

EUROPE ENGAGE

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING
WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE



ITALIA NATIONAL REPORT



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**EUROPE ENGAGE SURVEY
OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & SERVICE-LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

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CONTENT

Section	Page Number
1. Introduction	4
2. Background to surveys	7
3. Limitations and opportunities of the survey	7
4. University culture and identity	7
5. Service-Learning activities	8
6. Conclusion	x



1. INTRODUCTION

The following types of institution offer higher education in Italy:

- Universities (polytechnics included)
- High level Arts and Music Education institutions (Alta formazione artistica e musicale - Afam)
- Higher technical institutes (Its)

Universities are autonomous bodies; they adopt their own statutes, establishing their own governing bodies (such as the rector, senate, and board of management) as well as their teaching and research structures. Universities issue the following qualifications, corresponding to the Bologna Process structure (cycles):

- Laurea, corresponding to a first-cycle qualification, issued at the end of a three-year course of study (180 credits - CFU);
- Laurea specialistica/magistrale, corresponding to a second-cycle qualification, issued at the end of a two-year course of study (120 credits - CFU) or to a 5-6-year single course (300-360 credits - CFU);
- Dottorato di ricerca, corresponding to a third-cycle qualification.

The Afam institutions are the following: Academies of Fine Arts, the National Academy of Drama, Higher institutes for Artistic Industries (ISIA), Conservatoires, the National Dance Academy and officially recognised music institutes. Afam institutions have legal status and statutory, teaching, scientific, administrative, financial and accounting autonomy.

Higher technical institutes (ITs) are highly specialised technical schools established to meet the demand of new and high level competences coming from the labour world, in particular from the technical and technological sectors. ITs offer short-cycle non-university higher education, which is part of the education system since 2011/2012. Courses are accessible to holders of an upper secondary education qualification. In general, courses last 4 semesters and lead to the qualification of 'Higher technician' (Diploma di tecnico superiore).

Besides universities, Afam institutions and Its, also other specialised institutions offer tertiary education in specific fields. In general, access to courses requires an upper secondary education qualification and an entrance examination. The number of posts available is limited and fixed annually. In some cases, also a previous relevant training is required. These institutes issue qualifications recognised within the education system and refer to national authorities other than the Ministry of education, university and research, therefore, the following articles do not describe the offer into details. Among the specialised institutions offering tertiary education there are: Scuola nazionale di cinema (National School of Cinema), Scuole di archivistica, paleografia e diplomatica (Schools for the archive systems, palaeography and diplomatics), Military academies (Air Academy of Pozzuoli, Revenue Guard Academy, Military Naval Academy of Livorno, Military Academy of the army of Modena),

Istituti superiori di scienze religiose (Higher Institutes of Religious Sciences), the Foundation for the preservation and restoration of books.

1.1. Types of Higher Education Institutions

A list of all institutions is available on the website of the Ministry of education, university and research (Miur). In addition, Miur has launched the portal universitaly.it that, beside the list of all institutions, provides all necessary information to access higher education in Italy.

University education is provided by 96 university institutes:

67 state universities (of which 9 are higher schools, or institutes, called ‘special system higher schools’);

29 non-state universities (of which 11 are online universities).

Finally, the following institutes issue qualifications equivalent to those issued by universities:

- Higher schools for language mediators (Scuole superiori per mediatori linguistici, SSML) offering three-year courses and issuing qualifications equivalent to the laurea (first-cycle degree) on language mediation sciences released by universities;
- Specialisation institutes for psychotherapists, issuing qualifications equal to the specialisation diploma (third-cycle qualification) issued by Italian universities in the broader field of psychology.

1.2. Admission Requirements

Central regulations establish the general requirements to access university courses. Admission is restricted for single-cycle courses in medicine and surgery, pharmacy, veterinary science and dentistry studies, primary teacher education and architecture; admission is also restricted for courses in health professions or for bachelor courses for which study plans foresee practical training and the use of laboratories. Admission requires the possession of an upper secondary school leaving certificate or other equivalent qualification obtained abroad.

Moreover, each university, in its own regulations, may also require an adequate initial preparation. To this end, regulations should establish the knowledge required for admittance and should lay down tests procedures. Institutions decide on the acknowledgement of qualifications obtained abroad, in the respect of European Union directives and regulations as well as of the international agreements in force.

1.3. Curriculum

Central regulations establish the general criteria for the organisation of university and High level art and music education (Afam) studies, as well as the qualification universities and Afam institutions issue. As for university, at national level, the Ministry of education, university and research (Miur) has established the laurea classes and, for each class, the quali-

ifying educational objectives and the subsequent learning activities necessary to reach these objectives.

Each class or course of study should also provide for:

- learning activities in one or more study areas similar or supplementary to the study areas typical of the field of studies;
- learning activities chosen by students;
- learning activities aimed at the final examination to obtain the final qualification and at the evaluation of the knowledge of a foreign language;
- further learning activities aimed at improving linguistic knowledge, as well as ICT skills, relational skills and any other skill useful to get into the labour market among which, in particular, training and guidance apprenticeships.

Furthermore, learning activities include laboratory activities or artistic productions, where relevant.

Universities and Afam institutions issue their own regulations, approved by the Ministry of education. In particular, each regulation determines:

- The name and training objectives of the respective study courses; general framework of the training activities that must be included in the curriculum; credits assigned to the various training activities; outline of the final examination for the final qualification attainment.
- The organizational aspects of the teaching activities common to all study courses, such as objectives, times and methods to be adopted for planning, co-ordinating and evaluating the results of the activities; procedures to assign the annual teaching tasks to teachers and researchers; examination procedures; student assessment procedures, within the limits established by central regulations; evaluation of the students' initial training and organisation of training activities preparatory to the assessment of the initial training; quality assurance.

