
Italy

VET in Europe – Country report

2012

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CHAPTER 1

1. External factors influencing VET

Italy has been a democratic Republic since 1948 and has 20 Regions, 107 Provinces and 8 100 local authorities. Under the on-going Constitutional reform the total number of the Provinces is to be reduced with a view to saving costs.

The State has exclusive legislative powers over most of the main issues, including general rules on education, social security (including unemployment benefits and social integration measures for workers in the event of a significant drop in production) and the establishment of minimum public service performance levels (Article 117 of the Constitution). The Regions have exclusive competence in social care and 'exclusive' legislative powers over vocational education and training, apart from tasks connected with the European Union, and parallel legislative powers over general education, although the State is responsible for establishing the basic principles. In fact, Law n. 3/2001¹ reformed the Title V of the Constitution. In particular, Art. 117 makes a distinction between: a) general education, which falls under the exclusive competence of the State for general rules, minimum public service performance levels and fundamental principles of legislation at regional level; b) vocational education and training, which falls under the responsibility of the Regions, although minimum public service performance levels remain under the responsibility of the Provinces and local authorities are responsible for providing school buildings and other facilities and intervening in the areas of adult education and guidance (including the management of employment services). Five Regions (Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino-Alto Adige, Valle d'Aosta) have special status and have been given greater autonomy under the Constitution in various areas including education. Moreover, the Trentino-Alto Adige Region has two Autonomous Provinces (Trento and Bolzano) which in turn have considerable autonomy in the management of education and vocational training activities.

The Italian economy, after a slight recovery in 2010, entered into a new recession in the second half of 2011. The forecast for Italy's GDP this year was a 1.4 per cent contraction. The Italian government has struggled to limit government spending, but Italy's exceedingly high public debt remains at around 120.7% of its GDP, and its fiscal deficit was reduced to 3.9% in 2011 compared to 4.6% in 2010 (1.5% of the GDP in 2007). In 2010, unemployment reached its highest level since 2001 (8.4%), and remained stable in 2011. Italy has a diversified industrial economy with roughly the same total and per capita output as France and the UK. However, the economic landscape remains divided into a developed industrial North, where most of the private companies are based, and a less developed South where an infrastructure gap still exists. The production system structure is based on the prevalence of small and medium-sized enterprises. In 2008, before the crisis onset, out of a total of just over 4.5 million enterprises belonging to the industry and services sector, which employed

1 Constitutional Law dated 18th October 2001, "*Modifiche al titolo V della parte seconda della Costituzione*" ("Amendments to Title V Part II of the Constitution").

about 17.9 million people, companies employing less than 10 people accounted for 95% (4.3 million) and employed 46% of all the people employed in the sector. In addition, almost 21% of the employees (nearly 3.8 million) worked in small size enterprises (10 to 49 employees) and 12.5 per cent (2.2 million) in medium-sized ones (50 to 249 employees). Only 3,735 enterprises (0.08 per cent) employed 250 workers and over, although they absorbed 20% of total employment (about 3.6 million people).

From a social point of view, it is necessary to underline the recent radical reform of the Italian pension system, that has gone from a so-called 'pay system', under which all workers are entitled to receive a pension at the time of retirement regardless of the contributions paid, to a 'contribution-based system', which is linked to the salary payments made during an individual's entire working life, capitalized and multiplied by coefficients calculated on the basis of the person's retirement age. Simultaneously, the minimum retirement age has been set at 65 years for men and 60 for women, and conditioned to the payment of at least 20 years of contributions. In addition, another reform (2010) was launched to raise the retirement age for women working in the civil service starting from 2012 to 65. With the latest reform, the so called '*Riforma² Fornero*', the retirement age has been equalised and will be raised to 66 years for both men and women by 2018, always taking into account the change in life expectancy

1.1. Population and demographics

According to EUROSTAT, the Italian population was over 60 million in 2011 (i.e. a 0.32% increase compared to 2010 - see *Table 1.1*). This population increase was mainly due to the migratory flows which have occurred in the last few years and which counterbalanced to some extent the drop in the birth rate and population ageing. In fact, dependency ratio projections for aged people show that the indicator value was slightly higher (30.78%) than the corresponding EU27 already in 2010, that it increased progressively in the following years, constantly maintaining a positive gap compared to the European population and will eventually rise to 50% in 2040 (see *Table 1.2*).

The birth rate was 9.3% in 2010 and the number of births (561,944) decreased in comparison with 2008, but it was one of the best results since 1993. However, the increase is due to migrant women's fertility rate that is higher than that of Italians.

These dynamics underline the need for a progressive perspective change in the organisation and distribution of resources among the different sub-systems which compose the national lifelong learning system to promote migrants' socio-cultural integration on one hand and the population's active ageing on the other.

2 Decree Law 6 December 2011, n. 201, 'Urgent measures to foster growth, equity and fiscal consolidation', Chapter IV, Art. 24.

GEO\TIME	2006	2009	2010	2011
EU 27	493,226,936	499,723,520	501,120,157	502,404,439
IT	58,751,711	60,045,068	60,340,328	60,626,442

Table 1.1: Total population (on 1st January), 2006, 2009, 2010, 2011

Source of data: Eurostat (Demographic Statistics); date of extraction: 18 October 2012.

GEO\TIME	2010	2015	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060
EU 27	25.92	28.48	31.37	38.33	45.52	50.16	52.55
IT	30.78	33.13	34.76	41.14	51.73	56.34	56.65

Table 1.2: Projected old-age dependency ratio %

Source of data: EUROSTAT (EUROPOP2008 - Convergence scenario, national level (proj_08c))

Date of extraction: 18 October 2012.

1.2. Economy and labour market indicators

Under the negative impact of the economic crisis, the average number of employees in Italy has dropped to 22.9 million and the employment rate to 56.9% (2011). In particular, in 2011 the employment rate was 56.9%, the unemployment rate 8.4% (unchanged since the previous year) and the activity rate had fallen from 63% in 2008 to 62.2%. Although the unemployment rate was still lower than the European Union average (9.7%), concerns arose about the gap between the North and the South of the country, as well as about groups such as women, young people and migrants. The unemployment rate in the South was on average 13.6% in 2011 vs. the national average of 8.4%; female unemployment rate was 16.2% and 44.6% of young women (15-24) in the South of Italy were unemployed (the national average was 32.0%). In addition, when examined by economic activity (see Fig. 1.1 *Employment by economic sector*) and compared with the EU, the 2011 data on employment confirm the importance of Italy's manufacturing sector with 18.9 of the employed versus a 15.9% EU average. However, the gap is gradually decreasing.

