

Min. Azzolina's make-up exam postponed to September

In Italy there is a minister who has been successful in the difficult business of bringing together everybody from ruling to opposition parties, regional governors, unions and ordinary citizens. She is the owner of the Education Ministry Lucia Azzolina, who has just presented her school reopening plan after a whirlwind of announcements, meetings, controversies and opinions from the ever-present ad hoc committee convened during the pandemic. Distance and sanitary rules, organizational flexibility, finding new spaces, expanded training offer on a territorial basis: 'empty words' for those who expected worthy of the historical times ministerial guidelines, or such as to provide certain operational indications without shifting most responsibility about the reopening on local administrations and school principals. Such as in the case of identifying additional spaces for taking lessons. The last in order of time to reject the Azzolina plan was the influential State-Regions Conference, shifted forward by a day to find an agreement in extremis on the return to classroom on September 14, after six months of blackout. This is yet another demonstration of how the pandemic managed to further poison the relationship between central government and local authorities in Italy, which is already deeply complex when not openly conflictual. A more unique than rare case, if it is true that among the few positive consequences of Covid-19 there was precisely the revival of the State role everywhere in the world. Reaching an agreement with the regions is of course possible, but in the meantime, protests have spread across the Country

and the Minister appears increasingly isolated within the government, as well as within the ruling coalition. The impression of being a simple pawn in a bigger game is strong, which is perhaps aimed at finding the scapegoat on which to unload the responsibility for the most delicate phase of the Italian restart. If the bet fails, the damage to the government team image would be certainly important; at the same time, however, it will provide the Prime Minister with the perfect excuse for a reshuffle, which is deemed necessary and no longer be postponed. The future of the Azzolina plan will depend on the effective availability of additional resources for the school, after the billion and a half provided with the latest Relaunch Decree and the request for another billion put forward by the tenant of the Ministry of Education. At the end of 2019, former Minister Fioramonti submitted his resignation for not having received the three billion requested under the Budget Law. As always in Italy, the row has shifted to the political level, thanks to the looming regional elections and Azzolina's accusation to center-right Northern governors of having withdrawn from the agreement under the orders of League leader Salvini. A plausible hypothesis, which is still not enough to explain the extent of the cross-cutting protests against her reopening plan. Only M5S political leader Vito Crimi defended Azzolina, while Premier Conte did not go beyond some declarations on his commitment to guarantee safety conditions for students. The Premier is in fact already under allied heavy pressure for the choice of phase 3 objectives.