

Banks and Young People in Italy: Financial Product, Credit and other Features

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Abstract

The financial crisis has affected all aspects of the global economy and has certainly exacerbated the social and economic conditions that young people are experiencing in many European countries.

The lack of job opportunities and employment services, the temporary nature of work, the absence of sufficient social security, the high cost of education and the difficulties involved in finding a home are all barriers that mainly hit young people who do not receive financial support from their families. All this is also a result of the rationing of credit loaned to the entrepreneurial sector and particularly young people who intend to start up companies, turn self-employed, buy property etc..

Unemployed young people, with no chance of turning self-employed, starting their own business or buying a first home are, to a great extent, young people without a future and without prospects. They are a social emergency that can no longer be put off or avoided, especially in this moment of crisis.

In this perspective, as regards Italy this study aims to analyse: a) the details of the range of financial products specifically designed for the youth market; b) the technical and operational characteristics of the relationship between banks and young people.

JEL classification numbers: G1, G2, J00

Keywords: credit, unemployed young people, financial crisis.

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1 Introduction

The financial crisis that recently affected all aspects of the global economy and particularly hit more developed economies helped unleash an intense debate among operators, watchdogs and academics – in this country as elsewhere – regarding the main causes, consequences and the possible solutions to this crisis, with a particular focus on the issue of jobs for young people and credit loaned to young enterprises.

The international financial crisis has certainly exacerbated the social and economic conditions that young people are experiencing in many European countries; the lack of job opportunities and employment services, the temporary nature of work, the absence of sufficient social security, the high cost of education and the difficulties involved in finding a home are all barriers that mainly hit young people who do not receive financial support from their families. All this is also a result of the rationing of credit loaned to the entrepreneurial sector and particularly young people who intend to start up companies, turn self-employed, buy property etc.

As we all know, high growth rates of revenue, investment and value added per employee and the tendency to export (all indicators presumably associated with growth prospects) simplified access to credit during the period prior to the crisis, but as soon as the recession became obvious and all its effects were felt, credit was rationed in a more indiscriminate way, to the point where it was less tied to the development prospects of companies (Bank of Italy, 2012).

Current news reports remind us daily of how the difficulty of gaining access to credit for those belonging to this group is one of the problems that pose the biggest obstacles to getting their projects and ideas off the ground: if we examine the matter closely, what we see is a generation that is consequently experiencing undeniable difficulties which stop them from entering the job market, acquiring a home and, hence, creating a new family. Unemployed young people, with no chance of turning self-employed, starting their own business or buying a first home are, to a great extent, young people without a future and without prospects. They are a social emergency that can no longer be put off or avoided, especially in this moment of financial and economic crisis. Therefore attempts to understand what the technical, operational and human characteristics of the youth market's relationship with the banking industry are can prove useful. To this end, this study aims to provide a true picture of the actual role carried out by lenders operating in Italy as regards those 'young' people who wish to embark on business ventures, self-employment work and/or would like to buy a home.

This study is set out as follows: the next section focuses on presenting the main publications in the field of economics that focus on the difficulties of accessing credit and possible solutions identified to encourage the launch of new businesses and self-employment ventures, as well as purchasing a home. The third section describes the objectives, methods and instruments of analysis used in this study, while the fourth section focuses on describing the sample of lenders who were studied in our survey. The fifth section provides a snapshot of the current range of products designed for young people in Italy; the sixth section focuses on the survey itself, concentrating on the technical and operational details of the relationship between young people and banks in Italy, conducted on a selected sample of lenders. The final section lists a few (almost) conclusive observations.

2 Articles on Credit extended to Young People

Not only is the search for leading publications dealing with the issue of young people's access to credit (as regards housing and the launch of new businesses in a strictly economic or business view) quite an arduous and complex exercise; it also leads to results that are generally only partial. Truth be told, it is an issue that is widely debated in spheres that see the active participation of various different types of players including social sciences academics, national governments, public institutions, representatives from the finance industry, unions, other socio-professional groups who represent specific interests or industries etc...

As well as the abovementioned problems, we should add that we are in the presence of scientific literature that, though valuable, often focuses its attention on single aspects which, in this study, we consider jointly: this is the case, for example, in Forrest and Yip's article (2013), one of the few that has tackled the problem of young people's access to housing and credit, presenting a series of case studies in different European, Asian and Australian contexts, as well as the situation in the United States.

More frequently, we come across scholarly publications that are not specifically focused on the 'youth' market or publications that, though dealing with this particular group, tackle the analysis from a different point of view to the strictly economic one. For example, this is the case in many articles that, though focusing on the difficulties young people have in getting their own home, analyse the problem from a social, demographic and political point of view (Mencarini, Tanturri, 2006; Giaccaria *et al.*, 2008; Santarelli, De Pascale, 2012) and publications focusing on so-called 'social housing' (Prizzon *et al.*, 2008; Baldini, Federici, 2008; Lungarella, 2010); as well as articles that tackle the issue of new start-ups while disregarding the role played by banks (De Waal, 2004; Isaksen, 2005; Voss, Müller, 2009; Dornberger, Zeng, 2009; Tamasy, 2010), i.e. which analyse the problem of financing start-ups without, however, considering the 'age-characteristics' of entrepreneurs (Florio, 2003; Gualandri, Schwizer, 2008; Akyol A., Athreya K., 2011; Bertoni F., Colombo M.G., Grilli L., 2011; Nofsinger J.R., Wang W., 2011; of the IP Finance Institute, 2011). Furthermore, there are articles on self-employment that focus on how likely men and women are to set up this type of business (Fehrenbach, Lauxen-Ulbrich, 2006; Tervo, Haapanen, 2010) or the possible coexistence of self-employment and formal entrepreneurship (Mason *et al.*, 2009).

3 Goal, Methodology and Survey Procedure

These are the main results of the paper.

Sections and subsections should be numbered as 1, 2, etc. and 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2 respectively.

Capital letters should be used for the initial letter of each noun and adjective in the section titles, the section should be formatted as left, bold, times new roman, and 15pt font size. For subsection (left, bold, times new roman, and 14pt), the initial letter of first word should be capitalized. And also similarly for other sub-subsections (left, bold, times new roman, and 12pt).