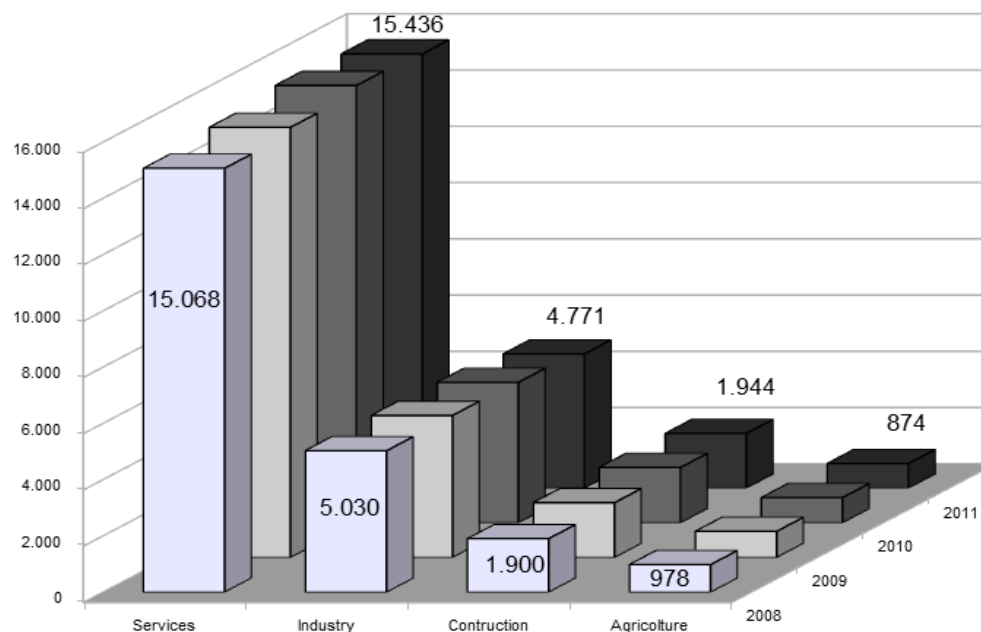


Figure 1.1: Employment by economic sector – Seasonally adjusted data (in thousands)

Source of data: Istat (RCFL – Ateco 2007)

Date of extraction: 23 October 2012

As underlined in *table 1.3 Employment rates by age and highest level of education attained*, the employment rate broken down by age groups and highest level of education, Italy's employment rate is lower than the EU average for all examined age groups. The difference with the European figures is particularly high for the 15-24 age group and has worsened since 2005. In the 50-64 age group, despite a significant increase in the employment rate (from 31.4% in 2005 to 37.9% in 2011), there still is a 9% difference with EU27. In Italy, as in EU27, employment rates for the adult population increase proportionally to the education level; most of the difficulties in accessing the labour market can be seen in the 15-24 age group with ISCED 5-6 (22.7% employment rate, 26.6 in 2007 before the crisis), especially if we compare this data with the 29.4% share of employed people for the 15-24 age group with ISCED 3-4 (but, it was 35.5% in 2007, before the crisis).

	TIME	2005			2007			2011		
GEO	ISCED / AGE	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
EU27	0-2	25.6	66.6	42.4	25.3	67.5	44.2	21.6	62.1	43.3
	3-4	47.9	79.5	57.3	48.8	81.3	59.1	44.4	79.8	60.4
	5-6	60.2	87.7	73.9	61.6	88.9	74.8	55.5	87.1	74.9
	No A.	4.6	73.7	5.0	5.3	75.7	6.7	5.6	73.6	61.6
	TOTAL	36.9	78.2	42.6	37.3	79.8	44.6	33.6	78.0	47.4
IT	0-2	18.2	65.8	33.2	16.0	66.0	35.2	11.1	61.8	37.0
	3-4	35.1	77.6	58.5	35.5	78.8	60.7	29.4	75.6	62.3

	5-6	27.3	81.5	77.3	26.6	81.5	76.2	22.7	80.1	76.0
	No A.	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	TOTAL	25.7	73.2	31.4	24.7	74.0	33.8	19.4	71.2	37.9

Table 1.3: *Employment rates by age groups and highest level of education attained (%), 2005, 2007 and 2011*

Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey); extracted on 23-10-2012; last updated: 18-10-2012.

: = not available;

The outcomes in the labour market confirm that in Italy a university degree does not reduce the risk of unemployment to the same extent as in other European countries; the unemployment rate among those with tertiary education is 5.5% and that of people holding a diploma is 7.3% (EU27 averages were 5.6% and 8.4% in 2011). More specifically, the employment rate of people who have a university degree is 77.0% and that of people who obtained a diploma is 65.2%, while the EU27 average is 82.0% and 68.4% respectively. Moreover, the highly skilled jobs in Italy account for 34.5% of the total, compared to a 39.2% EU27 average, and of these, only 41.5% are held by people with tertiary education (in the EU27 the share was on average 60.1% in 2011). The competitive advantage determined by a degree in Italy is not very significant even when comparing the pay gap between upper secondary school and university graduates. A finding that, in a context of limited capacity and level of public spending on higher education, if we consider as an approximation of the quality of higher education, explains people's limited inclination to invest in education as well as the increasing number of youth who leave their studies to enter the world of work.

At the same time, indicators on unemployed people (*table 1.4 Unemployment rates by age groups level of education attained*) show an unemployment rate that is generally higher compared to the correspondent EU27 values for the 15-24 age group at all educational attainment levels, whereas it is lower for the 25-49 and 50-64 age groups at all educational levels, except for ISCED 5-6, age group 25-49 (i.e. 6.3 in Italy as compared to 5.5 in the EU in 2011). As suggested in literature, empirical evidence confirms the paradox of the Italian labour market in which a relative scarcity of high levels of education correspond to low yields. The reasons include: firstly, the small size of Italian manufacturing units which have resources inconsistent with the level of investment required for innovation activities, research and development, and secondly, the poor quality and credibility of the school system, with weak connections with the world of work. This situation generates a vicious circle: low returns discourage public investment in education and people from expanding their knowledge and skills. This impacts the Italian economy by reducing the ability of innovation which, in this phase of history, is considered the main engine for economic growth. As a consequence, there is a need for coordinated actions in the training and education system, pointing to the quality and value of human capital, in the production system through adequate industrial and trade policies and investment in research and innovation. As for total public expenditure for secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary level, the Italian indicator is quite close to that of the EU27, as shown in table 1.5. *Total public expenditure on education*.

