

ifa ECP Monitor Country Report

# Italy

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## 1. External cultural policy objectives in geopolitical context

Italy is the third largest country in the European Union (following Germany and France), both in terms of its population, as well as its GDP (The World Bank, 2019) Worldwide, the country's cultural exports and well-known history have contributed to the image of an Italian way of life with largely positive connotations (Torcutti, 2005). This positive image is visible in the number of tourist arrivals: in 2018, the country was ranked as the fifth most popular tourist destination globally<sup>1</sup> (World Tourism Organization, 2019). Despite this popularity, the country has had a turbulent political past and experiences strong regional differences, which has motivated millions of Italians to leave the country over the last century and a half. Due to these strong waves of emigration, the number of Italians abroad officially registered with the Italian government amounted to more than 5 million in 2019. The actual diaspora, composed of people with decades- or centuries-long residence in other countries is estimated to surpass 70 million (Caldarini, 2020). What sets these groups apart from other global diasporas is the exceptionally strong ties to regional Italian culture, which persist over the course of generations (ibid.).

**Table 1: Economy of Italy**

	2019	% change since 2015
Population (millions) / ranking	60.35 / 23 <sup>rd</sup>	60.79 / - 0.7%
GDP ranking	8 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>
GDP per capita	29,660€ /29 <sup>th</sup>	8.8
Cultural economy (%GDP)	0.30	0
Education economy (%GDP)	3.9	0
R&D economy (%GDP)	1.43 <sup>(2018)</sup>	0.09
Media economy (%GDP)	0.20	0.20

Sources: Eurostat, 2021; World Bank, 2019

Despite Italy's strong draw for tourists and its status as the third-largest economy in the European Union, the country has faced issues of slowed economic growth and enormous public debt. Likewise, there are strong regional disparities alongside a North-South divide, as economic performance and youth employment fare much worse in Italy's southern regions (Goodman, 2019). Indeed, Italy only comes in 29<sup>th</sup> place worldwide in terms of GDP per capita (Eurostat, 2021b). What is more, government spending on culture, education and media is exceptionally low in comparison to its EU neighbors: with 0.3 percent of GDP spent on culture (compared to an EU average of 0.4 percent), 3.9 percent of GDP spent on the education economy (compared to 4.7 percent) and only 0.1 percent of GDP spent on publishing and broadcasting (compared to 0.2 percent) (Eurostat, 2021a). Similarly, the country's R&D spending amounts to merely 1.4 percent, once again placing Italy behind the EU average of

<sup>1</sup> Measured in absolute tourist arrivals by country.

2.1 percent<sup>2</sup> and far below the OECD average of 2.5 percent (OECD, 2020). Considering public expenditure on these soft power factors alone, Italy delivers a modest performance – especially when set side by side with its European neighbors. Italy’s hard power arsenal, on the other hand, has made a leap in terms in its international ranking, rising from 16<sup>th</sup> place in 2015 to the 11<sup>th</sup> place in 2019 (Global Firepower, 2021), in accordance with an increase in public expenditure on Italy’s defense<sup>3</sup> (Eurostat, 2021a).

**Table 2: Italy’s geopolitical and geo-economic position**

	2019	2015	
Hard power rank	11 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	↑
World trade rank (\$ million)	11 <sup>th</sup> / 1,179,909	10 <sup>th</sup> / 1,040,276	↓
Soft power rank	11 <sup>th</sup> / 71.58	12 <sup>th</sup> / 63.09	↑
Diplomacy rank	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup> (2016)	↑

Sources: Global Firepower, 2021; Lowy Institute, 2020; Portland, 2019

In terms of the country’s world trade, Italy stands at 11<sup>th</sup> place worldwide, a small decrease from 2015. Throughout its history, but particularly in recent years, Italy has experienced political instability and a rapid succession of national coalition governments, which have impeded on the country’s ability to wield wider influence within the European Union (Bremmer, 2021). Nevertheless, Italy’s ranking in Portland’s Soft Power 30 list has remained firmly in the top half, including a slight improvement from 12<sup>th</sup> place in 2015 to 11<sup>th</sup> place in 2019. The country’s strong performance is upheld by a robust set of cultural assets, such as well-known luxury brands in the fields of fashion, the automotive industry and its world-renowned cuisine. The country’s ancient Roman history—still tangible through the presence of the world’s largest number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites (50 relating to culture)—further accounts for a strong touristic and cultural draw (Portland, 2019; UNESCO, n.d.-b). Beyond cultural assets, Portland attributes Italy’s soft power to the country’s strong diplomatic network. Indeed, Italy managed to improve its diplomatic rank by one place from 2015 to 2019, then ranking at 10<sup>th</sup> place (Lowy Institute, 2020).

