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School Reform  
and Construction  
in the Province of Rovigo,  
Italy

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## SCHOOL REFORM AND CONSTRUCTION IN THE PROVINCE OF ROVIGO, ITALY

### At a Glance

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Province: **Rovigo**

Region: **Veneto**

Country: **Italy**

The Province of Rovigo has a population of approximately 243 000.

10 188 pupils (aged 14 to 19) are enrolled in secondary schools under the supervision of the province (2000/01 school year).

Rovigo has 34 secondary school buildings, with a total surface area of approximately 122 000 m<sup>2</sup>. These buildings are located in seven different communes within the province.

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### The legislative context

The legislative framework of the Italian education system has changed radically over the past five years. After decades of announcing, discussing, proposing and experimenting with reform, the school of tomorrow is rapidly becoming a reality. Italy will at last have schools that are pluralistic, strengthened by their autonomy and by the mutual benefits that can be derived from a close relationship with their local area. They will be schools that look outward towards Europe, not only because the overall duration of schooling will be in line with European standards (reduced from the current 13 to 12 years, with pupils exiting at age 18), but because new curricula will be introduced.

After measures to make schools legally autonomous, to determine the size of the school network, to introduce compulsory schooling up to age 15 and compulsory training to 18, and to decentralise functions from central government to an autonomous local system, the last major facet of the reform is the reorganisation of school cycles. This process has already been initiated through the relevant legislation (No. 30/2000); however it has yet to be fully completed, particularly at the secondary level, by defining

curricula and by preparing an infrastructure plan for buildings and educational technologies (information technologies, telematics and the technical facilities, which most often consist of laboratories, required to teach various subjects).

Since school construction is the responsibility of the local authorities, and in particular of the provincial authorities for the secondary education sector, it is easy to understand that in a situation that has yet to be fully defined, as noted above, the construction of buildings that meet not only current needs but also the future needs of the reformed school of tomorrow is a complex task.

Prior to the reform of school cycles, there were over 100 different fields of study in Italian secondary schools. These will now be consolidated within four areas:

1) Classical/humanities area, with two branches:

- classical languages and culture;
- modern languages and culture.

2) Scientific area, with two branches:

- mathematical and experimental sciences;
- social sciences.

3) Technical and technological area, with six branches:

- management and services related to the production of goods;
- management and services related to the economy;
- management and services related to the environment and territory;
- management and services related to natural resources and agro-industrial sector;
- management and service provision in the field of personal and community services;
- management and services in the field of tourism.

4) Artistic and musical area, with at least two branches.

At present, it is still uncertain how the existing areas of study will be combined, which makes it that much more difficult to design tomorrow's schools.

### New types of school buildings

Is it possible today to construct school buildings that will easily house the reformed school that is being defined? This is probably the most urgent question that the administrators, managers and experts of local authorities are now seeking to answer. It is perhaps even more urgent than the question of how to adapt existing buildings to meet the needs of the

reformed school. This can be scheduled in gradual phases staggered over time, but for new school buildings it is imperative not to miss the opportunity to experiment with new solutions and develop standards that can then be used elsewhere.

Last year the Province of Rovigo completed a school complex that was begun in the 1990s. It houses two separate schools with a total enrolment of slightly less than 900 pupils. The complex, built in the Commune of Adria, a town of approximately 20 000 inhabitants, has a total volume of over 38 000 m<sup>3</sup> and a gross surface area of 11 310 m<sup>2</sup>. It has 43 ordinary classrooms and 12 special classrooms and laboratories. It also has a large library and an auditorium with a capacity of approximately 350.

The last phase of construction aimed to meet the possible needs of the future reform of school cycles by enabling the building to play a distinctive role in the life of the town, *i.e.* to serve the community and be integrated into its public infrastructure. Specifically, an effort was made to respond concretely to four broad aims:

- 1) Flexibility of the laboratories and special classrooms – All the classrooms in the north-west corner of the building (the last segment built) are designed so that they can be equipped as laboratories, in particular computer science or language laboratories (hook-ups have been installed in floors). Each of these rooms has two entrances (one from an outer corridor and another from an outside gallery) so that they can easily be transformed into laboratories with a second external exit for safety reasons.
- 2) Flexibility of the classroom areas – Not only are there classrooms of different sizes, with a capacity ranging from 20 to 30 users, but many rooms are separated by mobile partitions that make it possible to adjust their size.
- 3) The close integration of the complex into the life of the town – The auditorium, in particular, can be used independently from the rest of the school (separate entrance, independent air conditioning, heating and air circulation systems). The existing library area has been completely redesigned and provided with an independent heating and air circulation system. Agreements will no doubt be reached with the local municipality to enable all local inhabitants to use the auditorium and library.
- 4) Flexibility in the overall use of the complex – The ordinary classrooms and multi-use special classrooms that can be converted into new laboratories make it possible to anticipate the planned reform of school cycles with confidence. The complex can be adapted flexibly to the new fields that will be introduced and to partial or comprehensive changes in the current curriculum.

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School complex in Adria, Italy,  
shared by a high school  
and a technical  
college

