

# Focus Experience

#18

**Educating Cities**  
International Documents Databank



## Title

## The School Adopts a Monument

**A program which promotes the appropriation and protection of the historical heritage of Turin.**

## Basic data

**City:** Turin

**Country:** Italy

**Number of inhabitants:** 137.141

**Topics:** city knowledge, heritage, history, city and school, youth participation, cultural activities, identity and dissemination of culture.

**Principles of the Charter of Educating Cities:** 5, 7, 9, 20

## Summary

The goal of the project **The School Adopts a Monument** is to make the new generations aware of the protection and safeguarding of historical heritage sights, through the adoption of a monument by the schools and the consequent involvement of the students. The Institution of Turin for Responsible Education (ITER, original acronym) of the Municipal Department of Education is the organisation responsible for coordinating this initiative.

The project is addressed to all the schools in primary and secondary education in the city. Each school involved in the project is responsible for a monument for a period of three years. Under the auspices of the teachers, the students become the protagonists of the activities that will be carried out in order to learn about the adopted monument in depth, and, later, explain this information to the citizens. To do so, the students make a historical, cultural and environmental study of the monument and then design a program for its care and appreciation.

The promotion of the monument is carried out through events, exhibitions and guided tours led by the students themselves. Likewise, exchange visits are made among students of different schools involved in the project in order for them to learn about other monuments.

The adopted monuments are churches, museums, historical palaces, fountains, statues, etc., but also streets and squares that have a historical and relevant emotional meaning for the community. During the 2013-14 school-year, 49 monuments have been adopted by 45 schools, with more than 3,000 students participating.

**The School Adopts a Monument** was created in 1995 by the Napoli Novantanove Foundation of Naples. Initially, it started with the involvement of different schools in Naples and later it began to spread in different Italian cities. At this time more than 80 Italian cities are involved in this initiative and, it has also spread in about 15 cities in Europe.



**Young guides of different adopted monuments**

## Objectives

- To inform the citizens of their heritage sites.
- To promote the feeling of belonging to the city and encourage a responsible citizenry.
- To become aware of the legacy of earlier societies as a basis for promoting respect and care for historical heritage sites.
- To foster the educational role of the city, as a space generating individual and collective identity, and of shared memory.

## Methodology

The students choose the monument to be adopted, although the adoption proposal is agreed by the school and the institution responsible for the project, the ITER. The primary schools tend to adopt monuments nearby, which facilitates being able to work with the students on the feeling of belonging to the city, as well as getting them to appreciate where they live. On the other hand, the secondary schools often choose monuments located in the old city centre, where the heritage sites studied in class are located.

The ITER carries out explanatory talks on the project for the teachers who will be involved in the experience. Furthermore, during the course of the initiative, the institutions responsible for the monuments offer information sessions to the teachers on the historical site adopted.

The project is carried out in three years and there is an initial learning phase about the monument adopted, followed by a series of initiatives to promote, publicise and make citizens appreciate the monument. During the first year, and with the aid of the teachers, the students study the monument from many perspectives (historical, iconographic, urban-environmental, social, etc.). After the historical and documental phase is completed, each school prepares a monument promotion plan, through the creation of publicity tools, in order to stimulate the interest of the citizenry in the heritage site. Once the documentary material has been put together, shows and other events are planned to help promote the importance and knowledge of the monument.

In the second phase, a series of interactions between the schools involved in the project are planned, including the creation of sister-schools, exchanges of materials, organisation of visits to different monuments, creation of cultural educative tours, etc. During the entire adoption period, the school has the privilege of enjoying the monument, of being responsible for its symbolic custody and of acting as guide during different public events or during visits by other schools or organised groups.

During the course of the project, the students can make proposals to the Administration in order to restore the areas where the adopted monuments are located. The proposals are evaluated, and, based on whether they are feasible, they are carried out. Therefore, the students can see with satisfaction that their ideas have been taken into account.

On Sundays in May, to conclude the work done during the school year, the students participate in an event called "Turin, Open House", which consists in showing the citizens all the adopted monuments. The students become hosts, explaining to the public each monument as well as the study work they have carried out.



**Different activities of the programme.**

## Social and urban context

The city of Turin is located in the region of Piedmont at the northwest of Italy. It has a population of 897,682 inhabitants and a population density of 6,887 inhab./km<sup>2</sup> (2013). It occupies a surface area of 130 km<sup>2</sup>.



View of Torino and the Alps

By age groups, the population breaks down as follows: 0 to 19 years old, 16.2%; 20 to 44, 31.4%; 45 to 64, 27.3% and 65 and over, 24.9% (source: Municipal Statistics Institute of Turin as at 31/12/2013).

The city's economy has traditionally been based on industry, and is one of the main industrial hubs in the country, forming part of the "Industrial Triangle" together with Milan and Genoa. Since the 80s the secondary sector has begun to give way to the tertiary sector.

## Assessment

This experience has revealed itself to be an effective tool for research, promotion and education on issues related to architecture and urban space. Moreover, it promotes knowledge of the urban changes that the city has experienced and fosters the participation in its transformation.

### Strengths:

-Enthusiasm and strong motivation on the part of the teachers, who, in spite of the difficult times that the schools are going through due to the economic situation, are managing to involve the students and their families in this initiative.  
-The families act enthusiastically as promoters of the monuments in other schools and the city in general.

-Thanks to the awareness work done by the students, different heritage sites have been renovated, including:

- The Bèla Rosin Mausoleum was converted into an exhibition space.
- Part of the Vittorio Square was renovated and made into a pedestrian zone.
- The Santísimo Salvador baroque church, abandoned years ago, has been restored and made operational.
- The Borgo San Paolo public baths were renovated as a Turkish bath.
- One school designed and made a protected path for the blind by the Murazzi (river walls) in the Lungo Po N. Macchiavelli district, in collaboration with the Italian Union of the Blind.
- The company Manufactura Tabacos will be turned into a university site.

### Weaknesses:

The ongoing decrease of funding, which is basic to the roll out of the program, such as, for example, for the creation of publicity material.

### Future proposals:

- To involve more sectors of the city in the initiative, pooling synergies in order to give the project more visibility.
- To carry out other events addressed to the citizens in general so that this project is not seen solely as a school activity.
- To publicize the initiative through more media, such as, for example, through a television channel.

## Contact

**Organisation:** City Council of Turin  
Department of Education– Institution of Turin for Responsible Education (ITER)

**Contact:** Ms Sofia Petrosino  
Person in charge of the Project

**Email:** [adotta.monumento@comune.torino.it](mailto:adotta.monumento@comune.torino.it)

**Phone:** +39 0114429104

**Project Website:** [http://www.comune.torino.it/iter/iniziativa/la\\_scuola\\_adotta\\_un\\_monumento/index.shtml](http://www.comune.torino.it/iter/iniziativa/la_scuola_adotta_un_monumento/index.shtml)