	TIME	2005			2007			2011		
GEO	ISCED / AGE	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
EU-27	0-2	21.9	11.7	7.9	20.0	10.4	6.9	28.2	16.9	10.7
	3-4	17.1	8.3	7.7	13.4	6.1	5.7	18.6	8.1	6.5
	5-6	14.1	4.8	3.8	11.4	3.7	3.2	16.7	5.5	3.6
	No A.	27.6	:	:	:	:	:	:	8.2	:
	TOTAL	18.5	8.1	6.8	15.5	6.4	5.5	21.3	9.0	6.9
IT	0-2	26.2	8.7	5.0	22.5	7.2	3.9	32.8	10.6	6.6
	3-4	22.0	5.8	2.5	19.0	4.8	1.5	27.3	6.9	2.9
	5-6	31.2	7.1	1.0 (u)	19.3	5.2	0.5 (u)	27.0	6.3	1.4
	No A.	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	TOTAL	24.00	7.1	3.5	20.3	5.8	2.5	29.1	8.0	4.2

Table 1.4: Unemployment rates by age groups and highest level of education attained (%), 2005, 2007 and 2011

Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey); extracted on 24-10-2012; last update: 18-10-2012.

: = not available; u = unreliable

GEO	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
EU27	2.35 (s)	2.29 (s)	2.25 (s)	2.23 (s)	2.19 (s)	2.24 (s)	2.41 (s)
IT	2.29	2.16	2.11	2.13	1.97	2.08	2.18

Table 1.5: Total public expenditure on education as % of GDP, at secondary level of education (ISCED 2-4), 2003-2009

Source: Eurostat (UOE); extracted on: 24-10-2012; last update: 16-06-2012

s – Eurostat estimate

i – see explanatory notes

1.3. Educational attainment of the population

Results from investment in education can be evaluated in terms of ability to access and maintain one's employment, job quality and profitability. The results, both in terms of probability of employment and wage differentials, show the existence of an Italian problem which explains the position of our country towards the bottom of a hypothetical ranking of the European countries. In Italy the share of people aged 25-64 that have acquired at least a secondary education diploma is about 17.5 percentage points lower than the EU27 average (56% in Italy and 73.4% in the EU27). The gap is still significant for the 25-64 age group with university degrees (14.9% in Italy, 26.8% EU27 average) and is even wider for the 25-34 age group (21.0% in Italy, 34.2% EU27 average).

The latest OECD-PISA surveys (focused on reading, mathematics and science) highlight that there is a lack of quality education in terms of knowledge and skills and know-how, and in the Italian school system teaching effectiveness is very low. Italy's percentage of early school leavers (18.2% in 2011) is definitively above the European average, although this has gradually diminished from 2002 to 2007 (thanks to the education policies implemented in the 90s; see *table 1.6*) and the new target set for Italy under the Europe2020

Strategy (15%) is within reach. For this reason, active policies, especially those aimed at young people, are specifically designed to combat early school-leaving by offering alternative training opportunities and tools for the exploitation of skills acquired by students. Dropping-out is widespread in the school system, especially in the vocational training pathways, where almost half of the enrolled students are at least 1 year behind compared to their original training/study plan.

GEO/TIME	2002	2004	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
EU-27	17.0	16.1	15.5	15.1	14.9	14.4	14.1	13.5
IT	24.2	22.3	20.6	19.7	19.7	19.2	18.8	18.2

Table 1.6: Early school leavers: Percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training

Source of data Eurostat; extracted: 25-10-2012.

The fluctuations in the number of ISCED 3 and 4 and 5-6 graduates are mainly due to different factors such as young generations' demographic drop, partially compensated by the general increase in higher school attendance, and the attainment of ISCED 3 and higher qualifications, which has been influenced by the different reform programmes of the education system, as for example the raising of compulsory school age and the introduction of the right-duty to education and training till 18 years old. On the other hand, the decrease in the number of graduates at ISCED 4 in 2007 can be explained with a reduction of the attractiveness of the three-year degree pathways which initially had attracted a considerable number of +21 year-old students, but also the possibility of the recognition of previous studies or working experience.

The registered increase of ISCED 5 and 6 graduates highlights a strong polarisation between low levels and high levels of education that reflects the situation of the labour market where there is great demand for innovative and creative jobs on one hand and an increasing request for low skilled workers in care services and other services on the other. Furthermore, women are still more qualified than men. The trend concerning the rise in school attendance levels is however confirmed by the rate of population aged 20 to 24 having completed at least upper secondary education (table 1.7): from 68.8% in 2005 to 70.8% in 2011. This aspect is particularly relevant for the percentage of women that in 2011 acquired an upper secondary school diploma (72.6% compared to the EU27 64.6%).

TIME	2005			2009			2011		
GEO	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M
EU-27	64.8	65.1	64.5	65.0	64.9	65.0	64.8	64.6	64.9
IT	68.8	72.3	65.4	69.6	71.3	68.0	70.8	72.6	69.0

Table 1.7: Youth education attainment level by gender (%), 2005, 2009, 2011

Source of data Eurostat; extracted: 26-10-2012

A critical aspect is the low participation of the adult population in lifelong learning activities, which is still below the European average. Between 2005 and 2011, the percentage of population aged 25-64 participating in training and education over the four weeks prior the survey shows a significant gap compared to the European average (3.8% in 2005 and 3.2% in 2011), as shown in table 1.8.

TIME	2005			2009			2011		
GEO	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M
EU-27	9.6	10.4	8.8	9.3	10.2	8.4	8.9	9.6	8.2
IT	5.8	6.2	5.4	6.0	6.4	5.6	5.7	6.0	5.3

Table 1.8: *Lifelong learning-Adult participation in education and training by gender (%), 2005, 2009, 2011*

Source of data Eurostat; extracted: 26-10-2012.