As mentioned above, as regards Italy this study aims to analyse: a) the details of the range of financial products specifically designed for the youth market; b) the technical and operational characteristics of the relationship between banks and young people.

In the absence of public information and databases that could help us attain this research objective, we considered it useful to proceed according to two main guiding strategies:

- on the one hand, by mapping the current range of products designed for young people provided by the leading credit institutions operating in Italy;
- on the other hand, by using purposive sampling³ (Frosini et al. 1999), carried out by preparing and then handing out a questionnaire to a selected sample of banks (the Bank Questionnaire) operating in Italy; a sample that, though limited from the point of view of the number of lenders taken into consideration, could provide meaningful answers, given that they represent a broad share of the financial market.

The fundamental choice of method applied in conducting this survey was to carry out a selection ‘up-stream’ of the lenders we focused our attention on, so that their answers could represent the operational methods generally applied when dealing with young customers.

4 The Lenders we examined

As soon as we wish to define the ‘features’ of our chosen respondents, we must mention how it is not possible to gain access to an immediate illustration of the ‘weight’ each credit institution has within its particular market, as the Bank of Italy’s 2011 Annual Report only provides a classification of lenders operating in Italy in its Appendix, in the Glossary section, according to their respective categories and group size (Table 1 and Table 2).

In order to overcome this apparent *impasse* as regards 2011, industry data published by Bank of Italy was examined as well as the data published in lenders’ public accounting documents: by comparing the total assets of each lender with the total system’s assets we went on to identify the leading players operating in this country (of which we list the top 15 in Table 3), those on which we mainly decided to concentrate our analysis. Though the number of these operators is small compared to the industry under review, it is easy to see how these represent almost 90% of the market share; add to that the fact by referring – in most of the cases examined – to ‘uniformly related banking groups’ or ‘diverse banking establishments’ our research task became much easier as one can reasonably assume that the answers provided by the holding company or one of the companies that make up the group represent a glimpse of a generally shared *modus operandi*.

³‘Purposive sampling’ is one of the *methods of non-probability sampling*, i.e. methods where the choice of the sample’s *n* unit disregards haphazard criteria and, therefore, the units are selected in terms of particular fact-finding needs or for particular characteristics. In particular, purposive sampling involves choosing areas of analysis or sample units depending on the characteristics of the phenomenon we wish to study and the researcher’s strong conviction that these characteristics are concentrated in such areas or in such units. Among the methods most commonly used in purposive sampling is *balanced sampling*, obtained by choosing units on the basis of a presumed identity or near approximation between the parameters of the sample and the parameters of the population. For sampling methods, see Frosini B.V. et al. (1999).

Table 1: Banks resident in Italy in 2011: classified by category

Category	Number	%
Limited company banks	215	29,01
Subsidiaries of foreign banks	78	10,53
Cooperative banks	37	4,99
Mutual banks	411	55,47
Total	741	100,00

Source: *Bank of Italy (2012), p. 307.*

Table 2: Banks resident in Italy in 2011: classified by group size

Size	Number	%
Maggiori	6	0,81
Grandi	9	1,21
Medie	31	4,18
Piccole	135	18,22
Minori	560	75,57
Totale	741	100,00

Source: *Bank of Italy (2012), p. 307.*

Table 3: Banks resident in Italy in 2011: market share

No.	Bank	Total assets (thousands €)	% of total
1	GRUPPO UNICREDIT	926,768,744.00	31.41
2	GRUPPO BANCARIO INTESA SANPAOLO	639,317,101.00	21.67
3	GRUPPO MONTE DEI PASCHI DI SIENA	240,757,724.00	8.16
4	GRUPPO BANCO POPOLARE	134,126,618.00	4.55
5	GRUPPO UNIONE DI BANCHE ITALIANE	129,803,694.00	4.40
6	GRUPPO BANCARIO BANCA NAZIONALE DEL LAVORO	97,943,321.00	3.32
7	GRUPPO BANCARIO MEDIOBANCA	76,904,217.00	2.61
8	GRUPPO BANCA POPOLARE DELL'EMILIA ROMAGNA	60,487,931.00	2.05
9	GRUPPO BIPIEMME – BANCA POPOLARE DI MILANO	51,935,786.00	1.76
10	GRUPPO BANCARIO CARIPARMA CREDIT AGRICOLE	49,290,653.00	1.67
11	GRUPPO BANCARIO DEXIA CREDIOP	48,831,774.00	1.66
12	GRUPPO CARIGE	44,860,061.00	1.52
13	GRUPPO BANCARIO BANCA POPOLARE DI VICENZA	41,878,711.00	1.42
14	GRUPPO BANCARIO VENETO BANCA	37,968,621.00	1.29
15	CREDITO EMILIANO - CREDEM	31,097,308.00	1.05
	Total	2,611,972,264.00	88.53

Source: *Our extrapolation based on Bank of Italy data and the 2011 balance sheets of these lenders*

5 Mapping the Products designed for the Youth Market

The map summarising the current range of financial products designed for young people offered by the main lenders operating in this country (in the Table in Enclosure 1) was drafted by consulting their respective corporate websites.

From an initial review of the information gathered, one can come to the following conclusions:

- there is no, one, single definition for the term ‘young people’; while the lower limit of the age range of those seeking credit considered to be ‘young’ is universal (≥ 18 years of age), the upper age limit proves to be extremely variable (≤ 29 ; ≤ 30 ; ≤ 32 ; ≤ 35 ; etc.) and, at times, lenders even refer in general to an unspecified audience of ‘young people’ or ‘young couples’;
- young people are generally offered ad hoc bank products: current accounts, debit cards, cash cards and short-term loans;
- as far as buying a first home is concerned:
 - a. almost 50% of lenders do not offer a special range of products;
 - b. only some lenders, especially larger ones, have products designed for the youth market: indeed, in most cases, even when a product is specifically considered to be for this group, we can ascertain that this product is also offered to other types of customers;
- as regards self-employment, we can see that only one lender offers a special product for young people, mainly designed for buying a newly found property or the takeover of a family-run company by businesses run by young people between 18-35 years of age;
- as regards start-ups, there are no products designed for young entrepreneurs at all;
- we can see that it is common to resort to insurance cover associated with loans which, however, is of a general nature and not strictly aimed at covering loans extended to young people.