**Table 3: Government spending on ECP fields as a % of total outlays**

	2019	% change since 2015
Culture	0.60	- 0.10
Education	8.00	0.30
R & D	1.10	0.09
Media	0.30	0.30

Source: Eurostat, 2021

<sup>2</sup> The OECD reports on the EU average using the EU27 without the United Kingdom, even when it comes to 2019 numbers, while Eurostat reports on both. As the United Kingdom’s spending on R&D amounted to 1.8 percent of GDP in 2019, the average would be somewhat lower than what the OECD reports.

<sup>3</sup> Italy’s general government expenditure on “Defense” as a percentage of total government expenditure has increased from 2.4 percent in 2015 to 2.6 percent in 2019.

## 2. External cultural policy: an overview

Italy is an involved player in all aspects of ECP, which are nearly all coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy (*Ministero degli affari esteri e della cooperazione internazionale*), commonly called Farnesina. Within this body, the “Directorate General for the Promotion of the Country” is endowed with a budget of €211.9 million<sup>4</sup> (Farnesina, 2020a). The various ECP subfields form components of what the country calls the “Integrated promotion of Italy around the World”, a wider campaign that combines and creates synergies between economic, cultural and scientific diplomacy using the Italian representations abroad (Farnesina, n.d.-b). Aside from the country’s diplomatic network of 209 total posts (Lowy Institute, 2020), this includes the Italian Institutes of Culture (*Istituti Italiani di Cultura*, IIC) with 84 offices in 59 countries, which are instated by the Italian government. In addition, the most widely represented institutions are the chapters from the Dante Alighieri Society (*Società Dante Alighieri*, DA), a non-profit organization supported by the government, which promotes the Italian language and culture to foreigners and Italians abroad. The society is represented with 481 chapters in 60 countries across all continents (Farnesina, 2020a).

**Table 4: Key ECP Statistics for Italy**

	<b>2019</b>
Number of countries with ECP activities	~123
Total number of institutions abroad	Dante Alighieri Society (481), C (84), archaeological missions (196), science centers (2). Total: > 763
Total number of FTE staff engaged in ECP activities	38 science & technology personnel, IIC (433), 183 (DGSP department), 1,700 teachers. Total: > 2,354
Government financial support (€ million)	211.9 <sup>5</sup>
Total expenditure of all ECP operators (€ million)	> 8.5
Number of countries with ECP activities	~123
Total number of institutions abroad	Dante Alighieri Society (481), Istituto Italiano di Cultura (84), archaeological missions (196), science centers (2). Total: > 763
Comparative ECP ranking	global

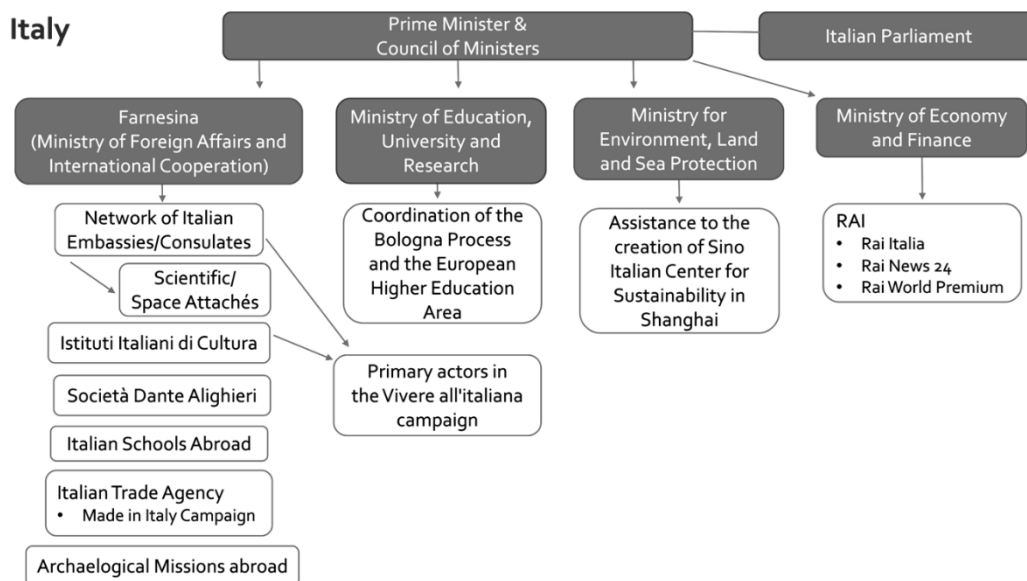
<sup>4</sup> Figure refers to 2019 budget. The Directorate General for the Promotion of the Country also covers aspects of economic diplomacy that are not included in the definition of ECP used here. The figure cannot be used as a stand-in for an ECP budget.

<sup>5</sup> The final budget for the Foreign Affairs Ministry was 1,107 million in 2019. The number refers only to the DGSP Department “Directorate General for the Promotion of the Country” (Direzione Generale per la promozione del sistema Paese) since its activities are the best equivalent to ECP.

