

UNICEF Report: “New Horizons for Learning. The use of educational technology for disadvantaged children in Italy”

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UNICEF releases today the [reports](#) “*New Horizons for Learning. The use of educational technology to support language learning and social inclusion of disadvantaged children in Italy*”, which presents the results of the first year of the experimentation of **Akelius**, the digital platform for learning foreign languages.

Between 2014 and 2020, more than 700,000 **asylum seekers and migrants** arrived in Italy and, according to data from the end of November 2022, around 49,400 refugee minors from Ukraine entered Italy. **From 2016 to 2021, an average of approximately 20,000 newly arrived students (NAI)** enrolled in schools in Italy each year. Many children still encounter difficulties in acquiring the fundamental skills of the Italian language. This is especially true for foreign students, who represent one in ten students in public schools.

The report is based on the Akelius trial **in 2021/2022 which involved over 400 students** in two comprehensive schools in **Rome and Bologna**, here in partnership with the social cooperative Agire Insieme Per l’Intercultura (AIPI). Since then, UNICEF has extended the use of the platform to another **60 Italian schools and Ukrainian associations**, in collaboration with the ISMU Foundation, involving over 1000 newly arrived pupils.

Akelius helps students learn the language in a fun way thanks to the innovative blended learning teaching approach, which integrates the use of tablets and interactive content in combination with classroom lesson materials.



The digital platform has helped foreign students and supported those with special educational needs

From the analysis conducted by the UNICEF office for Europe and Central Asia in collaboration with the UNICEF Innocenti Research Office, the use of the digital platform in classrooms has accelerated students' learning of Italian and English through personalized courses also suitable for girls and boys with special educational needs. Akelius has also improved student **motivation** to learn, largely due to **gamified content and instant feedback**.

This approach has been particularly useful in facilitating the scholastic and social inclusion of pupils newly arrived in Italy and of children with **disabilities**, giving teachers the possibility of providing personalized support to different students.

The research highlighted some **important recommendations for teachers and schools**. First, it is essential to establish clear protocols for managing digital devices, with well-defined rules and specific responsibilities. Additionally, teachers can plan their lessons by considering both how digital learning content can enrich teaching and how digital devices will be used in the classroom. Finally, teacher **training** on digital learning should be practical and focus not only on basic digital skills, but also on how to effectively integrate the use of educational technology within the school environment.