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Research and Initiatives
for a New Approach
to Educational Building
in Italy

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RESEARCH AND INITIATIVES FOR A NEW APPROACH TO EDUCATIONAL BUILDING IN ITALY

The Italian government and regions are preparing to approve new legislation in the field of educational building. The main topics being discussed and analysed are:

- quality;
- technological innovation;
- multifunctionality;
- resources.

The topic of **quality** is further divided into the following aspects, on the basis of ideas developed in consultation with experts in this sector:

- the educational importance of effective school architecture;
- flexibility and adaptability of space;
- bioarchitecture, alternative energy sources and building automation as factors that ensure the well-being of users and allow for savings, but that also have a strong educational impact.

Technological innovation in facilities, networks and the materials used is also a challenge that must be met in order to overcome the technological barriers that can prevent schools from keeping up with the times.

Multifunctionality addresses the issue of the enormous resources required to carry out initiatives in the field of educational building; school facilities may need to be adapted to different uses in the future, and they can play a highly social role.

Resources are therefore a central, decisive element. Experts foresee that the minimum investment necessary for educational building in Italy is at least EUR 20 658 million, with annual operating costs of approximately EUR 2 065.8 million for some 45 000 existing buildings.

Consequently, Italy faces the problems of finding the resources necessary for investment, monitoring the performance of the enormous real estate assets represented by educational facilities and containing operating costs.

In this regard, a key role is being played by the new research project on the **“intelligent school”** (www.tecnosys.it/isb) in the Milan Centre for Educational Innovation and Experimentation (Cisem, a research institute reporting to the Province of Milan and the Union of Italian Provinces, www.provincia.milano.it/cisem). This project, in addition to providing input on how to improve quality, might ultimately reduce operating costs by some 40%, which would enable Italian local authorities to save some EUR 826.3 million that could be used for investment. This project is part of Cisem's overall research and initiative policy in the field of educational experimentation and the renovation of school architecture.

Cisem, which was created in 1972 during the years of initial experimentation in upper secondary schools, has opened up various fields of research, always bearing in mind the interconnection between educational policy, pedagogical/curricular reform and changes in the design of educational facilities.

These fields also include teacher training, the relationship between schooling and employment, equal opportunities and general education, guidance, management models for the school system, the role of the local authorities, forecasting of enrolment trends, territorial educational planning and the use of audio-visual and multimedia technology as an aid to learning. The centre has highly computerised statistical, forecasting and planning tools, such as the National Observatories of the Provinces devoted to enrolments and to educational building, which continually monitor the key parameters for accurate territorial planning of education supply and better use of resources.

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