

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001701/24
to the Commission
Giuseppe Antoci (The Left)
(13 September 2024)**

Subject: Request for clarification and remedial action on NRRP investments in education in Sicily and Southern Italy

A recently published Save the Children report ⁽¹⁾ has uncovered significant irregularities in the management of national recovery and resilience plan (NRRP) investments in education in Italy, particularly in southern Italy and Sicily. Although the NRRP constitutes a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between North and South in the range of teaching provided, the efforts ongoing are failing to reduce inequalities. The southern regions, with limited access to essential services such as full-time education, school canteens and gyms, have a high prevalence of young 'NEETs' ⁽²⁾ and suffer from a lack of adequate educational facilities ⁽³⁾.

This raises concerns about how funds are being distributed and used, and calls for an in-depth analysis of the impact of these investments on educational poverty. The persistent inequalities require decisive action supplementing NRRP resources with other available funds in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the educational services provided ⁽⁴⁾.

Can the Commission, therefore, answer the following questions:

1. What view does it take of the current distribution and effectiveness of NRRP investments in the education sector in southern Italy and Sicily, and what does it intend to do to enforce the 'mezzogiorno quota' of 40% of investments?
2. What specific measures does it intend to take to ensure an impact analysis is conducted of the projects under NRRP Mission 4 on education, especially in the most disadvantaged areas?
3. What initiatives does it intend to propose to ensure that the financial burden for operational costs does not fall disproportionately on municipalities and families?

Submitted: 13.9.2024

**Answer given by Mr Gentiloni on behalf of the European Commission
(28 October 2024)**

The Commission acknowledges the importance of an inclusive education, according to the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) Regulation.

The contribution to the objective of territorial cohesion is among the assessment criteria of national recovery and resilience plans (NRRPs) based on the RRF Regulation.

The 'mezzogiorno quota' of 40% of NRRP investment is a national commitment, as the RRF Regulation does not require a quantification.

The Commission has been working closely with the Italian authorities to ensure that funds are used effectively, including through the use of the audit and control system required by the plan.

The RRF Regulation also provides for an *ex-post* independent evaluation report on the implementation of the Facility, including its long-term impact.

¹ ¹'Scuole disuguali. Gli interventi del PNRR su mense, tempo pieno e palestre' ('Unequal Schools. Efforts under the NRRP to improve canteens, full-time and gyms')(<https://www.savethechildren.it/cosa-facciamo/pubblicazioni/scuole-disuguali>).

² The regulation on the preventive arm of the European Stability and Growth Pact explicitly refers to the European pillar of social rights and the targets it monitors include reducing numbers of early school leavers and NEETs.

³ Sardinia has an early school leaving rate of 17.3%, Sicily 17.1% and Campania 16%. Source: Istat, BES report 2023, 2024.

⁴ This entails enshrining in the law on the budget the necessary funds to cover the operating costs of the new canteens built and being built under the NRRP.