

## Italy

This report describes the structure of the national higher education system in Italy, focusing on the institutional types as defined by national categories. It builds on the Eurydice Report on the national higher education system and complements it with quantitative information on the role of higher education institution (HEI) types in national systems, based on data derived from the European Tertiary Education Register (<http://www.eter-project.eu>) for the period 2011-2020.

### Types of Higher Education Institutions

According to Eurydice<sup>1</sup>, the Italian higher education system comprises three main types of HEIs:

- Universities and Polytechnics
- Institutions of Higher Education for the Fine Arts, Music, and Dance
- Higher Technological Tertiary Education Institutes (not part of the ETER perimeter)

Universities and equivalent institutions (including Polytechnics) and the Institutions of Higher Education in the Fine Arts, Music and Dance (*Alta Formazione Artistica, Musicale e Coreutica- AFAM*) are higher education institutions that issue first, second and third-cycle qualifications referred to the Bologna Process framework<sup>2</sup>. Higher Technological Tertiary Education Institutes (*Sistema Tertiario di Istruzione Tecnologica Superiore - ITS*) only offer short courses and are not covered in this report.

A list of all institutions is available on the website of the Ministry of University and Research (*Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca, MUR*)<sup>3</sup>. In addition, MUR has launched the web portal *UniversItaly*<sup>4</sup> that, beside the list of institutions, provides all necessary information to access higher education in Italy. For the empirical insights that follow, we mobilize the more detailed ETER classification, disaggregating universities and AFAM to the following subcategories.

- University sector
  - University
  - Technical University
  - University for Foreigners
  - Distance Education Institution
  - Higher School
- Institutions of Higher Education in the Fine Arts, Music and Dance (AFAM)
  - Academy of Fine Arts
  - Free Academy of Fine Arts
  - Higher Institute for Artistic Industries
  - Music Conservatory
  - National Dance Academy
  - National Academy of Drama

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<sup>1</sup><https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/italy/types-higher-education-institutions>

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.ehea.info/media/ehea.info/file/2018\\_Paris/77/8/EHEAParis2018\\_Communique\\_AppendixIII\\_952778.pdf](https://www.ehea.info/media/ehea.info/file/2018_Paris/77/8/EHEAParis2018_Communique_AppendixIII_952778.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mur.gov.it/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.universitaly.it/>

## Main institutional characteristics. Legal status and the right to award a PhD

Table 1 provides a quantitative overview of the main institutional characteristics by HEI type.

Table 1: Institutional type and legal status by HEI type, 2020

Category		N	Public	Private	Private government-dependent	PhD awarding	
Universities	Distance Education Institution	Università Telematica	11	0	6	5	5
	Technical University	Politecnico	3	3	0	0	3
	University	Università	75	58	15	2	74
	University for Foreigners	Università per Stranieri	3	2	1	0	3
	Higher school	Scuola Superiore	6	6	0	0	6
AFAM	Academy of Fine Arts	Accademia di Belle Arti Statali	20	20	0	0	0
	Free Academy of Fine Arts	Accademia delle Belle Arti Legalmente Riconosciuta	10	0	10	0	0
	Higher Institute for Artistic Industries	Istituto Superiore per le Industrie Artistiche	5	5	0	0	0
	Music Conservatory	Istituto Superiore di Studi Musicali	73	55	18	0	0
	National Dance Academy	Accademia Nazionale di Danza	1	1	0	0	0
	National Academy of Drama	Accademia Nazionale d'Arte Drammatica	1	1	0	0	0
Total			208	151	50	7	91