Therefore, it is not possible to provide an in-depth picture of programmes and contents of each course.

1.4. Teaching Methods

Universities and High level arts and music education (Afam) institutions, in their own regulations, should establish procedures to carry out teaching activities, in the respect of teaching freedom as well as of teachers' and students' rights and duties.

Teachers freely choose their own teaching methods. They can receive just some not mandatory indications. The use of new technologies is more and more widespread, as well as seminars, working groups, etc.

Organisational Variation For some university courses, distance learning is provided. The universities can provide this type of didactic organisation, also in the form of a consortium with several universities or with the support of other public and private bodies. Teaching regulations of each university and of the study courses lay down the organisation of possible training activities for students who do not attend full-time and the typology of courses, including distance learning provisions, examinations and other monitoring forms of the students' performances.

Italian universities are among the oldest universities in the world. In particular the University of Bologna (founded in 1088, the oldest university in the western world), the University of Padua, founded in 1222, or the University of Naples, founded in 1224 and are the most ancient state university in Europe.

2. BACKGROUND TO SURVEY

The situation illustrated in the following pages is dated 2015. At that time, the term Service Learning is not well known not used in Italy, except few examples. So, in the first phase, we identified relevant contact persons at the two known entities, one (private) university, LUMSA, Rome and one private school, The Siena Italian Studies (SIS) for survey distribution. In the second phase, the survey has been distributed to the identified contact persons from each body. Only LUMSA University completed the survey, whereas SIS failed to fill the correct line: as we have info about this experience, we incorporate some data concerning SIS.

3. LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE SURVEY

Since civic engagement in general and Service-Learning in particular isn't organized on a central level in Italian universities, it's challenging to find contact persons that are relevant and disposed to complete the survey.

Despite this barrier, the distribution of the survey was a good opportunity to make contact with colleagues of the universities (Turin, Milan, Padua, Lecce, Rome, Naples, Florence, Verona, etc) starting dissemination of information about Service-Learning and the project Europe Engage. We found persons interested in knowing more and available for experimentation.

4. UNIVERSITY CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Only the LUMSA University completed the survey. The Siena Italian Studies completed an old version of the questionnaire.

The Libera Università Maria Ss. Assunta (LUMSA) is a private Italian Catholic University, founded in 1939 as the Istituto Superiore di Magistero "Maria Ss. Assunta". The LUMSA has didactic, scientific, administrative, organizational and disciplinary autonomy. It releases legally certified educational qualifications which are equivalent to those of state-owned universities.

The Siena Italian Studies is a study abroad program based at the International Center for Intercultural Exchange in Siena, Italy.

5. SERVICE-LEARNING ACTIVITIES

La Scuola di Alta Formazione EIS (Education to Encounter and Solidarity), in Rome, guided by prof. Italo Fiorin, wants to contribute to the development of the task of the LUMSA in the educational field. Both directions are pursued, teaching and research, with a perspective non only academic but also open to the encounter, to the dialogue, to the concrete commitment, to the promotion of active citizenship.

La Scuola aims to deepen on theoretical level, and to experiment on concrete level, the pedagogical approach of Service Learning, addressed both to the teachers, the university staff, and for the students. EIS organizes workshops, seminars and training for teachers and practitioners, promotes research and documentation, publishes experiences and reflections in the pedagogical field on active citizenship and service learning

The Siena Italian Studies' programs are a 'gentle full-immersion' in Italian life for highly motivated beginners, intermediate and advanced Italian language students. Offering some of the most innovative programs in Italy that work to fully integrate the education of language, culture and service-learning, in and out of the classroom, they strive to offer students an environment where they can become interculturally competent and function as global citizens. SIS employs a unique approach called the FICCS Method. FICCS, Full-Immersion: Culture, Content, Service is a method that unites the guided input in the classroom with spontaneous input from outside the classroom, with host families, language exchange partners, and at community service placements and during daily interactions with locals in the streets of Siena.

6. CONCLUSION

In general, considering the overall situation, awareness and knowledge about the educational concept of Service-Learning seems growing. Some good practices of Service-Learning appear or already exist, mostly based on individual initiatives from educational staff. However, the term "Service-Learning" is used inconsistently to describe a variety of experiential learning activities and internships. Some good practices of Service-Learning are not labelled as such. Few educators know what Service-Learning is or understand how Service-Learning is different from voluntary based community service, internships, or other experiential learning activities.

Critical points for the implementation of service learning in Italy are the following::

- Problems in the definition of what is Service -Learning
- Problems in translation of S-L into Italian
- Differences/similarities with internships, civic service (at national and regional level), volunteering activities

- At university: No central office, no staff, No courses in S-L

After this survey, in the following months (since the second semester 2015), we realized that there were more experiences in Italy, that even not called “service learning” shared some common characteristics. The topic is particularly relevant for the group of Italian Community psychologists: for that it was possible to organize a symposium on Service Learning and Community Engagement in the National Congress of Community Psychology (Bergamo, June 2016). After the Europe Engage meeting in Bologna and the IARSLCE conference, held in Bologna in June 2016, the Italian Network of Service Learning and Community Engagement was created, which comprises about 50 teachers and researchers from 12 Universities, 5 private universities for foreigners students in Italy and other 4 institutions.