2. Providing VET in a lifelong learning perspective

2.1. National Education and Vocational Training System Framework

The actors involved in the governance of the Italian education and vocational training system³ are the following:

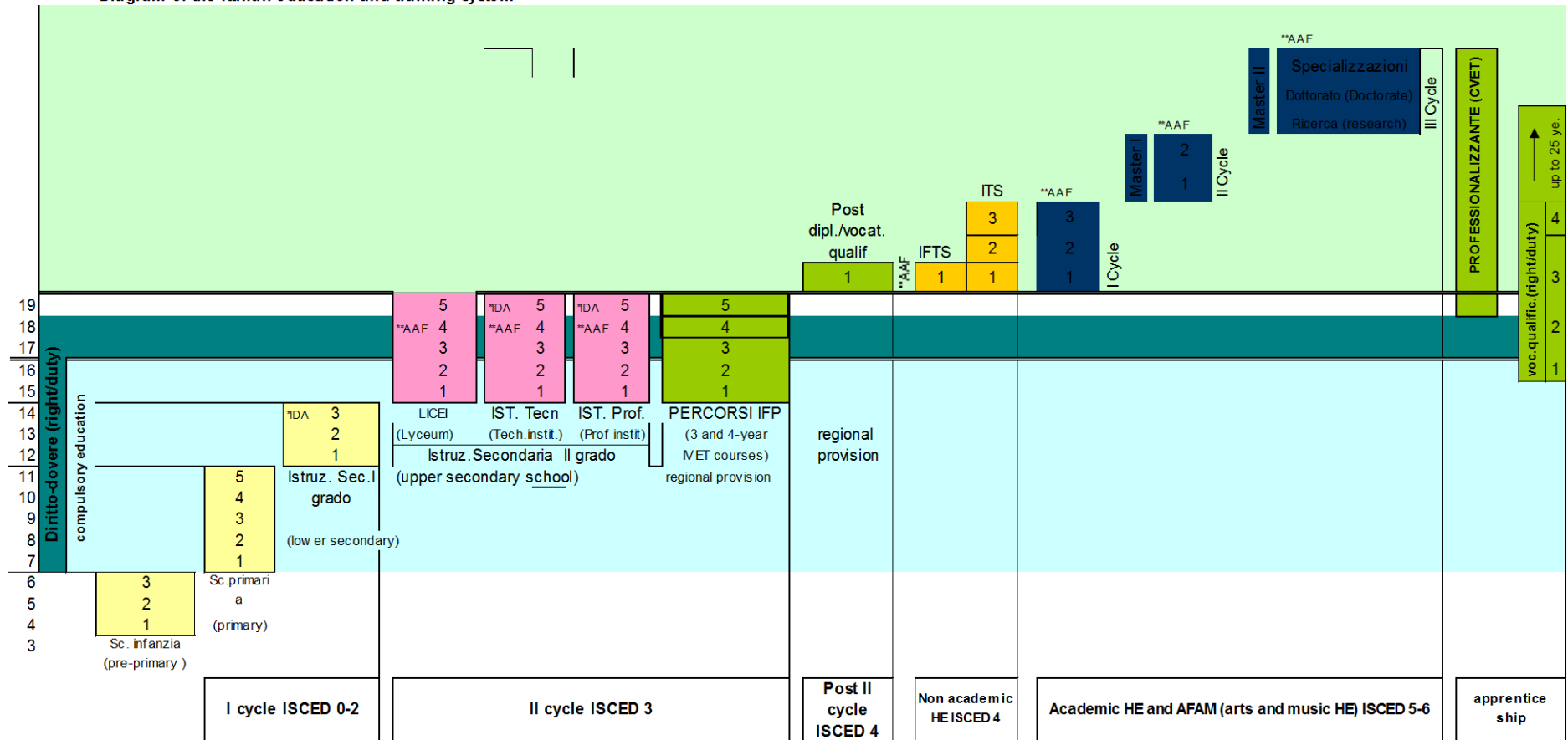
- the Ministry of Education, University and Research that is responsible for setting the minimum public service performance levels (*Livelli Essenziali delle prestazioni – LEP*) for the education system;
- the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies that is responsible for setting the minimum public service performance levels (*Livelli Essenziali delle prestazioni – LEP*) for the vocational training system;
- the Regions and Autonomous Provinces that are the administrations in charge of planning, organising and supplying VET;
- the social partners that contribute to designing and organising active labour policies and particularly VET policies.

Compulsory education lasts 10 years (i.e. up to 16 years of age) and includes the whole first education cycle and the first two years of the second (either upper secondary schools or three/four-year vocational training courses). Everyone has the ‘right/duty’ (*diritto/dovere*) to pursue education and training for at least 12 years in the national school system, or until a three or four-year vocational qualification is obtained within the IVET system before reaching 18 years of age⁴.

3 Primo rapporto italiano di referenziazione delle qualificazioni al quadro europeo EQF (*First Italian Report on the referencing of the national qualifications to the EQF*), June 2012, <http://bw5.cilea.it/bw5ne2/opac.aspx?WEB=ISFL&IDS=18746>.

4 Law 53/2003, ‘Delega al Governo per la definizione delle norme generali sull’istruzione e dei livelli essenziali delle prestazioni in materia di istruzione e formazione professionale’ – ‘Delegating the Government to Establish General Regulations Regarding Education and the Minimum Service Performance Levels for Education and Vocational Training’.

Diagram of the Italian education and training system



IDA: Istruzione degli Adulti

Adult education

ITS: Istruzione e Formazione Tecnica Superiore Higher technical education and training

ITS: Istituti Tecnici Superiori Higher technical institutes

At present, the national education and training system includes the following⁵:

- *scuola dell'infanzia* (pre-primary school): not compulsory, lasts 3 years and is for children aged 3 to 6 (ISCED 0);
- first cycle of education (8 years): includes *scuola primaria* (primary school – ISCED 1) that lasts 5 years and is attended by children aged 6 to 11 and *scuola secondaria di I grado* (lower secondary school – ISCED 2) that lasts 3 years and is attended by children aged 11 to 14. At the end of the third year pupils sit a state exam and if successful are awarded a lower secondary school diploma;
- second cycle of education comprising two different pathways (ISCED 3):
 - upper secondary school: falls under the responsibility of the State, lasts 5 years and caters for students aged 14 to 19. This level of education is provided by *lyceums*, technical institutes and vocational institutes which have been recently reformed (2010). On completion of the 5-year path students sit an exam and if successful are awarded an upper secondary school diploma;
 - three and four year education and vocational training courses (*percorsi triennali e quadriennali di Istruzione e Formazione professionale – IFP*): organised by the Regions, they cater for students who have completed their first cycle of education. A vocational certificate is awarded on the completion of three-year vocational courses and a vocational diploma is awarded on the completion of four-year courses.
- post-diploma/post-vocational qualification courses: regional courses⁶ (400-600 hours) generally co-financed by the European Social Fund. On completion, a regional vocational certificate commonly referred to as a 'second level qualification' is awarded. In particular, they cater for young unemployed people, migrants and disabled people holding a three or four-year vocational training qualification or an upper secondary school diploma. Although they are provided on the whole national territory, the professional profiles and skills that can be acquired through them vary depending on the specific employment and skills needs of the Regions;
- post-secondary non-tertiary education comprising two different training paths (ISCED 4):
 - higher technical education and training pathways (*percorsi di Istruzione e Formazione Tecnica Superiore – IFTS*) on the completion of which a higher technician certificate is awarded;
 - courses provided by Higher Technical Institutes (ITS courses - *Istituti Tecnici Superiori*) on the completion of which a higher technician diploma is awarded.

