed by the COSP together with a vocational training agency (a cooperative). It is addressed to drop out youngsters.
The first step is to work on orientation with a group of youngsters, followed by a short period of training (one week). If this first step is successful, they can begin a longer period of training (250 hours).
A strong tutoring (by the orientation advisors and the company) is assured.

3 Structures and programs against dropping out in schools

3.1 Considerations about dropping out
Dropping out at school is a very big and complex question. The city of Turin has been trying for a long time to cope with it actuating several projects. These experiences showed that under the term “drop out” many different realities are hidden.
Drops out can be:
- youngsters sent out from school because of their problematic behaviour;
- students absolutely not interested in studies and school, often “sustained” by their families;
- weak students, who do not have the necessary skills to follow the program or to understand the lessons;
- talented drop out students, with good intellectual skills, but not motivated or who suffer behavioural problems.
So, to manage the problem, public institutions must try to give a particular answer to each category. We can even say that each person should need a personalized support. Moreover, dropping out concerns even those who though, staying at school, do not really benefit from education. They do not feel really concerned, and get to the end of compulsory education in nearly illiteracy conditions.

Speaking about statistics, we can say that, even if in junior secondary school the drop out rate is not so high, almost all the students who get a “sufficient” at the end of school (45% of total) do not have a really sufficient level of knowledge. The students who drop out during secondary school are very numerous. Of course some of them go to private schools or to vocational training, but in general they are too many, it’s a heavy price for the society.

Scholastic disease takes place in many ways and places:

1) in the family: the economic and social conditions of the family have a big influence in the scholastic skills of students, but there are other reasons. The most important is the “cultural patrimony” of the family, that can influence scholastic results very much. Many projects have been activated by the city of Turin to help families with this kind of difficulties;

2) in the school where the youngsters’ disease reveals itself and where sometimes it is created. School culture (and, in general, adults culture) is today in conflict with the culture of young people. School is than the main place for this disease and lack of communication between generations. The problem is particularly heavy for youngsters who come from culturally weak environments. School aims at creating good conditions to make this communication possible and easier for students with cultural disease. But this does not necessary mean that schools must introduce new activities like computing or theatre; the real innovation should involve first of all teachers and their role as disciplinal researchers;

3) in the society: all the values expressed in society by mass medias (success, money, hedonism, etc.) have a big influence on youngsters’ behaviour and aspirations. Society should make youngsters aware that education and vocational training are fundamental for their future.

3.2 Local network

The main partners of the city network involved in drop out prevention and recovery are:

- The City of Torino with the Educational Services, the Social Services and the Labour Division, coordinates and monitors the activities of schools, volunteer associations and training agencies;
- Torino Province and City of Torino work together to support counselling and training activities;
- Secondary schools supply the projects with their human resources and facilities;
- Training agencies give the possibility to young students to obtain the junior secondary certificate with a tutorial support;
- The CTP where recovery projects take place;
- The Ufficio Pio and the School Fundation of Compagnia di San Paolo sustain and finance the projects of the city;
- Volunteer associations, the main characters in the realisation of the projects, are involved in the planning, training, coordination and evaluation phases.
3.3 “Provaci ancora, Sam!” (Try it again Sam)

“Provaci ancora Sam” is a project of the City of Torino, that aims at preventing and recovering the dropping out of youngsters from 11 years old to 18 years old. The project is divided into two ways: the preventive and the recoverable.

3.3.1 “PAS” prevention way

The project is structured into specific activities with the purpose of intervening in a delicate phase of the training pathway: the passage between elementary and secondary school, which represents a critical moment. The target group is youngster from 11 to 14 years old who attend the first class of junior secondary school and have problems.

In general all these activities aims at:
- preventing dropping out;
- integrating the educational role of the family and the school;
- intervening in behavioural, relational and cognitive problems that lead to learning difficulties and that could not be certificated as an handicap.

The team group is made up of 2/3 teachers for each class, an educator, a social worker and a volunteer which assume the function of peer educators.