Through the creation of Italy's integrated diplomatic campaign, the Farnesina has identified twelve pillars of action, cumulatively forming the "Vivere all'italiana" ("Italian Way of Life") campaign: (1) design, (2) archaeology and protection of cultural heritage, (3) Italian museums around the world, (4) contemporary art around the world, (5) Italian language, (6) invest your talent in Italy, (7) fine Italian cookery around the world, (8) cultural tourism, (9) cultural and creative industries: cinema, audiovisuals and publishing, (10) Mediterranean<sup>6</sup>, (11) promotion of science and research, and (12) integrated system missions (Farnesina, n.d.-b). Matched with these categories, Italy's institutions function as "one-stop-shops" that offer a wide spectrum of activities. After a starting period between 2016 and 2019, the Vivere all'italiana plan is now operational with a budget of €32 million in 2021, €47 million in 2022 and €51 million in 2023. After this period, the Farnesina intends to stabilize the program's endowment at €51 million per year (Italiana, 2020a).

Italy's systematic usage of cultural tools in external policy goes back to the Liberal Period – after the country's unification and before its political turn to Fascism in the 1920s. In the years since, Italy has adapted the tools and messages conveyed to complement the political climate of the times (Medici, 2019). After the awareness of the strategic usage of cultural elements in international cooperation grew in the 2000s, the relevant bodies – the Farnesina and Ministry of Culture ("Ministero della cultura") officialized the growing importance of their cooperation through a Memorandum of Understanding in 2008. Its implementation includes frequent exchanges between the two bodies, taking into account Italy's diplomatic and cultural representations abroad (Bodo & Bodo, 2016). While other countries have shied away from using the term "cultural diplomacy", resorting instead to terms like "international cultural cooperation", Italy explicitly embraces both the terms "cultural diplomacy" ("diplomazia culturale") and "scientific diplomacy" ("diplomazia scientifica"). Indeed, after its Fascist regime made active use of ECP to influence international opinion in its favor, Italy is certainly aware of the political weight that cultural and scientific diplomacy carry (Medici, 2019).

**Figure 1: Institutional map of Italy's ECP**



<sup>6</sup> This perhaps confusing subhead refers to Italy's commitment as a partner in the Mediterranean region.

The regional dissemination of the first IICs, established by Italy's fascist government in 1926, mirrored the distribution of the country's diaspora in an attempt to link Italian migrants to their home country (Lugli, 2018). This network expanded significantly in the period after the Second World War, when the Farnesina created the explicit mandate to establish bilateral cultural dialogues. Contrary to their prior propagandistic usage, the institutes were consequently considered an essential anchor to present Italian culture free from its fascist framing (Medici, 2019). Geographically, priority areas for Italy's foreign policy – including its ECP include fellow EU countries, as well countries located in the Western Balkans such as Montenegro and Croatia, which are bound to Italy by historic, as well as geographic ties. Furthermore, Italy's past migration flows to the Americas ensure that the country's institutions are strongly represented in many North and South American countries (Farnesina, n.d.-f).

Due to household brand names with strong international recognition, Italy's global role is also closely linked with the promotion of the “Made in Italy” label. This label presupposes that consumers want to purchase an emotional experience, tied to Italian traditions and its way of life, rather than a merely physical experience (Airos Soria, 2020). Although not strictly a field of ECP, this nation branding complements the notion of an Italian way of life internationally. Its promotion includes the involvement of the Italian Trade Agency in order to stimulate foreign investment in Italy in turn<sup>7</sup>. Along these lines, the Farnesina has further found that the Italian language is the second most utilized language for commercial signs internationally – indicating that the Italian language already evokes strong positive associations in consumers (Farnesina, n.d.-e). This image is not without its flaws, however. Despite the favorable reputation of Italian (luxury) brands abroad, the reality of their manufacturing standards has repeatedly caused stirs in international media (Girardi, 2019). Paired with the inconstancy of Italy's political regimes, it cannot be ignored as a viable threat to the status of Italy's brand abroad (Bremmer, 2021).

### 3. Fields of ECP

#### 3.1. Culture and the arts

Building on the country's advantaged status with significant cultural capital, Italy's cultural engagement between nations is further regulated through the 63 bilateral agreements relating to culture (Farnesina, 2020a). Among these, a thematic emphasis is put on audio-visual collaboration: approximately half are concerned with Italian cinema (Bodo & Bodo, 2016). In addition to the priority areas identified within these bilateral treaties, the most important instruments for Italian international cooperation are the governmentally organized IIC, as well as the non-profit DA. Both of their operations maintain a clear cultural mission at their core. This mission is fortified through a selection of cultural events tailored to the host country or city. These activities are supported centrally when certain Italian luminaries are celebrated, such as Rossini in 2018, Leonardo in 2019, Raphael in 2020 and Dante in 2021 (Italiana, 2020c). Additionally, there are specific program lines, such as the ‘Vivo d'arte’ Award, which is available to young Italian artists living abroad, or thematic events, such as the Italian movie celebration “Fare Cinema”, which are organized centrally from Rome (Farnesina, 2020b; Italiana, 2021a). The inclusion of libraries in the cultural centers abroad (called *Le Biblioteche*

<sup>7</sup> Their work is implemented through 79 offices in 65 countries.