6 The survey

The empirical evaluation was carried out using a questionnaire handed out to a selected sample of banks between the second quarter of 2012 and the first quarter of 2013.

The questionnaire consisted of three areas of investigation (Figure 1) and a total of 20 questions. The questions were usually in a multiple-choice format. The few questions that were set as open answers asked the lenders interviewed to supply brief answers so as to obtain data that could be compared. The questionnaire was sent via e-mail together with a letter explaining the main objectives of the questionnaire itself, compilation deadlines and the ultimate aims of the research in the field to which it applies.

More specifically, the areas of investigation were the following (Figure 1):

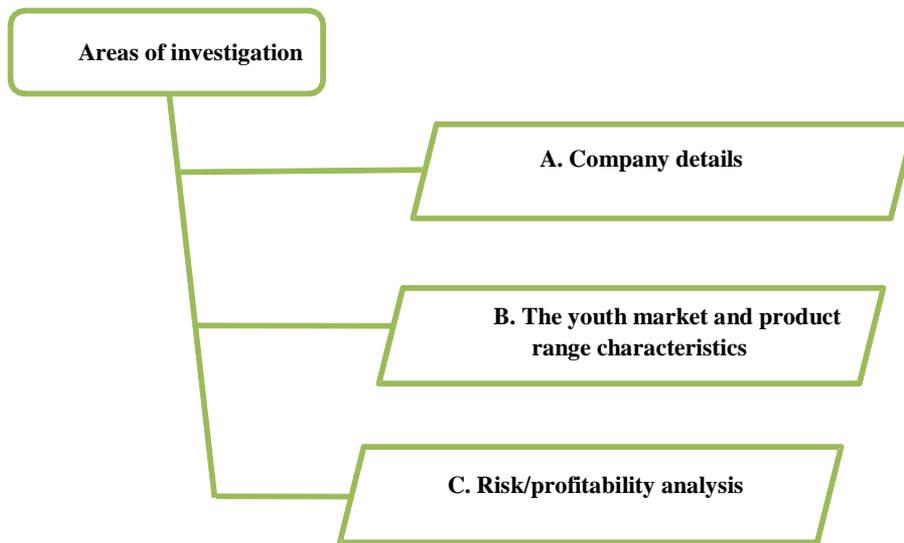


Figure 1: The questionnaire's structure

- *Company details*: the lender's details, the company role of the person answering the questions;
- *The youth market and product range characteristics*: a definition of the youth market, its importance in terms of percentage of the client portfolio, technical types of loans, the percentage of loans extended to young people in the past three years, the availability of instruments supporting access to credit etc.;
- *Risk/Profitability analysis*: factors analysed in order to evaluate creditworthiness, the percentage of bad credit in the past three years, the evaluation of mitigation instruments available, average profitability produced by the youth market, possible future changes to policies regarding loans for the youth market.

The questionnaire was sent via e-mail during the first ten days of February. The data from the completed questionnaires was gathered and processed in June and the following report was produced.

6.1 Results of the Survey: Company Details

Having identified the 'limits' of the group selected to receive the questionnaire, this led us to select a total of 60 lenders that could represent approximately 90% of their industry. Apart from the 15 lenders listed in Table 3, we decided to include a further 45 smaller players in the sample in order to investigate the possible adoption of different operating methods in future.

When asked to participate in this survey, 34 operators agreed to cooperate, representing approximately 58% of the targeted market. In particular, out of the 34 banks interviewed, we included:

- as regards the classification shown in Table 1, 30 *limited company banks*, 1 *subsidiary of a foreign bank*, 1 *cooperative bank*, 2 *mutual banks* (Figure 2);

b) as regards the classification shown in Table 2, 32 *major* banks, 2 *large* banks, 7 *medium-sized* banks, 17 *small* banks and 5 *minor* banks.