5 At present, EQF levels for the qualifications awarded by the various pathways cannot be indicated as the referencing process is still underway.

6 No ISCED levels are indicated as the courses do not lead to national qualifications.

Both paths are open to young people holding a school diploma. IFTS courses can also be accessed following the validation of the students' previously acquired skills.

- higher education (ISCED 5 and 6) comprises academic and non-academic higher education courses (i.e. those provided by the *Alta Formazione Artistica e Musicale* – AFAM - Higher Artistic and Musical Training). The higher education system is divided into State and non-State institutions which cater for students holding a secondary school diploma. Courses lead to 1st and 2nd cycle qualifications:

- three-year courses lead to a *laurea* (degree, 1st cycle);
- two-year courses lead to a *laurea specialistica/magistrale* (specialization degree, 2nd cycle). The second cycle also includes a *Master universitario di primo livello* (first-level university Master) lasting at least one year.

The 3rd cycle includes *Research Doctorate* courses, *Specialization* courses (*Corsi di specializzazione*) and *Masters universitario di secondo livello* (second-level master degrees). University and AFAM courses have a similar structure.

There are three recently reformed types of apprenticeship (2011) in Italy:

- 'Apprenticeships leading to a qualification and a professional diploma' (ISCED 3) that last three or four years, cater for 15-25 year olds and lead to a certificate or a vocational diploma. This type of apprenticeship allows young people to complete compulsory education and to fulfil the right/duty to education and training;
- 'Professional apprenticeships' that cater for 18-29 year olds, cannot last more than 6 years and lead to a regional qualification⁷;
- 'Higher education and research apprenticeships' that cater for 18-29 year olds, enable apprentices to obtain upper secondary school (ISCED 3), IFTS/ITS (ISCED 4) and university (ISCED 5-6) qualifications.

IDA (*Istruzione degli Adulti* – Adult Education) courses are provided by Centres for Adult Education (*Centri per l'Istruzione degli Adulti*, CPIA) based in lower and upper secondary schools. They lead to a first cycle education leaving certificate (primary and lower secondary education - ISCED 1 and 2), enable students to gain the certification required to complete compulsory education and to obtain an upper secondary school leaving certificate (ISCED 3). They also provide functional literacy courses for migrants.

Although less important than state-funded vocational courses, students can also attend private courses organised by private agencies and no-profit organisations which they have to pay for themselves.

7 Compare note 3.

2.2. Government-regulated VET provision

2.2.1. Three and four-year education and vocational training courses

Three and four-year education and vocational training courses fall under the Regions' responsibility and provide training for 14-17 year old students. They enable young people to complete compulsory education and to fulfil the right/duty to education and training by gaining a vocational qualification in either 'education-oriented' paths in schools or 'training-oriented' courses organised by accredited training agencies.⁸ The courses provide basic common education and lead to a vocational qualification recognised at national level (certificate after a three-year course; diploma after a four-year course).

Over the last few years, the increased cooperation between the State, the Regions and the Provinces has made the education system more flexible enabling students to switch to different pathways and from the education to the vocational training system (and vice-versa) to prevent school drop-out.

A series of documents, revised from 2004 to date and issued by the State-Regions Conference, have introduced a number of important systemic elements: a) a set of training standards for basic skills to be developed in three and four-year VET courses (2011); b) a set of minimum standards (valid at national level) for technical and vocational skills in relation to the professional profiles included in the National Qualifications Index (*Repertorio nazionale delle qualifiche*, 2011); c) intermediate and final certifications (valid at national level) that enable students to switch from the education system to VET pathways (2011).

After attaining a three-year vocational qualification students can access a further specialisation year within the same system, as well as the third or fourth year in the upper secondary education system (usually at technical and vocational institutes). A first level vocational qualification also enables students to enrol in second-level vocational training courses, as well as to apply for a Professional Apprenticeship (for over 18s). In addition, it gives access to higher technical education and training (IFTS) courses provided the skills previously acquired are verified, and in the near future, in accordance with an Agreement signed in 2010, to both academic and non-academic higher education provided students attend a fifth supplementary year. Three/four-year courses are financed by the Regions through Ministry of Labour funds or their own financial resources. They are open to students under 15 years of age who have completed the first cycle of education, while students coming from other pathways have to be under 18. The duration of the courses (including activities at the schools/training agencies and internships in enterprises) varies depending on the geographical area but is approximately 1 000 hours per year, with a total of 3 000 hours over the three years.

Training providers develop study programmes on the basis of specific duties and skills pertinent to the professional profile in question. The modules provided are generally aimed at developing basic, transversal and technical-vocational skills. Vocational learning objectives

⁸ The quality criteria and specific requirements to carry out interventions are established by law and State-regions agreement.

are usually planned in accordance with the technical-professional standards set for the 22 three-year vocational qualifications and 21 four-year vocational diplomas⁹ related to the previously mentioned national framework for the educational and training pathways.

At this level of education, on-the-job training activities (particularly internships) play a key role, both from a practical and a professional point of view and are carried out under the supervision of two tutors, one from the training institution and one from the enterprise.

Teaching methods vary and may range from traditional class teaching to simulations, role plays, cooperative learning, etc. In particular, active teaching methods are recommended in order to facilitate learning processes and meet learners' needs to acquire academic and technical/professional skills through practice. In fact, internships and workshops are highly appreciated by learners. The scheme below provides data regarding three and four-year vocational training courses¹⁰:

In the school year 2010-11, 179,000 young people enrolled in three-year vocational training courses (7.9% of the 14-17 year old population). About two-thirds of these chose a course run by a training agency. In the last 5 years the number of enrolled students increased by 60,000 persons, in the last three years by 26,000 and in the last year by 14,000.
In the school year 2010-11, 4452 young people enrolled in four-year vocational training courses. At present these are not evenly provided across the national territory.
In the school year 2009/2010, about 40% of first-year enrolments were 14 year olds. The others were older because they enrolled in vocational courses following a one or two-year unsuccessful experience in the school system.
In the school year 2010/2011, 15% of the enrolled students were foreigners.
The students who acquired a qualification after completing a three year IVET course in 2010 were mainly distributed in 6 professional profiles in the following areas: wellness, food, electric systems, mechanic systems, administration, and motor vehicles.
78% of the students who completed an IVET course in the school year 2010 were from the North of Italy.
During the 2009/2010 period the courses were founded with about 950 million euro particularly from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the Regions.