*degli Istituti Italiani di Cultura*) ascertains their status as hubs of knowledge and Italian culture.

Unlike the national cultural institutes in several other European countries, such as the UK's British Council and Germany's Goethe Institut, the IIC are not organized in an "arms-length" manner. Instead, they are under the direct control of the Farnesina. As this political connection exposes the institutions to the changeability of the Italian government, this manner of management has been accused of leading to instability in long-term mission and guidance (Bodo & Bodo, 2016). Similarly, in the past, the budget allocated to the IIC has been accused of not measuring up to the institutional importance they carry, which has often limited their activity to the provision of their standard services, including regular classes and their libraries, limiting their flexibility to adapt new programs for their respective local audiences (Barillaro, 2021). With the integrated strategy "Vivere all'italiana", the Farnesina has since taken specific action to address these points of criticism, for instance by way of the advancing budget over the coming years (Italiana, 2020a). However, whether the more project-based support for cultural activities abroad can relieve the pressure on the institutional budgets remains to be seen.

**Table 5: Key statistics on culture and the arts**

	2019	2015
Number of countries present	Dante Alighieri Society (DA): 60 Italian Cultural Institutes (IIC): 59	-
Number of cultural agreements	63 cultural agreements Total: 154 science, culture, technology agreements	Total: 141 cultural and scientific agreements
Number of institutes	DA: 481 IIC: 84	DA: 482 IIC: 83
Number of FTE staff	IIC: 433	IIC: 411
Number of artists in exchange programmes	-	-
Budget (€ million)	DA: 8.5	DA: 6.43
Government financial support (€ million)	IIC: 11-12 annually DA: 3.3	-

Sources: Società Dante Alighieri, 2016a; 2016b; 2017; 2020; Società Dante Alighieri & Noli, 2016; Farnesina, 2016; 2019b; 2020; Lugli, 2018

### 3.2. Language

As a means to reinforce the Italian cultural footprint in the world, the instruction of the Italian language is an important component and valuable asset of the Italian cultural diplomacy strategy. For this reason, the Farnesina supported organizations and associations offering Italian language courses with €13.7 million in 2019 (Farnesina, 2020a). It promotes the "Italian Language Certification of Quality" association (CLIQ), which unites four different certifying bo-

dies to standardize the legal status of Italian language certification offered domestically and abroad in line with EU standards (Farnesina, n.d.-a). The harmonization of standards is also a sign for the important role the Italian language plays internationally. Indeed, interest in learning Italian has steadily grown since the 1990s (Bodo & Bodo, 2016). The year 2015 brought about a new triumph: in the ranking of most studied foreign languages in the world, Italian surpassed French and took fourth place (following English, Spanish and Chinese). Although the language was not widely “exported” through colonialism, as English, French and Spanish were, the pronounced interest in the language is influenced by two factors: the large Italian diaspora and the cultural relevance of Italian in the fields of music, fine art, architecture and culinary art (i Italy, 2019).

The most relevant institutions for the instruction of Italian abroad are once again the IIC and the Dante Alighieri Society, which complement individual local offers. The different chapters of the Dante Alighieri Society, alone, offer more than 7,000 different classes taught by 1,700 teachers (Società Dante Alighieri, 2017). With a combined number of approximately 182,000 students, these two networks have a wide reach, spanning more than 560 locations in at least 60 countries (Farnesina, 2020a; Società Dante Alighieri, n.d.). Beyond the two institutions, Italian is widely taught in Italian schools abroad and Italian language departments at higher education institutions<sup>8</sup>. Including all means of learning Italian, the Farnesina reports that more than two million people chose to study Italian in 2017 (Farnesina, 2017). In addition to language instruction, these classes often function as a gateway to Italian culture. For instance, several countries offer specific courses for Italian descendants (Farnesina, n.d.-e).

As mentioned above, the specific programming of the IIC typically varies from country to country. However, among those events that are observed in all Italian cultural institutions and diplomatic representations abroad is the annual “Week of the Italian Language in the World”. Celebrated in its 20<sup>th</sup> edition in 2020, this festivity was further supported by the diplomatic-consular network of the Swiss Confederation (as a country in which Italian is also one of four official languages). During this thematic week, each institution offered special programming related to the Italian language, with activities including exhibitions, concerts or discussion events (Farnesina, 2020c). Overall, at least 520 events were organized in this context (Farnesina, 2020a).