Note: Numbers reflect ETER data

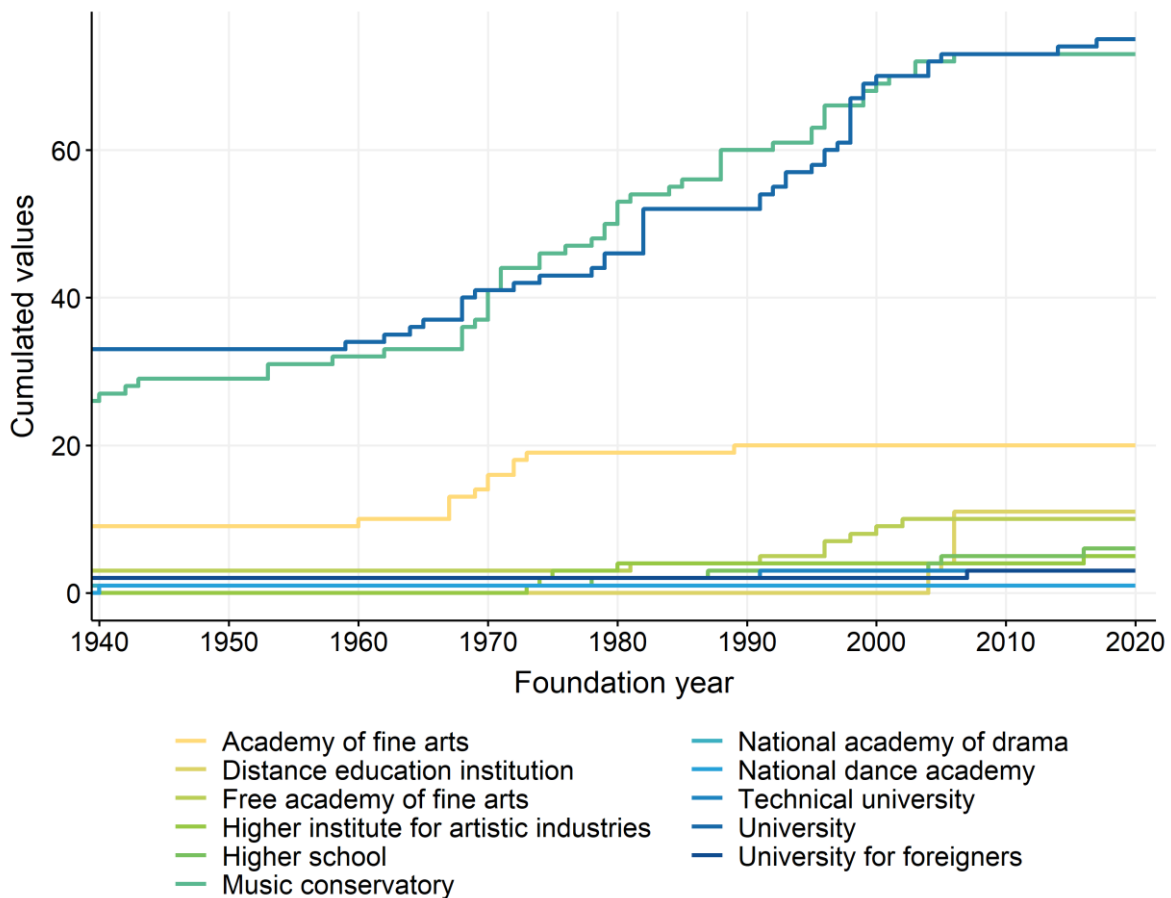
Institutions in the university sector are mostly public institutions and have the right to award PhDs (with one exception). In total, barely half of all Italian HEIs are Universities and equivalent institutions. Pure Technical

Universities (*Politecnico*) do play a minor role within to the whole university sector (though just in terms of the number of institutions and not in terms of the number of students enrolled, see below). The other half of Italian HEIs is comprised of high-level arts and music education (AFAM), none of them PhD awarding. Music Conservatories (*Istituto Superiore di Studi Musicali*) are the most important HEI accounting for two thirds of all AFAM institutions. About one quarter of all HEIs in Italy, mostly Universities, Music Conservatories, and all Free Academies of Fine Arts, are private.

### **Institutional history. Older and younger institutional types**

Data on the HEI foundation year provide information on the history of Italy's higher education and its evolution over time. Figure 1 shows that Italy is characterised by immense historical roots, with many HEIs being established before 1940 (around 50%). The University of Bologna (founded in 1088) is not only the oldest university in Italy, but in Europe as a whole. Also, in the other categories very early foundation years can be found, with several Academies of Fine Arts (*Accademia di Belle Arti*) being established already in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and Higher Schools (*Scuola Superiore*) and Music Conservatories (*Istituto Superiore di Studi Musicali*) from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Looking at the past century, we do not see any additional university establishments between the second World War and the early 1960s, but a steady growth afterwards until 2020. A similar pattern can be identified for the second most important category, i.e., Music Conservatories. Academies of Fine Arts have witnessed a substantial increase in the late 1060s and early 1970s, while starting in the mid-1990s Free Academies of Fine Arts have emerged. Remarkable complements in the Italian HEI system have been added with the Distance Education Institutions in 2004-2006.