Scheme 1.1: Overview of three and four-year vocational training course

⁹ In accordance with the Agreement of July 2011 the areas in which the 22 3-year operator qualifications can be gained are: clothing, footwear, chemical production, building, electric systems, electronic systems, graphics, thermal-hydraulic systems, artworks, woodworking, pleasure craft building and maintenance, motor vehicle repair, mechanic systems, wellness, catering, tourism and hospitality, administration, retailing, logistics, agri-food processing, agriculture and maritime services. Under the same Agreement the areas in which the 21 4-year technician diplomas can be gained are: building, electric systems, electronic systems, graphics, arts, woodworking, motor vehicle repair, automation systems operation and maintenance, industrial automation, beauty treatments, waiting and bar services, business services, commercial sales, retailing, agriculture, tourism, sports and leisure entertainment, clothing, hairdressing, cookery, thermal systems, tourism and hospitality and agri-food processing.

¹⁰ Compare note 6

2.2.2. Post-Secondary higher technical training system

The post-secondary higher technical training system was recently reformed by the Italian Prime Minister's Decree (2008) which contained guidelines for both the reorganisation of the higher technical education and training system (*Sistema di istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore* – IFTS) and the establishment of higher technical institutes (*Istituti tecnici superiori* – ITS). As a result, there are now two separate channels within the same system. The reform started with the Territorial Plans for the 2007-2009 period and the main strategic objectives are to:

- provide a wider and better organised range of training pathways leading to a higher technical specialisation aimed at both young people and adults to meet the demand for higher technicians at different levels in the private and the public sector, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises and the sectors most affected by technological innovation and market internationalisation;
- strengthen the cooperation with the territory, the labour market, the scientific and technological research centres and the education and training system within vocational/technical clusters (*Poli tecnico-professionali*);
- support active labour policies, particularly those aimed at fostering young people's transition to work, and promote closer integration with the continuing training system with a view to fostering lifelong learning.

The learning paths are designed and organised to ensure a flexible and modularised offer for young people, working-age and employed adults. In addition the courses' organisation ensures that the following minimum standards are met:

- the teaching organisation for each semester includes both theoretical and practical workshop activities;
- internships in enterprises and traineeships can also be undertaken abroad and cover at least 30% of the total duration of the course;
- 50% of the teachers are to be recruited from the world of work and professions;
- pathways are organised in modules and capitalised units enabling students to gain skills that can be easily recognised by prospective employers as significant components of specific professional profiles while also being easily identified as expected outcomes of the training pathways.

IFTS pathways are planned by the Regions and designed and managed by a) at least four training organisations (school, vocational training, university and the world of work) that associate through a formal act to establish – depending on the choices made by the various Regions – a Temporary Association of Purpose (*Associazione temporanea di scopo* - ATS), Temporary Enterprise Association (*Associazione temporanea di imprese* - ATI) or a Consortium, or b) organised by IFTS Clusters (made up of several different actors officially recognised by the regional administrations in accordance with the State-Regions Agreement dated 25th November 2004).

As of September 2012, IFTS pathways still refer to the technical/professional skills of the 49 higher technicians' profiles set at national level, or to those established on the basis of specific regional needs within the framework of experimental projects approved by the Regions. Besides these, the courses should provide students with basic and transversal skills (language, science, technology, law, economic, organisation, communication and human relations). They usually last 2 semesters (800/1 000 hours in total) and lead to a Higher Technical Specialisation Certificate (EQF level IV) valid both at national and European level. In addition, they enable students to gain training credits valid in the university system as well as to undertake 'High apprenticeships' (see chapter 2.2.4 The apprenticeship system).

Target groups of IFTS courses include young people and adults, both employed and unemployed, holding an upper secondary education diploma or a professional technician diploma gained at the end of a four-year regional vocational course (see chapter 2.1). In addition, access is granted to the students admitted to the fifth year of *lyceums*, as well as to those who do not have a secondary diploma, provided the skills they have previously acquired in education, VET or work are recognised.

From 2007 to today 519 courses were planned that meet the new standards. The vast majority of courses were held in the North, a lower number in the centre of Italy and only 56 in the South (Table 2.2).

Geographic area	2007-2009 (800/1 000 hours)	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	Total
North	37	98	78	57	50	320
Centre	0	88	27	28	0	143
South	0	14	0	0	42	56
Total	37	200	105	85	92	519

Table 2.2: Time sequence distribution of IFTS pathways per geographic area

Source: Indire database - September 2011

ITS (*Istituti Tecnici Superiori* - Higher Technical Institutes) are joint foundations formed of the following:

- a technical/professional upper secondary institute, state or *paritario* school (i.e. non-state schools that on request have been granted equal status in the national education system), located in the same Province as the foundation;
- a training organisation accredited by the Region for higher training located in the same Province as the foundation;
- an enterprise belonging to the productive sector covered by the Higher Technical Institute;
- a university department or some other organisation that is part of the scientific and technological research system;
- a local body.

The Higher Technician Diploma (EQF level 5) awarded by ITS courses covers one of the technological areas specified for each national reference profile. These areas have been further specified by an Inter-ministerial Decree (2011) as shown in the scheme 2 below:

ITS technological areas	Subsections
Energy efficiency	▪ Energy supply and Production ▪ High-efficiency plants and processes
Sustainable transport Systems	▪ Transportation of people and goods ▪ Production and maintenance of transport vehicles and/or related facilities ▪ Management of transportation information technologies and logistic facilities
New life technologies	▪ Industrial and environmental biotechnologies ▪ Production of instruments and diagnostic and bio-medical devices
New technologies for typical Italian products	▪ Food and agriculture ▪ House systems ▪ Mechanical systems ▪ Clothes and fashion ▪ Business services
Innovative technologies for cultural resources and activities - tourism	▪ Promotion of cultural heritage ▪ The conservation and upgrading of buildings and sites of cultural interest and ensuring safety
ICT	▪ Methods and technologies for software systems development ▪ Knowledge information organisation ▪ Architectures and infrastructures for communication systems

Scheme 2: ITS Technological areas and specific subsections

Foundations are allowed to further subdivide the national profiles in accordance with the specific skills and technological applications required by the territory. ITS courses last 4 semesters and include a total of 1 800/2 000 hours (in the case of the profiles for which specific agreements with the regulated professions have been made, a longer duration is allowed provided they do not exceed six semesters). They are only open to young people and adults holding an upper secondary education diploma. As of September 2012, 62 Foundations have been formally established and 77 courses were launched between September and December 2011. The Foundations are now in the process of running the second year of the programmed courses, while also running a new round of first year courses. Although precise figures regarding the students are still unavailable, according to a first estimation over 1 500 people were involved.