**Table 6: Key figures on language promotion**

	2019	2015
Number of countries where courses are offered	~ 60	~ 60
Number of students enrolled		
In-class	DA: 122,000 IIC: 60,403	DA: 122,000 IIC: 71,067
Other courses of Italian language and culture	375,853	309,965

<sup>8</sup> For more information on Italian education abroad, please consult the subsections “Primary and secondary education” and “Tertiary education and science”.



	2019	2015
Number of candidates for Italian language qualifications	-	IIC: 4,170 <sup>(2004)</sup> DA: 9,454
Number of language teachers	-	DA: 1,700
Budget (€ million)	<i>see above</i>	<i>see above</i>
Government financial support (€ million)	(2017-2021) "Promotion and strengthening of the Italian Culture and language abroad": 150 <sup>9</sup>	
Subsidies to organizations and associations for Italian language courses (through IIC) (€ million)	13.72	11.6

Sources: Farnesina, 2016; 2020; Società Dante Alighieri, 2017; Torcutti, 2005; Haller et al., 2004

### 3.3. Primary and secondary education

The history of Italy's dense network of primary and secondary education abroad goes back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when schools were established by Italian migrants or catholic missions following Italy's strong emigration flows. Although their organization was often autonomous upon their establishment, the Italian government assumed strategic control over the entire network in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Farnesina, 2013). Since their operation, these schools have been used as essential instruments of Italian cultural diplomacy, as well as tools to retain an impact on the Italian diaspora (Medici, 2019). The network of primary and secondary education abroad is composed of various school modes: there are 8 explicit Italian state schools abroad, 43 schools that follow the Italian curriculum, 7 Italian sections at European schools, 79 sections in foreign, bilingual or international schools and lastly, 2 private, though recognized schools<sup>10</sup>. The largest portion of these schools is located in South America, consistent with a strong Italian diaspora on the continent. Indeed, Argentina is home to the largest Italian population living abroad in 2019 and Brazil takes fourth place (Farnesina, 2020a).

Overall, around 33,000 students attend Italy's schools abroad. Beyond people of Italian descent or expatriate Italians, these schools also tend to attract a significant portion of international students. This number is reported to be 23,000 overall, amounting to about 70 percent of the entire student body. To support their functioning, the Farnesina assists in the provision of relevant teaching personnel, procuring a total of 607 teachers (Farnesina, n.d.-d).

<sup>9</sup> The funding is divided between the Ministries MAECI, MIUR, and MIBAC.

<sup>10</sup> This type of school is termed "unequal" by the Italian government.

**Table 7: Key figures on primary and secondary education**

	2019	2015
Number of schools	152 Italian schools, 113 Italy-related schools <sup>11</sup> , 124 lectorships Total: 389	148 Italian schools, 112 Italy-related schools, 166 lectorships, Total: 426
Number of students (Italian schools)	33,237 (23,003 foreigners)	30,423 (of which 23,467 foreigners)
Number of staff / teachers	607	-

Sources: Farnesina, 2016; 2020; Società Dante Alighieri, & Noli, 2016

### 3.4. Tertiary education and science

Italy's domestic higher education system is well-developed and home to some of the oldest universities in the world. This is also reflected in some renown: the international Times Higher Education Ranking lists three public Italian universities among its top 200 in 2021 – the University of Bologna, the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies and Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa (THE, 2021). Even beyond these prominent universities, Italy has embraced the mission to drive forward the internationalization of domestic higher education institutions. This process is strongly impacted by EU-wide student mobility schemes and harmonization processes, commencing with the implementation of the Bologna Process in 1999 for international comparability. Since then, a considerable increase in English-language programs, particularly on the graduate and doctorate level, was noted (OECD/European Union, 2019).

While the global market for international university students has become highly competitive, the motivation for internationalization differs between the Italian regions and institutions. Discrepancies in the speed and level of internationalization may also be due to the fact that there is no central strategy or implementing body for the country. The CIMEA (Centro di Informazione sulla Mobilità e le Equivalenze Accademiche) has been designated to oversee the internationalization of Italian higher education since 1986, however it is, most importantly, in charge of the recognition of foreign institutions in order to ensure academic mobility. Wider strategic processes and large scale objectives do not fall within the body's mandate (CIMEA, n.d.). Among Italian higher education institutions, the OECD has identified the academic rationale (i.e. the improvement of education quality, prestige, and ranking) as the most commonly cited motivation for internationalization. The process may also be an attempted remedy for some domestic obstacles: some Italian regions also struggle with declining enrolment numbers and adverse economic conditions, factoring into their quest to attract international students (OECD/European Union, 2019).