Figure 1. Foundation year of HEIs by type



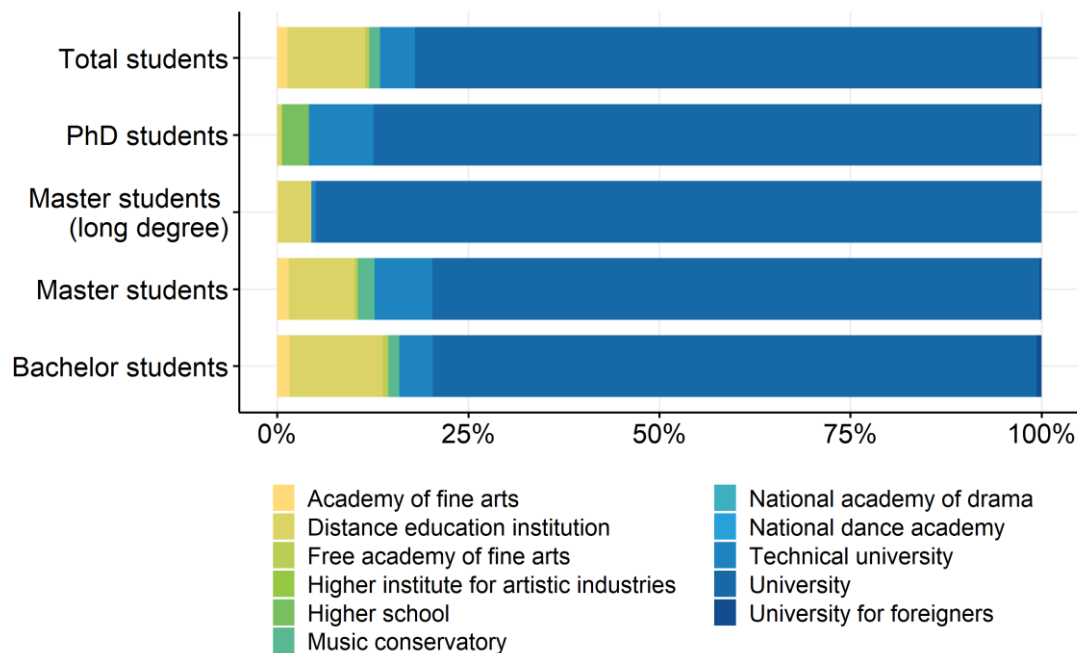
## Students

In terms of the number of students enrolled, Universities account for most of all students (82%, while they account for just 36% in terms of number of institutions). The other institutional types play a relatively minor role (see Figure 2). Looking at educational levels, the role of Universities is even more pronounced for master students, long master's degrees and doctorates (with 79%, 95% and 82% of the students enrolled at Universities). The second-most important category in terms of the number of institutions, the Music Conservatories (*Istituto Superiore di Studi Musicali*), just accounts for about 1% of total students. Likewise, all other AFAM institutions are rather small HEIs in terms of student enrolment.

Interestingly, the second most important category in terms of students enrolled are Distance Education Institutions, accounting for almost 10% of total students enrolled. Their relative importance is even higher at the bachelor level, where Distance Education Institutions account for 12% of all students enrolled.

Technical Universities (*Politecnico*), which are only a minor fraction in terms of the number of institutions, are very important in terms of enrolment (5% of total students), in particular at the PhD and Master levels (8% of total students each). A significant role for PhD level education is also played by the Higher Schools (*Scuola Superiore*) in Italy, with 4% of the students enrolled at this level.