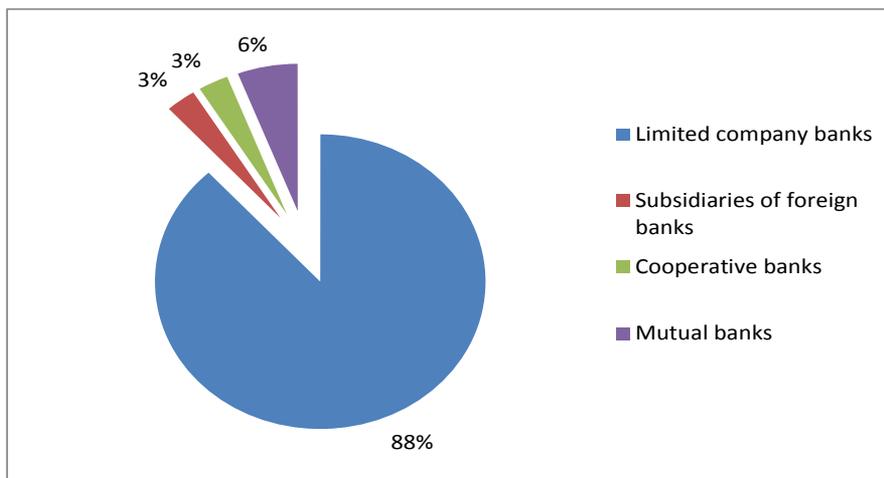


Figure 2: Respondent banks by category

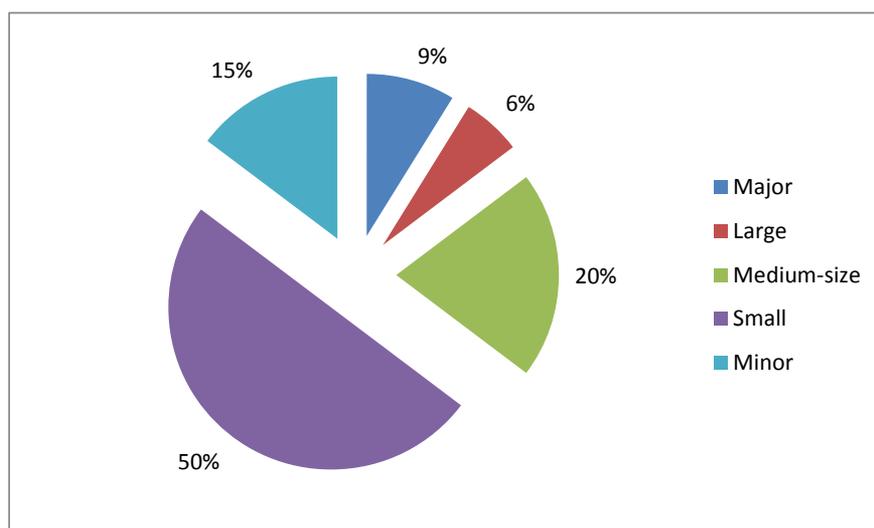


Figure 3: Respondent banks by group size

Five of the lenders analysed sent the questionnaire back without filling it in; hence the data that follows was compiled on the basis of only 29 completed questionnaires. However, many of these were only partly filled in. The average number of questions answered was, in actual fact, very low; an initial symptom, perhaps, of the lack of attention/appeal this customer audience has for lenders.

6.2 The Results of the Survey: The Youth Market and Product Range Characteristics

Information concerning the survey's area of investigation entitled *The youth market and product range characteristics* allowed us to understand whether the lenders analysed had a

youth market, how they defined it, what its importance was in terms of its percentage of their client portfolio, what range of products were on offer, whether they had instruments to support access to credit etc.. Of the lenders surveyed, 21 declared that there is a ‘youth market’ in their range of client categories; the remaining eight said they did not have a special category set aside for this type of customer (question no.1), hence displaying a lack of commercial interest for this category which, as has already been mentioned above, often lacks appeal given the small profit margins that can be gained from this category.

Question no. 2 intended to find out what percentage the ‘young market’ accounted for (if 100 is the total number of clients in the portfolios of these lenders) over the 2009-2011 period. Banks did not always answer this question, probably because of the inadequate and vague way this data is filed. This problem often lowered the number of answers supplied to many questions in the questionnaire.

The average figures for this percentage seem to have risen slightly in the 2009-2010 period and generally remained stable during the two-year period of 2010-2011. Overall, the average percentage attributable to the youth market compared to total client numbers seems to have increased, even if the data is not totally comparable given the different number of answers available for these years (as Table 4 shows below).

Table 4: Percentage of the youth market compared to total client numbers

	2009	2010	2011
Available answers	4	18	20
Average figure	13%	15.50%	15.50%

Question no. 5 attempted to investigate the percentage that could be attributed solely to the ‘youth’ market out of the total loans extended to clients in the 2009-2011 period. The questionnaire offered range options for this answer. The most common ranges selected by the banks who answered for the entire three-year period were 1-10%, 11%-20% and 21-30%, evidence of the relatively minor importance of the youth market compared to the total credit extended by the lenders analysed.

Question no. 5 attempted to investigate the percentage that could be attributed solely to the ‘youth’ market out of the total loans extended to clients in the 2009-2011 period. The questionnaire offered range options for this answer. The most common ranges selected by the banks who answered for the entire three-year period were 1-10%, 11%-20% and 21-30%, evidence of the relatively minor importance of the youth market compared to the total credit extended by the lenders analysed.

Table 5: Percentage of the youth market compared to the total amount of credit extended

	2009	2010	2011
1-10%	3	3	43
11%-20%	1	1	1
21%-30%	2	2	2

Question no. 6 attempted to find out, in detail, the importance of specific types of loans

for a) the self-employed, b) the purchase/renovation/construction of a first home in the 'youth' market, c) micro-enterprise, compared to the total value of credit extended.

In two out of five cases, loans for the self-employed had no weight in the 2009-2011 period; in one case, they accounted for between 1% and 10%, in only one other case they accounted for between 51% and 60% and for only one other lender their maximum weight was between 91% and 100%. The importance of loans varies a fair amount in the sample analysed; the respondent banks indicated, at different times, six different ranges from those listed. It seems the answers that were particularly concentrated in the lower ranges were those loans destined for micro-enterprise, where the 0%-20% range was indicated most frequently (see Table 6).

The lenders surveyed seem to offer a fair number of products for the purchase/renovation/construction of a first home and for micro-enterprise. However, the lion's share of this range seems to be concentrated on traditional products, as the Table 7 shows.

Table 6: Percentage of credit extended to young people compared to total credit extended: focus on main areas of activity

	SELF-EMPLOYMENT			FIRST HOME PURCHASE / RENOVATION / CONSTRUCTION			MICRO-ENTERPRISE		
	2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011
0	4	4	4	1	1	1	4	4	4
1-10%	1	1	1				1	1	1
11%-20%							1	1	1
21-30%									1
31%-40%		1		1	2	3	1	1	1
41%-50%				2					
51%-60%	1	1	1						
61%-70%									
71%-80%				1	1	1			
81%-90%				1	1	1			
91%-100%	1	1	1						

Table 7: Products designed for the youth market

Asset management	Deposits (of various technical types)	Loans (of various technical types) for the self-employed (professionals, craftsmen)	Loans (of various technical types) for the purchase/renovation/construction of a home	Loans (of various technical types) for micro-enterprise (except corporate)	Other (please specify in the adjacent box)	We have no products of this kind
0	22	3	23	23	24	0

Among the other products listed by the respondent banks, which were not included in the questionnaire's own list, we find the following:

- ALFA banks: Personal Loans; Student loans; SIM cards; Savings Schemes; Car Insurance; Prepaid Cards;
- BETA banks: school book loans, PCs, payment of school fees, travel;
- VEGA banks: €1,500-15,000 personal loans for young people with a 6.50% interest rate to fund personal spending, planning and redistributing the repayment over time with monthly instalments; the opening of a line of credit on a current account for young

people in order to fund the costs of university fees, €1,000 per year with a 25% refund of up to €1,500 for those who earn a degree with top marks; a 50% discount on a Classic Cartasi credit card; a free prepaid card, free cash card, a 50% Discount on an Account Share Portfolio;

- GAMMA banks: Student loans.