There are 3 different phases:

1. **observation.** The observation takes place at the beginning of the school year and lasts one or two months (October-November). There are 2 different kinds of observation: direct and indirect. Direct observation involves teachers, educators and volunteers during lessons hours. Social Services, the social educational coordinator (C.S.E.), the headmaster of educators and one referent of the city participate in the indirect observation out of scholastic hours in order to compare information.

2. **intervention.** The interventions are various and they depend on the demands of specific cases and on the competences of the associations. Activities can take place in the classroom or outside. Classroom activities are characterized by the cooperation between volunteers and teachers (role-playing games, creative writing and innovative strategies to involve students). Out of the classroom activities give an individual or group support but they can also be integrative (high technology classes). Furthermore, there are out-school time activities such as sports, creative laboratory, trips and scholastic aid.

3. **evaluation.** At the beginning of the intervention a team group decides the goals for each students. These goals could be scholastic or behavioural. The evaluation consists in a comparison between the goals and the effective results.

The project started in the school year 2000-2001 with the involvement of 18 secondary schools, 70 first secondary classes and 350 youngsters. Now the participants are 26 secondary schools and 5 elementary school with more than 90 classrooms and more than 450 students (1/3 of them are migrants).

The project “Provaci ancora SAM-prevention” includes training activities for teachers and social workers, action–research on “bullismo” and a course to teach maths with new strategies.

3.3.2 “PAS” recovery

“Provaci ancora Sam-recovery” aims at helping minors to achieve the junior secondary school diploma and at the same time supports their social integration and counsels them about their school reintegration or vocational pathway. PAS recovery started in 1989 and it consists of two pathways. The first one is for Italian and immigrant youngsters (from 15 to 17 years old) and it takes place in the CTP The second one involves students aged from 14 to 16 and it is called “tutela integrata”. This project gives the possibility to almost 150 youngsters to achieve the junior secondary school certificate.
3.4 “CTP”  
The five “CTP” were born as centres for adults who didn’t achieve the junior secondary certificate. Today they are also opened to youngsters from the age of 15 who have left school without the junior secondary certificate. Specific classes for minors are created to answer their needs. Students attend “CTP” 4 days a week (from Monday to Thursday) for an average of 4 hours and they can choose between evening or daily lessons. There are only 4 subjects: Maths, Italian, History and a foreign language.  
PAS recovery project aims at following youngsters who have behavioural and learning problems and its phases are similar to “PAS”-prevention (observation, intervention and evaluation). An important activity is the counselling offered by “COSP”. There is a contract between the youngster, the family, the teacher and the volunteer that must be respected to achieve the junior secondary certificate.

3.5 “Tutela Integrata”  
“Tutela Integrata” is a project addressed to de-motivated 14 years old who live a problematic relationship with school and teachers. They usually fail their classes many times and are frequently absent. There is a specific external facility out of school which receives every year 50 drop outs signalled by Social Services, schools or families. Educative Services of the city, volunteers associations and Tutela teachers choose those youngsters who can join the project. The team group is represented by 4 teachers and one educator for each class. There are 5 subjects: Italian, Maths, Sciences, Technical Education and Sports. Time schedule is from Monday to Friday for 3-4 daily hours. Tutela Integrata takes place in 4 different suburbs but all these youngsters are enrolled in the junior secondary school Turoldo in Vallette suburb, where, at the end of the school year, they have to pass the final exam to obtain the junior secondary certificate. The collaboration between teachers and educators as well as the signing of an educational contract between students and teachers is one of the most important part of the project.

3.6 Other drop out and counselling projects  
3.6.1 “Accompagnamento solidale”  
“Accompagnamento solidale” aims at supporting social and scholastic integration of young people coming from a difficult social background and/or suffering learning problems. Tutors have the function of peer educators, they try to help integrating youngsters in a positive context. This project can integrate “PAS”-prevention and it can be considered its continuation.

3.6.2 “Centri Diurni Aggregativi” (Daily Young Centres)  
Daily Young Centres (associations, sports clubs, oratories) aims at offering a place where youngsters can socialise in a positive and safe environment. These youngsters are signalled by Social Services. Most of them have a really difficult family situation and relationship problems. There are 20 volunteers who work with almost 150 youngsters collocated in 11 Daily Young Centres.