Figure 2. Students by level and type of HEI, 2020



Note: Total students include ISCED 5-7

## Personnel

People are a core resource for HEIs, as their competences are essential for teaching, undertaking research and producing scientific output. In that respect, ETER provides a rich set of data moving beyond the information available in EUROSTAT, which allows to analyse the composition of personnel by type of HEI and characteristics such as gender, nationality, educational field and, from 2020 onwards, levels of seniority.

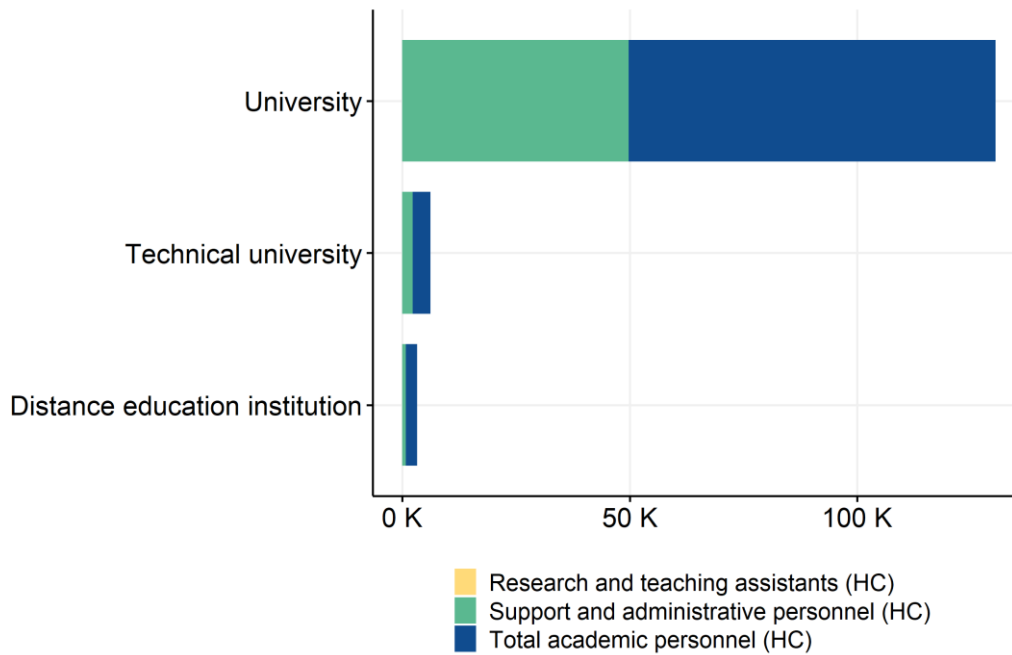
As shown by Figure 3, there are major size differences between HEI sectors, as measured by total personnel in head counts (HC), and in the personnel composition. The lion share (85%) of total HEI staff works in Universities. Hereby, Technical Universities and Universities are on average significantly larger than all other HEI institutions, both in the university and in the AFAM sectors: Technical Universities count a total personnel of almost 2,100 and Universities have more than 1,700 total staff on average. As of the personnel composition, academic personnel account for 68% of total staff, both at Universities and Technical Universities, while the Distance Education Institutions show a higher share of academic staff (75% HC) in Italy.

A final important dimension is internationality since it is generally considered as beneficial for the quality of research and education. In ETER, this is measured by the share of academic personnel not having the citizenship of the country. As shown in

Figure 4, the Italian HEI system is characterized by a very low level of internationality with only 2.7% of foreign academic personnel in 2020. While in Universities the share of foreign academic personnel even slightly decreased in the last decade (2.6% in 2020), at Technical Universities the share of academic personnel increased to 4.2% from 2011 to 2020. The highest share of internationality can be observed in the Distance