We then went on to analyse (with question no. 4) whether the technical types of loans designed for the youth market regarding a) self-employment, b) first home purchase/renovation/ construction and c) micro-enterprise were supplemented by instruments that mitigate the risk factors associated with the applicant and/or operation.

Of course, these instruments have different legal characteristics (tied to assets or people) and operational characteristics (percentage of cover, opening and closure procedure, etc.) depending on the type of macro-category of loans involved in points a), b) and c). The results available allowed us to see that the technical types of loans designed for the self-employed are accompanied by personal guarantees, CPI policies and, to a lesser extent, by guarantees issued by the Fondo Centrale (or SME Guarantee Facility) and insurance policies compliant with prudential supervision legislation on Credit Risk Mitigation (Bank of Italy, circ. 263 dated 26.12.2006, Heading II).

Table 8: Self-employment: mitigation instruments

Financial guarantees	Property guarantees	Personal guarantees	Mutual guarantees (provided by the Confidi consortium as per Art. 106 and Art. 107, SME guarantee bank	Fondo Centrale (SME Guarantee Facility) as per Law 662/1996	Compliant insurance policies (surety policies and life insurance policies)	CPI policies	Other (please specify in the adjacent box)	We have no products of this kind
0	0	2	0	1	1	2	0	3

In contrast, when it comes to first home purchase/renovation/construction, technical types of loan are more often supported by property guarantees, CPI policies and insurance policies, i.e. personal types of guarantees. Some lenders specified that they resort to ad hoc mitigation instruments for this market.

Table 9: First home purchase/renovation/construction: mitigation instruments

Financial guarantees	Property guarantees	Personal guarantees	Mutual guarantees (provided by the Confidi consortium as per Art. 106 and Art. 107, SME guarantee bank	Fondo Centrale (SME Guarantee Facility) as per Law 662/1996	Compliant insurance policies (surety policies and life insurance policies)	CPI policies	Other (please specify in the adjacent box)	We have no products of this kind
0	23	5	0	0	20	22	18	0

In contrast, where loan operations designed for micro-enterprises set up by young people are concerned, personal guarantees most often support these operations as well as, to a lesser extent, Fondo Centrale guarantees and CPI policies.

Table 10: Micro-enterprise: mitigation instruments

Financial guarantees	Property guarantees	Personal guarantees	Mutual guarantees (provided by the Confidi consortium as per Art. 106 and Art. 107, SME guarantee bank)	Fondo Centrale (SME Guarantee Facility) as per Law 662/1996	Compliant insurance policies (surety policies and life insurance policies)	CPI policies	Other (please specify in the adjacent box)	We have no products of this kind
0	1	4	1	2	1	2	0	2

In order to understand more fully the technical and operational characteristics of mitigation instruments supporting the three main macro-categories of loans extended to young people examined here, we asked the banks the following:

- what is the percentage of cover provided by such instruments (question 7);
- how useful are the abovementioned instruments for accessing credit (question 8);
- what is the average amount that such instruments can deduct from interest rates on loans (question 9);
- what their evaluation is of such instruments when determining the creditworthiness of young people applying for loans (question 10).

As regards self-employment, the average percentage of cover provided most frequently by mitigation instruments supporting technical types of loans in this macro-category was the following:

Table 11: Self-Employment: the percentage of cover provided by mitigation instruments

	Products for the self-employed in the 'youth' market						
	Financial guarantees	Property guarantees	Personal guarantees	Mutual guarantees (provided by the Confidi consortium as per Art. 106 and Art. 107, SME guarantee bank)	Compliant insurance policies (surety policies and life insurance policies)	CPI policies	Other (please specify in the adjacent box)
0							
1-10%	1	1				1	1
11%-20%					1		
21-30%							
31%-40%							
41%-50%							
51%-60%			1				
61%-70%					1		
71%-80%			1			1	1
81%-90%							
91%-100%			1				1

- 1-10%: for financial guarantees, property guarantees, compliant insurance policies and CPIs;
- 51%-60% for personal guarantees;
- 71%-80%: for personal guarantees, compliant insurance policies and CPI policies;
- 91%-100% for personal guarantees and CPI policies.

As regards the purchase/renovation/construction of a first home, the average percentage of cover most frequently provided by mitigation instruments supporting the technical types of loans for this macro-category were the following:

- 1-10%: for financial guarantees;
- 11-20% for personal guarantees;
- 21%-30% for mutual guarantees and personal CPI policies;
- 71%-80%: for property guarantees, personal guarantees, compliant insurance policies and CPI policies;
- 91%-100% for property guarantees and CPI policies;

Table 12: First home purchase/renovation/construction: percentage of cover provided by mitigation instruments

	First home purchase/renovation/construction products: 'youth' market						
	Financial guarantees	Property guarantees	Personal guarantees	Mutual guarantees (provided by the Confidi consortium as per Art. 106 and Art. 107, SME guarantee bank)	Compliant insurance policies (surety policies and life insurance policies)	CPI policies	Other (please specify in the adjacent box)
0							
1-10%	1						
11%-20%			1				
21-30%				1		1	
31%-40%						2	
41%-50%							
51%-60%						1	
61%-70%							
71%-80%			1			1	1
81%-90%			1				
91%-100%		3				1	

Finally, as regards micro-enterprise, the percentage range of cover provided most frequently by mitigation instruments supporting technical types of loans in this macro-category were the following:

- 1-10%: for financial guarantees, property guarantees, compliant insurance policies and CPI policies;
- 11%-20% for personal and mutual guarantees;
- 71%-80%: for property guarantees, personal and mutual guarantees;
- 91%-100% for personal guarantees and CPI policies;

Apart from personal guarantees and insurance policies which, for the three macro-categories of loans surveyed, always offer the same percentage of cover (91-100%), other mitigation instruments seem to offer very different percentages for these categories as shown in Tables 11, 12 and 13.