The system reform, still on-going, will be strengthened with the adoption of the 'Guidelines for Coordinating and Promoting the VET Offer' (*Linee guida per il coordinamento e la promozione dell'offerta di istruzione e formazione tecnico-professionale*). In particular, they are expected to reduce the distance between the productive sectors and training,

promote complementarity both among the training organisations included in the networks and between these and the enterprises, get enterprises more directly involved in pin-pointing training needs as well as in the design and implementation of the training paths, promote learning in practical contexts (first and foremost apprenticeships), and use both private and public resources to foster integration between the technical training, enterprise and research systems.

In addition, as part of the reform, a number of Technical/Professional networks (poles) have been set up with a view to establishing a functional connection between training organisations and enterprises to provide opportunities for situational learning in shared public and private laboratories that are already operational.

The reform also impacts on IFTSs. In the future these will refer to a national index of specialisations (not to professional profiles as of now) for which the outcomes will be revised in relation to the newly established pathway standards. By the end of this year, therefore, the new tertiary technical/professional system will have been further integrated and organised so it can effectively satisfy the demand from enterprises for post-secondary specialised technicians.

2.2.3. Adult education

In 2009 the Ministry of Education introduced a 'Draft regulation for the reorganisation of teaching in adult education centres' (*Schema di Regolamento recante norme per la ridefinizione dell'assetto organizzativo didattico dei Centri d'istruzione per gli adulti*). The document contains provisions for the establishment of training pathways leading to lower and upper secondary education qualifications and to ensure that the low-skilled are given priority access to the educational offer. The Regulation has not yet been approved and is currently under discussion in Parliament.

In the school year 2009/10, 1 336 institutes were surveyed in the annual monitoring report on adult education edited by ANSAS¹¹. Of these, 505 (37.80%), were institutes coordinating local centers for lifelong learning known as 'Permanent territorial centers' (*Centri Territoriali Permanenti* - CTP), 773 were institutes in the upper secondary education system providing evening courses (57.86%), and 34 were registered as schools in correctional institutions (2.54%). Of the 529 CTPs surveyed by the research, 118 had set up one or more schools in prisons (173 as a whole on the national territory). The CTPs also offered 111 personalised pathways (21% of the total) which enabled students to access evening courses run by upper secondary schools.

The Annual Monitoring Report 2009/2010 also collected information regarding the financial resources used by CTPs and evening schools in addition to Ministry of Education funding. Out of the 1 336 institutions, 1 204 (87%) said they used additional funding. The survey found that for 74% of the Adult Education Institutes (CTPs + evening schools) the

11 ANSAS (2010), Rapporto di sintesi del Monitoraggio Nazionale dell'Istruzione degli Adulti, a.s. 2009-2010 (Synthesis Report of the National Monitoring Survey on Adult Education, school year 2009-10).

most important additional financial resource came from enrolment fees (although often very low). More specifically, 87% of CTPs said they had benefited from funding from sources other than the Ministry of Education (the Region, Local Authorities and the European Social Fund). The percentage breakdown is as follows: 59.55% benefited from enrolment fees; 37.05% from funding from the Region; 34.22% from funding from the local authorities; 31.19% from the European Social Fund; 5.48% from companies and/or associations and the remaining 11.53% from other sources.

In the school year 2009/10 18 692 courses were provided in all. Of these 4 584 were compulsory education courses; 3 965 were Italian and social integration courses for migrants speaking other languages, and 10 143 short modular courses on functional competences, literacy and numeracy. Out of the 4 584 compulsory education courses, 2 351 were at primary school level (51.29%) and 2 233 at lower secondary school level in preparation for the state exam (48.71%). Overall, 453 037 people enrolled in adult education: 96 957 in the first cycle of education (21.40%); 78 537 in Italian courses for foreigners (17.34%); 192 140 in short modular literacy courses (42.41%); and 85 403 in personalised pathways to obtain an upper secondary education qualification and/or certificate (18.85%).

As regards the typology of the providers, 95% of users (342 370 adults) attended courses offered at CTPs and evening schools, the remaining 5% (equivalent to 16 759 adults) attended courses at correctional institutions. Of these 16 759 students 13 917 attended courses provided by local CTPs in prison institutions, while the remaining 2 842 attended evening courses provided by local schools to obtain an upper secondary education qualification or certificate.

As regards the students' origin, 59% of those who attended adult education courses were Italian (212 502), while the remaining 41% were migrants (146 627). With regard to gender, the data analysis shows that 53% of the students were women, i.e. around 189 684 women against 169 445 men.

2.2.4. The apprenticeship system

As part of the reform of vocational training, particularly amongst the interventions aimed at relaunching the training pathways in which school and work periods are combined, apprenticeships have been given a strategic role by the training policies and are considered a major tool to help young people access the labour market. Apprenticeships are open-ended contracts with a specific training purpose. They include both on-the-job and classroom training.

The apprenticeship system has been recently reformed by the 'Consolidated Act on Apprenticeships' (Legislative Decree n. 167/2011), that was approved on October 25th 2011 and entered into force on April 25th 2012. The new Law amends and reorganises the previous legislation on apprenticeships, particularly by introducing some new features in the three types of contract available in the country:

- The 'Apprenticeship leading to a qualification and a professional diploma' (*Apprendistato per la qualifica ed il diploma professionale*), aimed at young people aged 15 to 25, enables apprentices to complete compulsory education or to acquire a professional qualification or diploma after three or four years of training (ISCED level 3). It is regulated by the Regions and Autonomous Provinces that through a specific agreement signed at the State/Regions Conference established 21 operator profiles for three-year courses and 21 technician profiles for four-year courses drawing on the 'National Index of Qualifications' (*Repertorio nazionale delle qualifiche*) already used in education and vocational training pathways. Training activities, provided both in and outside the enterprises, last a minimum of 400 hours per year; further training at enterprises can be agreed on through collective bargaining;
- The 'Professional apprenticeship' (*Apprendistato professionalizzante e di mestiere*), aimed at young people aged 18 to 29, enables apprentices to gain a professional qualification on completion of a three-year training pathway (five in the case of the artisan sector). Training is divided in two areas: basic training (120 hours over a three-year period) that is regulated by the Regions and Autonomous Provinces and is provided by VET agencies; and professionalising training that is provided directly by the companies in accordance with the provisions established by collective bargaining agreements;
- The 'Higher education and research apprenticeship' (*Apprendistato di alta formazione e Ricerca*) enables apprentices to gain secondary (ISCED 3) or tertiary level diplomas (ISCED 4 or 5) from the education system or a doctorate degree (ISCED 6). The qualifications acquired also enable students to continue their studies within the education system, as well as to pursue the traineeships required to access the regulated professions. The Regions and Autonomous Provinces, in agreement with the social partners and public institutions, decide how to organise the training, also in relation to the education system curricula, and decide the duration of the contracts.