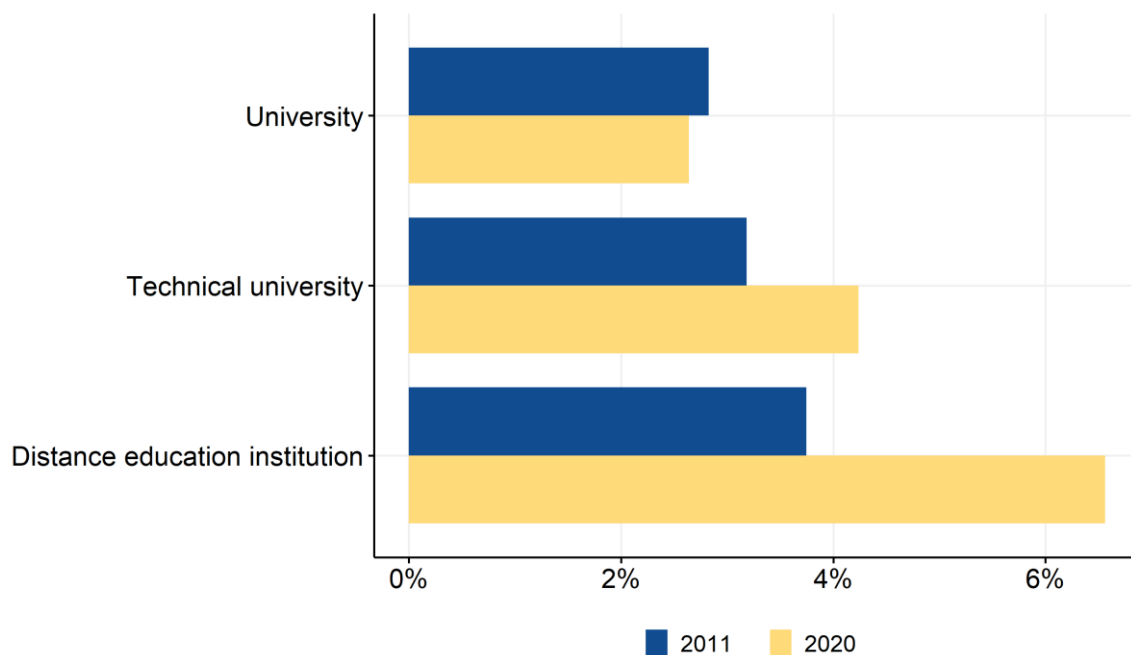
Education Institutions, where the share of foreign academic staff increased sharply to 6.6% in 2020. Internationality may be therefore associated with research orientation of HEIs and the possibility for remote education, while there is no indication that public or private ownership of the institution plays a role for internationality of Italian HEIs.

Figure 3. Personnel (HC) by category and type of HEI, 2020



Note: Research and teaching assistants missing

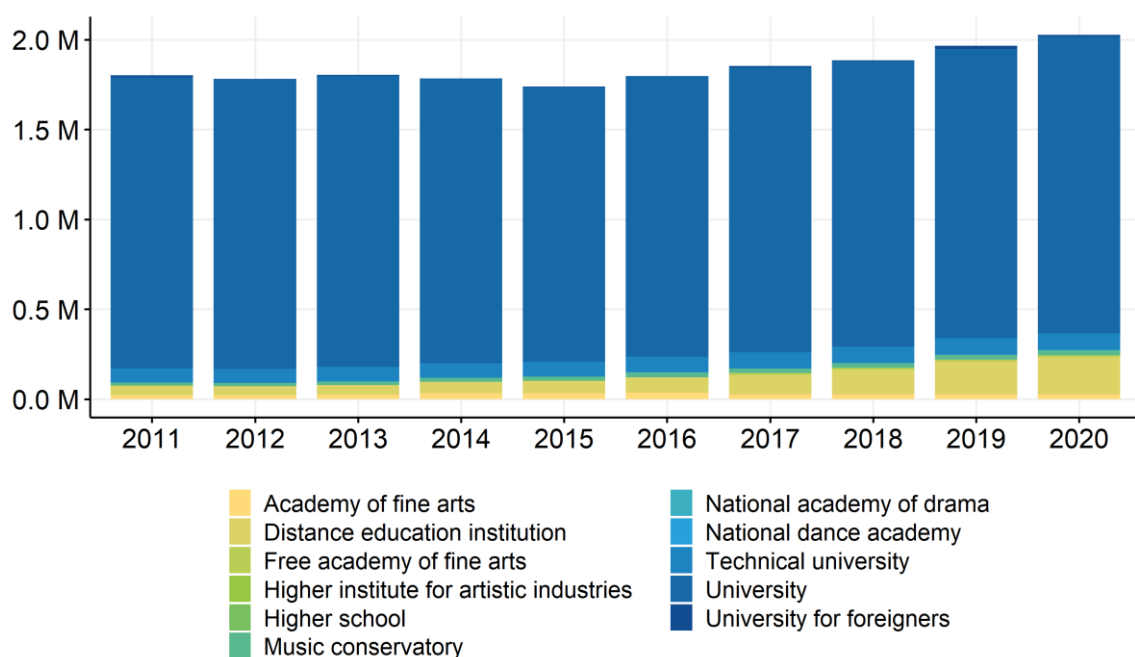
Figure 4. Share of foreign academic personnel (HC) by type of HEI, 2011 and 2020