In order to support the mission to attract international students to Italian universities, Milan's private and well-respected Bocconi University has also created an Italian branch campus abroad. The SDA Bocconi Asia Center is a pan-Asian hub of the university's graduate business school in Mumbai. The campus has been deploying Executive Education and Postgraduate Programs designed and implemented by SDA Bocconi School of Management, Italy, since

<sup>11</sup> Bilingual sections, Italian sections in international schools, European schools, etc.

2012 (SDA Bocconi Asia Center, n.d.). Bocconi University is not the only institution that has acknowledged the potential of expanding its reach abroad. In accordance with the strong historical influence of Italy in South America, the University of Bologna established a campus in Argentina in 1998 (University of Bologna, n.d.-b). Italy itself is also home to a host of international branch campuses of renowned foreign institutions, such as the Bologna Center of the Johns Hopkins University. What is more, there are also several fully autonomous universities located in Italy, which follow the curricula and structural requirements of specific other countries or consider themselves international universities. Notable examples include the American University of Rome and the John Cabot University, both located in Rome and following the academic model from the United States (Vignoli, 2004).

In addition to the small number of campuses abroad, the promotion of Italian studies at campuses abroad is a further important tool to strengthen the presence and visibility of Italy abroad. In support of these measures, the Farnesina provides grants to a certain number of Italian chairs at foreign tertiary education institutions, aiming to promote the field of Italian studies. The Farnesina has scaled up this agenda item in recent years from only 171 grants in 2014 to 251 grants in 2019 (Farnesina, 2016, 2020a). Most of these chairs are located in Italy's European neighborhood, with 43% of the grants awarded to European universities in 2019. Once again, Italy's impact on the Americas is acknowledged, as 24% of all grants go there (ibid.).

In order to support and accelerate student flows, the Italian government also invests in a scholarship program aimed at international students<sup>12</sup> or Italians living abroad to study in Italy. In 2019, 5,394 such scholarships were awarded (up from 3,812 in 2015). The strongest demand for the scholarships came from students in the Middle East/North Africa (1,749 scholarships) and Asia/Oceania (1,077 scholarships) (Farnesina, 2016, 2020a). Even beyond this program, Italy is a popular destination for international students. Among the 106,611 inbound higher education students in 2018, the most frequent countries of origin were China, Albania, Romania, Iran and India, demonstrating some of the countries were the demand for scholarships were strongest (UNESCO, n.d.-a). European mobility through the Erasmus+ forms another important component of Italy's international student flows, accounting for 21,757 incoming students in 2018/2019 (European Commission, 2019). Outbound movements are visibly shaped by this offer: among the 75,954 outbound students in 2018, the United Kingdom, Austria, Germany, France and Spain were the most frequent destinations (UNESCO, n.d.-a).

**Table 8: Key figures on tertiary education**

	2019	2015
Number of countries	Branch campus abroad: 2	Branch campus abroad: 2
Number of domestic universities / colleges	99	-
Number of universities/colleges abroad	251 Italian studies departments 2 International Branch Campuses	226 Italian studies departments 2 International Branch Campuses

<sup>12</sup> The corresponding online portal "Study in Italy" provides an extensive list of eligible countries.

	2019	2015
Number of students		
Number of foreign students	Inbound: 106,611 <sup>(2018)</sup> Outbound: 75,954 <sup>(2018)</sup>	Inbound: 90,419
Number of government scholarships awarded <sup>13</sup>	5,394	3,812
Number of staff / teachers	SDA Bocconi Asia Center: ~34	-

Sources: OECD/European Union, 2019; SDA Bocconi Asia Center, n.d.; UNESCO, n.d.; University of Bologna, n.d.-a, n.d.-b; Vignoli, 2004

Taking into account the special position Italy assumes due to its ancient history, the country's engagement abroad has also included a field that combines culture and science like no other: archaeology. In cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, the Farnesina has struck engagements to support other countries in capacity-building and technical assistance to safeguard local cultural heritage and archaeological sites (Bodo & Bodo, 2016). This pertains most prominently to missions that “extend chronologically from prehistoric times to medieval times and geographically from the Greco-Roman world to the Near, Middle and Far East, Africa and Latin America“ (Italiana, n.d.). The majority of these missions is located in the Mediterranean and the Middle East (ibid.). Particularly because they are not often located in capital or even just larger cities where other Italian representations might exist, these missions sometimes form the only Italian presence in certain regions. Accordingly, they bear the specific commitment to fostering intercultural dialogue and are an invaluable and somewhat unique asset to Italy's cultural diplomacy portfolio (Farnesina, n.d.-c). Italy's only permanent archaeological institution abroad – the Italian Archaeological School of Athens (SAIA) founded in 1909 – is located in Greece and dedicated to the study of the country's cultural heritage from prehistory to the Byzantine age. It offers the opportunity to research and learn in Greece to four scholarship recipients every year (SAIA, n.d.).