Table 13: Micro-enterprise: percentage of cover provided by mitigation instruments

	'Youth' market micro-enterprise						
	Financial guarantees	Property guarantees	Personal guarantees	Mutual guarantees (provided by the Confidi consortium as per Art. 106 and Art. 107, SME guarantee bank)	Compliant insurance policies (surety policies and life insurance policies)	CPI policies	Other (please specify in the adjacent box)
0							
1-10%	1	1				1	1
11%-20%			1		1		
21-30%						1	
31%-40%							
41%-50%					1		
51%-60%			1				
61%-70%					1		
71%-80%			1		1		
81%-90%							
91%-100%			1			1	

In most of the cases examined, the presence of mitigation instruments does not seem to be a necessary condition to extending different types of loans for the purchase/renovation/construction of a first home; a useful, but not essential, condition in the case of loans funding micro-enterprise and almost completely unnecessary where loans funding self-employment are concerned.

Table 14: The availability of mitigation instruments and the extension of loans

SELF-EMPLOYMENT			FIRST HOME PURCHASE/RENOVATION/ CONSTRUCTION			MICRO-ENTERPRISE		
Yes, for all technical types	Only for particular technical types	No.	Yes, for all technical types	Only for particular technical types	No.	Yes, for all technical types	Only for particular technical types	No.
1	0	6	4	1	4	3	0	5

Nevertheless, even where mitigation instruments are a necessary condition for access to credit, they do not help make contractual conditions more attractive (in terms of interest rates, amounts, implied options, etc.) when extending loans to young people (question no. 9) except for, it would seem, loans funding micro-enterprise and, for a smaller number of cases, those funding first house purchase/renovation/construction (Table 15).

Table 15: The presence of mitigation instruments and more advantageous contractual conditions

SELF-EMPLOYMENT			FIRST HOME PURCHASE/RENOVATION/CONSTRUCTION			MICRO-ENTERPRISE		
Yes, for all technical types	Only for particular technical types	No.	Yes, for all technical types	Only for particular technical types	No.	Yes, for all technical types	Only for particular technical types	No.
1	0	6	2	0	7	3	0	3

What particularly emerges from the data available is that it is not possible to entirely understand if the presence of mitigation instruments offers benefits such as reducing the cost of money borrowed given the few answers provided, as shown in the table below (Table 16), which only highlights the answers provided by the lenders interviewed: the savings in terms of cost seem to vary from 0 to 150 bp.

Table 16: Average percentage of rate reduction applied

SELF-EMPLOYMENT	FIRST HOME PURCHASE/RENOVATION/CONSTRUCTION	MICRO-ENTERPRISE
150 bp	30-50 bp	30-50 bp
0 bp	0 bp	150 bp
	0 bp	advantageous conditions should there be a Confidi guarantee

Most of the lenders who filled in the questionnaire do not seem to take into consideration mitigation instruments during the credit scoring phase, especially where this concerns loans funding micro-enterprise and the purchase/renovation/construction of a first home (Table 17).

Table 17: The presence of mitigation instruments and credit scoring

SELF-EMPLOYMENT		FIRST HOME PURCHASE/RENOVATION/CONSTRUCTION		MICRO-ENTERPRISE	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
5	19	7	19	6	19

The main types of guarantees taken into consideration when credit scoring differ depending on whether they concern self-employment, first home purchase/renovation/construction or micro-enterprise. As regards self-employment in particular, personal and financial guarantees, mutual guarantees and CPI policies are considered by most of the banks analysed; as regards first home purchase/renovation/construction loans, property guarantees, personal guarantees, financial guarantees and insurance policies are more frequently taken into consideration in evaluating creditworthiness; finally, as regards loans funding micro-enterprise, it seems that almost all forms of mitigation listed are taken into account when credit scoring (Table 18).

Table 18: The presence of mitigation instruments and credit scoring

SELF-EMPLOYMENT		FIRST HOME PURCHASE / RENOVATION CONSTRUCTION		MICRO-ENTERPRISE	
Type of Guarantee	Number of banks	Type of Guarantee	Number of banks	Type of Guarantee	Number of banks
Financial guarantees	5	Financial guarantees	6	Financial guarantees	6
Property guarantees	3	Property guarantees	9	Property guarantees	6
Personal guarantees	6	Personal guarantees	9	Personal guarantees	7
Mutual guarantees	4	Mutual guarantees	3	Mutual guarantees	8
Insurance policies	3	Insurance policies	5	Insurance policies	5
CPI policies	4	CPI policies	5	CPI policies	6

6.3 Survey Results: Risk and Profitability

The questionnaire's final area of investigation was devoted to an analysis of risk and profitability profiles and the possible changes to policies governing youth market loans that the lenders surveyed might make in future.

The first questions in this section of the survey were aimed at understanding the technical and operational procedures and the main details concerning credit scoring for this market. The areas of investigation analysed in order to evaluate creditworthiness are obviously different depending on the macro-category of the loan. Analyses of creditworthiness for loans for the self-employed are mainly focused on internal performance, qualitative information, external performance (CERI central credit register, CAI interbank database, etc.) and data from statutory financial statements.

Where an analysis of creditworthiness is undertaken in order to extend a loan for first home purchase/renovation/construction, the credit limit is mostly determined by internal and external performance, qualitative information and the presence of CPI policies (Table 19).

Finally, when evaluating the creditworthiness of micro-enterprises, statutory financial statement information, internal and external performance, the presence of Confidi guarantees, balance sheet information, analyses of the market sector involved and the competitive positioning of the applicant are the areas of information that the lenders surveyed analyse the most (Table 19).