## Changing roles over time

Looking at changes over time in terms of the number of students enrolled, data show a slightly decreasing trend between 2011 and 2015, followed by a clear increasing trend after 2015, with a rather constant increase of students enrolled each year (Figure 5). Disaggregating between institutional types, we can observe only little differences for the observed period. A notable exception are the Distance Education Institutions, where the share of enrolled students increased substantially in the last few years (annual increases reached a maximum of 33%).

Figure 5. Students enrolled by type of HEI, 2011-2020

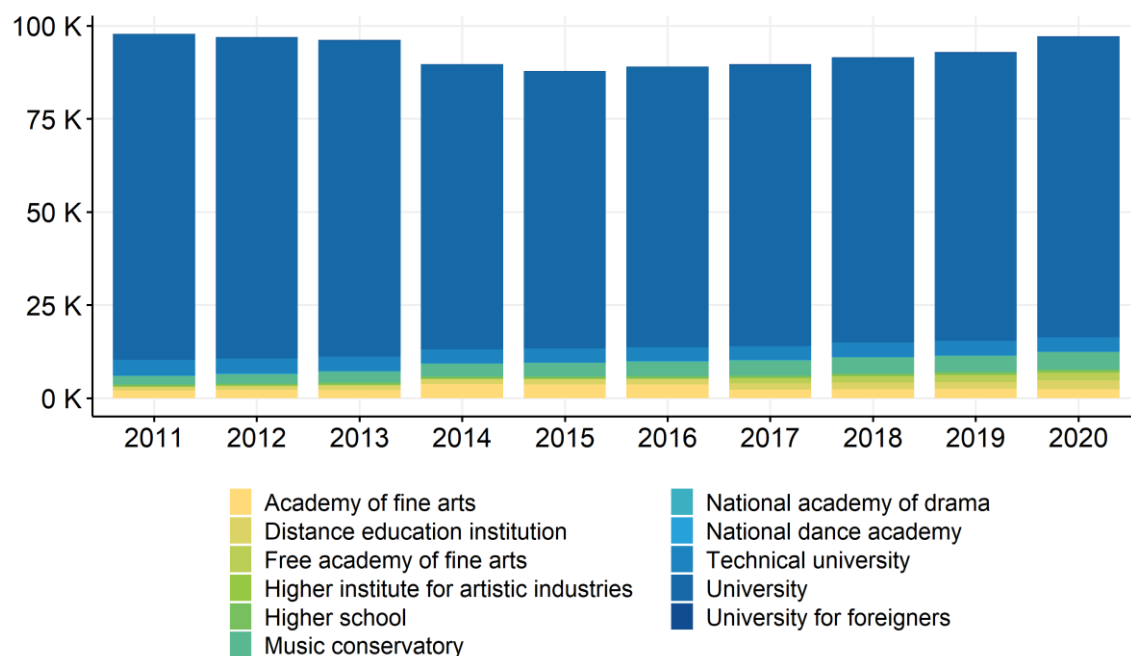


As shown by Figure 6, from 2011 to 2015 the number of total academic personnel (HC) has roughly kept pace with the decrease in the number of students, even dropping by 7% from 2013 to 2014. After 2015, the number of academic personnel has entered a cautious but steady growth trend until 2020. However, it must be noted



that despite a 5% growth in the last year, the absolute number of academic staff is still lower in 2020 than it was in 2011, resulting in a substantially lower staff-student ratio than the Italian HEI system had ten years ago.

Figure 6. Academic personnel (HC) by type of HEI, 2011-2020





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