Moving from archaeology to more traditional science and technology fields, the defining feature of Italy's science diplomacy is the presence of the country's researchers all over the world. In the field of research and technology, Italy has suffered from the consequences of brain drain of qualified Italian researchers for years – a likely consequence of a national financial support structure that lags behind the European average. Current estimations indicate that approximately 6,000 Italian researchers leave the country per year, with the United States and the United Kingdom ranking as the most popular destinations (Ruffini, 2017). Although Italian researchers demonstrate a strong performance in terms of the country's research output, this number is actually bolstered by expatriate researchers, while the domestic figure alone is much lower (ibid.). Acknowledging the importance of expatriate researchers, the Farnesina also promotes 22 Italian research associations abroad and advocates for their cooperation with Italian diplomats (Innovitalia, n.d.).

Both the Farnesina, as well as the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MUIR), have accordingly intensified the engagement for the internationalization of Italian research since 2015. For instance, the number of Italian researchers that are able to participate in

<sup>13</sup> Scholarships awarded by the Italian government to foreign students and Italian residents abroad.

international scientific exchanges has increased from 136 in 2015 to 251 in 2019 (Farnesina, 2020a). In the National Research Program of the MUIR, one strategic objective stipulates the complementarity of Italy's scientific initiatives with European and global science programs. Taking advantage of multilateral schemes and funding instruments as the EU's Horizon 2020 program is central to the achievement of this objective (MUIR, 2015). In this context, the MUIR advocates for a niche positioning for Italy's multilateral participation projects. Especially the country's location in the Mediterranean region has therefore allowed Italy to take on an active role in several research projects located in this area (ibid.). To offer a point of contact between the Italian government and its researchers abroad, the Farnesina and the MUIR have also jointly created the Innovitalia platform in 2012. The online portal's purpose is to offer a space for networking and collaboration for Italian researchers both at home and abroad (Ruffini, 2017).

Although the scientific diplomacy program located in the Farnesina lacks clear-cut goals and objectives, it is tied to a robust network of implementing agents through the network of Italian science representatives abroad. This network consists of 38 scientific attachés and employees, deployed to Italy's diplomatic representations abroad. Their function is to help negotiate bilateral collaboration projects, as well as represent the Italian scientific community internationally. Moreover, in light of Italy's sizeable expatriate science community, the attachés provide a link between domestic and international Italian research. On top of special representatives to certain international organizations, four of these experts are stationed in the United States, in addition to three attachés who are sent to China (Innovitalia, 2021). Two special attaché positions are arranged in Washington, DC and Brussels, where the Italian Space Agency ("Agenzia Spaziale Italiana") is represented through distinct space attendants (Ruffini, 2017). A host of selected experts, usually coming from major Italian research bodies, complement their work from Italy and support the facilitation of dialogues and bilateral research projects (Innovitalia, 2021).

Lastly, a consortium of Italian universities<sup>14</sup> and the Italian Ministry for Environment, Land and Sea Protection jointly created SICES, the Sino Italian Center for Sustainability in Shanghai, which is integrated into the campus of Tongji University. The center's mission is to find common ground regarding environmental protection policies, a cooperation project that goes back to 2005. SICES also provides a contact point for Italian universities seeking to enhance partnerships with Chinese companies and organizations (University of Bologna, n.d.-a).

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<sup>14</sup> The universities involved are: University of Florence, University of Bologna, Polytechnic University of Milan, Polytechnic University of Turin, University of Pavia and Venice International University.

**Table 9: Key figures on science and research**

	2019	2015
Number of countries	Scientific Experts: 26 Research institutions: 2	Archaeological missions: 56 Research institutions: 1
Number of institutes	Research institutions abroad: 2	Research institutions abroad: 1
Number of researchers / staff	> 38 <sup>15</sup>	-
Number of projects	Archaeological missions: 196	Archaeological missions: 178
Number scientists in exchange programmes	Research exchanges: 251 Scholarships for SAIA: 4	Research exchanges: 136 Scholarships for SAIA: 4
Government financial support (€ million)	MUIR: ~35.8 <sup>16</sup> (2017)	MUIR: ~35.8

Source: Farnesina, 2020; Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, 2015, SAIA, n.d.