Table 19: Types of information examined in order to determine creditworthiness

SELF-EMPLOYMENT		FIRST HOME PURCHASE/ RENOVATION/CONSTRUCTION		MICRO-ENTERPRISE	
Type of information investigated	Number of banks	Type of information investigated	Number of banks	Type of information investigated	Number of banks
Financial statements (accounts, annual report)	5	Financial statements (accounts, annual report)	4	Financial statements (accounts, annual report)	8
Performance	5	Performance	6	Performance	8
Company details	7	Company details	8	Company details	7
CERI central credit register	5	CERI central credit register	8	CERI central credit register	7
Industry and competitive positioning	4	Industry and competitive positioning	3	Industry and competitive positioning	7
Qualitative information	7	Qualitative information	7	Qualitative information	8
Relations with the bank	7	Relations with the bank	9	Relations with the bank	8
Confidi guarantees (as per Articles 106 and 107, bank guarantees)	4	Confidi guarantees (as per Articles 106 and 107, bank guarantees)	4	Confidi guarantees (as per Articles 106 and 107, bank guarantees)	8
Insurance policies	3	Insurance policies	5	Insurance policies	5
Other (please specify)	1	Other (please specify)	0	Other (please specify)	1

With this questionnaire we also attempted to investigate the importance that the different types of information take on when evaluating creditworthiness for the three macro-categories of loans. The number of answers was obviously low because, in this specific case, this is strictly proprietary information. However, the small amount of information available shows very disparate situations, as the tables below demonstrate (Tables 20, 21 and 22).

Table 20: Self-Employment: the importance of different types of information

	SELF-EMPLOYMENT								
	Financial statement (accounts annual report)	Performance	Company details	CERI central credit register	Industry and competitive positioning	Qualitative information	Relations with the bank	Confidi guarantees (as per Art. 106 and 107, bank guarantees)	Insuran. policies
0									
1-10%				1		1	1	1	1
11%-20%	1	1	2			1	1		1
21-30%				1		1	1		
31%-40%									
41%-50%	1								

Table 21: First home purchase/renovation/construction: the importance of different types of information

	FIRST HOME PURCHASE/RENOVATION/CONSTRUCTION								
	Financial statement	Performance	Company details	CERI central credit regi.	Industry and competitive positioning	Qualitative information	Relations with the bank	Confidi guarantees (as per Art. 106)	Insuran. policies
0									
1-10				1			1		
11%-20%									
21-30%				1		2	2		1
31%-40%									
41%-50%	1		1						
51%-60%									
61%-70%			1	1			1		
71%-80%									
81%-90%									
91%-100%		1		1					

Table 22: Micro-enterprise: the importance of different types of information

	MICRO- ENTERPRISE								
	Financial statement (accounts,	Performance	Company details	CERI central credit register	Industry and competitive positioning	Qualitative information	Relations with the bank	Confidi guarantees (as per Art. 106 and 107, bank guarantees)	Insuran. policies
0									
1-10%				2	1	3	3	3	3
11%-20%	2	2	1	1					
21-30%	1	1							
31%-40%					1	1			1
41%-50%		1							1
51%-60%	1								
61%-70%				1					

The analysis of the risk factor involved in loans extended to young people does not allow us to infer useful conclusions because the few banks who answered this question indicated ranges of non-performing loans due to insolvency, difficulty in keeping up with payments and past-due loans that were very different from one another, but that were generally constant over time (as shown by Table 23); which is fairly absurd given the financial crisis and the resulting general restriction in extending credit and the deterioration of the credit previously in lenders' portfolios. The percentages indicated by the few lenders who answered also vary enormously.

Table 23: Youth market: bad debt

SELF-EMPLOYMENT								
Bad debt due to bankruptcy			Difficulties in repayment			Past-due loans (over 180 days)		
2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011
0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%
61-80%	61-80%	61-80%	61-80%	61-80%	61-80%	61-80%	61-80%	61-80%

FIRST HOME PURCHASE/RENOVATION/RESTORATION								
Bad debt due to bankruptcy			Difficulties in repayment			Past-due loans (over 180 days)		
2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011
0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%
1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%

MICRO-ENTERPRISE								
Bad debt due to bankruptcy			Difficulties in repayment			Past-due loans (over 180 days)		
2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011
0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%
1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%	1-20%
61-80%	61-80%	61-80%	61-80%	61-80%	61-80%	61-80%	61-80%	61-80%

The average profitability produced, over the past three years, by the ‘youth’ market in terms of percentage of lenders’ total profitability, in contrast, is fairly low (max. 10%), confirming the minor contribution this market makes to profit margins achieved by the lenders surveyed and, therefore, this market’s lack of strategic appeal (Table 24).

Table 24: Youth market: percentage of total profitability

SELF-EMPLOYMENT			FIRST HOME PURCHASE/RENOVATION/CONSTRUCTION			MICRO-ENTERPRISE		
1-10%	1-10%	1-10%	1-10%	1-10%	1-10%	1-10%	1-10%	1-10%
1-10%	1-10%	1-10%	1-10%	1-10%	1-10%	1-10%	1-10%	1-10%
1-10%	1-10%	1-10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Few respondents provided information on the rates usually applied to the main technical types of loans for young people who fall into the macro-categories of self-employment, first home purchase/renovation/construction and micro-enterprise. The few details received are shown in the Table 25.

Table 25: Youth market: average rates applied

SELF-EMPLOYMENT	FIRST HOME PURCHASE/ RENOVATION/CONSTRUCTION	MICRO-ENTERPRISE
Euribor 6 months+175bp	3%	Euribor 6 months+175bp
6.50%	3.88%	4.78%
7.50%	Floating rate=4% Fixed rate=6.2%	
Euribor 6 months+1		

The question which attempted to analyse the legal costs generally incurred by different loans for the ‘youth’ market was rarely answered; the few lenders who answered declared that these costs are either 0%, 1% or 1.50%. The lack of answers, however, does not allow us to draw useful conclusions on this matter.

The penultimate question on the survey attempted to glean from the respondents surveyed whether, in their judgement, the implementation of new regulations regarding capital and liquid assets imposed by Basel III will result in a reduction of the range of credit offered to the ‘youth’ market, not to mention other markets. Of the respondents who answered, 60% believe that there will be no new restrictions imposed on the credit offered to this market by the new regulations, while 30% supposed that there will be restrictions.

Finally, 100% of respondents declared that in the near future their institute will devote more time to the ‘youth’ market and the development of commercial strategies for it.

7 Concluding – Almost Conclusive – Remarks

This study has allowed us to highlight significant problems in the system designed by the lenders surveyed to offer loans to the youth market and the characteristics of the relationship between banks and young people in Italy.

First and foremost, what emerged during the course of the survey was that there is no one agreed definition for what constitutes a ‘youth’ market; in practice, there are very different procedures that lead to the division of the population into groups according to maximum age: while the lower limit of the range that terms a person ‘young’ remains the same, the upper limit varies enormously (≤ 29 ; ≤ 30 ; ≤ 32 ; ≤ 35 ; etc.). The youth market is generally offered ad hoc financial products: current accounts, debit cards, cash cards and short-term loans, however almost 50% of the banks interviewed do not have a specially developed range of products; only a few lenders – particularly the larger ones – have products designed for the youth market which are often supported by technical types of risk mitigation (personal guarantees, guarantees on assets, CPI policies, etc). In the majority of cases analysed, the presence of mitigation instruments does not seem to be a necessary condition for extending different kinds of loans paid out for first home purchase/renovation/construction; a useful, but not indispensable, condition where loans for micro-enterprise are concerned and almost entirely unnecessary where loans for the self-employed are concerned. In contrast, the analysis undertaken allows us to note that the average profitability generated by the ‘youth’ market over the past three years and calculated as a percentage of the total profitability of these credit institutes is relatively low (max. 10%), confirming the minor contribution this market makes to profit margins achieved by the lenders analysed and, therefore, its scarce strategic appeal.

We believe that everything that emerged from this study allows us to make some (almost)

conclusive observations on this topic. Young people's access to credit must be supported by the intervention of policy makers, given that the international financial crisis has turned it into a social emergency. There are laws that currently state that public administration must offer employment or training opportunities to young unemployed people (for example, in Austria, the Netherlands and in Norway), but most of all there is an approach – or rather a European Commission recommendation and a programme – supporting young unemployed citizens (*Youth Guarantees*⁴). For the first time, on a European level, the unavoidable nature of public intervention designed to guarantee work has been recognised and it is also planned that it should be funded by European Union grants (the European Social Fund); what emerges is a departure from the economic *laissez-faire* approach and the sole model of budget austerity in anti-crisis strategy in order to point out the direction public intervention should go in economic and social matters.

This is the approach that should govern how we draft possible plans for developing programmes aiding young entrepreneurs and self-employed people. Banks should have a greater, more active role in such programmes, focusing and targeting their savings policies in a more effective way and, most importantly, the policies governing the range of credit available organised *according to objective* (employment, first home purchase, business start-up), *age group* (young graduates who have yet to look for work have different credit needs from a 35-year-old looking for his or her first job, from the professional unemployed young person, from low-income young couples with children, from young people changing career or those receiving redundancy payments who, perhaps for different reasons, despite being adults, continue to live with their parents), *gender* (young women have more difficulty entering the job/business market than men due to less support from their families, less access to information/contacts/networks, less access to credit; a lack of self-confidence and fewer female role models in business) and *geographic area/region* (in convergence regions and in other depressed geographic areas, access to credit is notoriously difficult for many groups of people who make up for the lack of official credit by resorting to loansharks; some aspects of the conditions young people face are closely tied to their social and geographic environment).

An increase in care taken over defining policies for young people should also be accompanied by better/new technical characteristics in the relationship between banks and young people. For example, the survey conducted as part of this study showed how mitigation instruments are often a necessary condition for access to credit, despite the fact that they do not make contractual conditions governing loans paid out to young people more advantageous except for, it would seem, loans awarded to micro-enterprise and, to a lesser extent, loans for first home purchase/renovation/construction. Nevertheless, this study shows that the average profitability produced by the 'youth' market over the past three years compared to lenders' total profitability is relatively low (max. 10%), confirming

⁴The EU has earmarked €8 billion for this programme, €6 billion of which for the 2014-2015 period. The initial beneficiaries of this European programme will be countries with youth unemployment rates of 25%. According to the recommendation passed by the Council of Europe, countries must offer young unemployed people a job, an apprenticeship, post-graduate courses, a workshop within four months of being fired or within four months of completing their studies etc. Italy is entitled to a €1.5 billion share of the funds from the Youth Guarantee programme in the 2014-2015 period.

the minor contribution this market makes to profit margins achieved by such institutes and, hence, its scarce strategic appeal. In order to enhance its appeal and optimise the ‘value’ of youth market guarantees for banks (in terms of reducing the capital requirement for such loan operations) as well as for the end beneficiaries of the loan and guarantee (young people), it might be useful to counter-guarantee current guarantee funds, already available to this market throughout the country, through the Fondo Centrale (or SME Guarantee Facility) and set aside a special section of this to guarantee young people’s enterprises and self-employment.

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Appendix

Enclosure 1: The range of products offered by banks resident in Italy

This section provides brief methodological notes concerning the analysis conducted on the actual range of products available for the following:

- first home purchase;
- self-employment;
- start-ups;

carried out on the top 15 operators working in the Italian banking industry, which can be examined in detail by referring to Table 1 of this Enclosure.

The Table is divided into three main parts:

- the first, where the following are listed:
 - a. the name of each lender;
 - b. its total assets, as per the 2011 financial year;
 - c. the corporate website where the information being examined was extrapolated;
- the second, where the products designed for a general audience of potential clients of the lender examined are listed;
- the third, where products specifically designed for ‘young’ customers are listed.

In order to aid the use of the information contained in the Table, we felt it useful to provide brief ‘instructions’: that way, the reader can immediately grasp the main facts that emerged from the work carried out.

To this end, in the second and third parts mentioned above, only the names of the single products or categories of products offered by each lender examined are listed. Nevertheless, though at first glance this could seem like a limited amount of information concerning the main features of each type of contract identified, the worksheet includes links that forward you to a specially prepared summary chart with a list of the main details available on each website visited.

As regards the summarised charts, despite the differing quantity and quality of information available, it was nevertheless possible to identify the aims of these products, their target audience and the technical specifications.