### 3.5. Foreign Media

Italy's international media presence is led by public broadcaster Rai ("Radiotelevisione italiana"), which possesses more than ten domestic and international TV channels and is subordinated to the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Three of these channels are available globally, namely Rai Italia, Rai News 24 and Rai World Premium. Among these three, Rai Italia explicitly addresses international audiences with the aim to promote the Italian language and culture abroad. The channels targets Italian audiences abroad – whether they be part of temporary expatriate communities or the "longer-term" diaspora (RAI, 2016). Rai's portfolio formerly included the now discontinued "Yes Italia", a channel aimed at promoting tourism and the "Made in Italy" brand through content on Italian regions and cuisine. In its stead, Rai World Premium delivers domestic Italian productions. The three Italian-language channels are broadcast in five regional blocks: Rai Italia America, Rai Italia Asia, Rai Italia Australia, Rai Italia Africa (Senato della Repubblica, 2011). Europe is not specifically considered in this list, as many of Rai's channels are regularly available through European broadcasters. Only Rai Asia, however, is free to air, while many other regions only offer the channel with a variety of subscription models, which account for a portion of its income (RAI, 2016).

Although Rai also offers a variety of public radio stations widely available in Italy, their respective international radio broadcaster was discontinued in 2012 to cut down on costs (Portale Itlradio, 2011).

<sup>15</sup> Refers to the employees and scientific experts abroad.

<sup>16</sup> The Ministry of Education, University and Research has included several internationalization targets in its National Research Program. This target is listed with a budget of 107.4 million euros between 2015-2017. The figure listed above is an estimation based on this budget. Please note that it may include Italy's involvement in multilateral science & research efforts and does not account for the expenditure of Italy's science attachés, as these are financed through the Farnesina.

**Table 10: Key figures on foreign broadcasting**

<i>Rai Italia</i>	2019	2015
Number of countries broadcasted to	Worldwide	-
Number of languages	1	1
Number of channels	3	3
Audience / weekly (million reach)	20	-
Digital & social media audience (million)	Rai Italia Following: Twitter: 12,392 (2021) Facebook: 68,237 (2021) Instagram: 11,100 (2021)	-
Government financial support (€ million)	6.7 <sup>17</sup>	6.7

Sources: Twitter, 2021; Facebook, 2021; Instagram, 2021; Portale Italcadio, 2011; Farnesina, 2016, 2020; RAI, 2016, 2019; Senato della Repubblica, 2011; Ashford, 2015

**Table 11: Key figures on new media**

	2019	2015
<b>New Media</b>		
Social networks following	RAI: 80,237 (Facebook & Twitter combined)	-
Audience / unique visitors (monthly /million)	Rai News: 3.4	-

Sources: Twitter, 2021; Facebook, 2021; RAI, 2019

## 4. Challenges and future outlook

An overview of the Italy's landscape of actors, programs and strategies involved in Italy's ECP makes it plain that Italy is a country well-versed with the diplomacy toolbox. Relying on historic experience that extends to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Italy is visibly engaged with the perception of the country abroad and the factors that may influence it. This awareness has directly impacted Italy's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the COVID-19 pandemic commenced in Italy, it has incurred a devastating impact on the country and its people. As a direct response to this, the Farnesina has kicked off the online platform entitled "Italiana – Language Culture Creativity in the World", while most traditional ECP activities were brought to a halt. Faced with fewer opportunities of promoting Italian culture "face to face", the portal stands in as a central hub for a number of new programs, aiming "to create a new and more powerful

<sup>17</sup> State support to RAI was 62.9 million euros. This number refers to the subsidies for the item: "Television, radio, and multimedia offer for foreign countries".

narrative for Italy abroad, relaunching and supporting the country's cultural and creative industries" (Italiana, 2020b). Since its inauguration, more than 400 original works were supported by the Farnesina and shown on the platform, for instance including musical, historical, audiovisual and culinary projects (Italiana, 2020a). New additions, such as the "BookTuber Prize", which targets young social media influencers abroad in hopes of raising awareness about Italian literature, demonstrate that Italy is actively engaging with Italian learners globally and keeping up with new developments (Italiana, 2021b).

The successive creation of easy-to-use online portals for Italy's different subfields of ECP is not only a practical solution for the digital "lifestyle" imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also wittingly makes Italian culture, language, science, and education easily accessible to the Italian diaspora. By creating Italiana, as well as Innovitalia, the country attempts to take ownership of its narrative abroad and detract from the negativity of the COVID-19 news cycle. From a still-fragmented presentation of Italian ECP, Italy could now start streamlining activities and objectives. This reorientation could be particularly helpful for Italy's national brand "Made in Italy", as this has so far been promoted using disharmonized, ad-hoc prioritization. Although the Italian brand – the cumulation of the "Vivere all'italiana" – is already strong, it now remains to be seen whether a more streamlined integration of actors can create a more effective impact abroad (Airos Soria, 2020).

Moreover, Italy's excellent connections with expatriate researchers and diasporic communities are certainly helpful to advance bilateral relationships. However, as the number of researchers leaving the country suggests, the country has not yet been able to successfully strike the trade-off between domestic investments and international networking. As Italy's regional differences and economic shortfalls remain domestic obstacles, the country must not forget to prioritize incentives allow its domestic sectors to profit from their international peers and attract – or bring back – talent from abroad.



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