In accordance with the new Law, apprenticeship contracts have also been extended to the workers registered in the so-called 'mobility lists' to enable them to qualify or re-qualify and to those working in the public sector. Over the last few years the number of apprenticeship contracts has dropped. The latest available data refer to apprentices hired under the previous regulations. In the first half of 2011 160 916 apprentices were employed; the most substantial drop was seen in the manufacturing, transport and communications sectors.

2.2.5. Teachers' and trainers' profiles

Teachers and trainers have very different features in Italy as teachers' professional profile is much more clearly defined and regulated than that of trainers as far as training, recruitment, duties and skills are concerned. In addition, when it comes to the actual teaching part of their activities, teachers can be mainly defined as 'content experts', whereas trainers are 'process experts' who depending on the situation can play a variety of roles (e.g. tutors,

learning facilitators, group leaders, coaches, etc.). In fact, trainers are mainly required to support the learning process by guiding and motivating trainees, to strengthen the link between training and work and to update trainees' working skills.

- **IVET teachers** are employed by the Ministry of Education and work mainly in State vocational schools although some of them also work in Higher Technical Institutes (*Istituti tecnici superiori*);
- **CVET teachers** work mostly in centres for adult education (*Centri per l'istruzione degli adulti* - CPIA) and are mainly employed by the Ministry of Education;
- **IVET trainers** mainly work in vocational training centres managed directly by the regional/provincial/municipal authorities as well as in private vocational training centres accredited by the Regions;
- **CVET trainers** work mainly in enterprises but also in public and private vocational training centres. Public centres can be managed directly by the local authorities or accredited by the Regions.

Table 2.4: General features of VET teachers and trainers

FEATURES	TEACHERS	IVET TRAINERS	CVET TRAINERS
PLACE OF WORK	State vocational schools Higher technical education and training institutes/Higher technical institutes Centres for adult education	Public and private vocational training centres Higher technical education and training institutes/Higher technical institutes	Public and private vocational training centres Enterprises
ROLE	Provide face to face learning activities to develop basic skills in languages, mathematics, social/historical and scientific/technological areas. Develop higher skills in specific industry and services sectors as well key competences. Develop key competences for citizenship and lifelong learning (learning to learn, planning, communicating, collaborating, acting autonomously, problem	Provide face to face learning activities (cultural, humanities, scientific, technical and practical subjects) with a special focus on professional practice. Coordinate training projects for disadvantaged people (e.g. drop-outs). Organise training projects in collaboration with employment services and enterprises. Provide guidance and counselling regarding	Provide face to face and blended learning activities in the areas of corporate organization and management, languages, marketing, accounting, ICT, etc., to develop higher technical and organizational skills and increase the competitiveness of the productive system. Actively participate in enterprises' innovation processes. Improve people's professional skills and

	solving, establishing relationships, acquiring and interpreting information).	vocational training. Provide professional support for alternate training and apprenticeship periods. Promote the establishment of integrated networks between education/training, employment and social assistance services.	employability. Facilitate face to face and blended learning activities for individuals and groups. Help people (including the disadvantaged) to make choices and strengthen their professional identity. Provide guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment. Support work-based learning and promote entrepreneurship.
TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT	Mainly State employees with open-ended or fixed-term contracts	Mainly private employees with open-ended, fixed-term and atypical contracts	Mainly private employees with open-ended, fixed-term and atypical contracts
TYPE OF RECRUITMENT	State exam	Direct: recruitment and selection are not regulated by law	Direct: recruitment and selection are not regulated by law
PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS	Specific subject degree	Degree or high school diploma and professional experience	Degree or high school diploma and professional experience
PRE-SERVICE TRAINING	Five-year academic degree followed by an Active Traineeship (<i>Tirocinio formativo attivo</i> – TFA) in schools	Currently not compulsory	Currently not compulsory
IN-SERVICE TRAINING	Not compulsory	Not compulsory	Not compulsory

2.2.5.1. VET Teachers' Training

VET teachers' pre-service training is strictly regulated by the Ministry of Education. Universities provide teachers' initial training on behalf of the Ministry and in collaboration with the schools. Up to the recent education system reform (Laws n. 244/2007 and n.133/2008)¹², the minimum requirements for obtaining a teaching contract (whether open-ended or fixed term) were an academic degree and a teaching qualification that could be gained either by sitting a state exam or attending a postgraduate course for teaching in secondary education (*Scuola di Specializzazione per l'Insegnamento Secondario* - SSIS). However, the reform has completely reshaped VET teachers' pre-service training and recruitment procedures. As a result, SSSs have been closed and the minimum requirement to access the teaching profession is now a five-year academic degree (with restricted access) in a selected subject followed by a one-year traineeship (*Tirocinio Formativo Attivo* – TFA - Active Teaching Traineeship) in schools. This includes face to face learning, workshop activities and practical work experience¹³ in schools under the supervision of a teacher (tutor). The aim is to cover both content and methodological/didactic aspects within a specific learning environment. During and at the end of the traineeship students are required to take theoretical and practical tests. The procedure through which they will be assigned a permanent teaching position on completion of the training path has not yet been clarified. More general, according to the reform, pre-service training of VET teachers should be aimed at strengthening their knowledge of mathematics, natural and physical sciences, as well as at improving their teaching, psychological, pedagogical, organisational and social skills. Special attention is also given to improving their languages and digital skills in compliance with the European recommendations. Teachers who wish to teach disabled people must attend a specific course of studies in formal education.

VET teachers' in-service training is not compulsory and not regulated by law but it is considered an individual right under the National Collective Work Agreement. Some training activities for VET teachers are provided by universities (Master courses) and public or private vocational training centres (specialisation courses). In addition, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the National Agency for the Development of School Autonomy (*Agenzia nazionale per lo sviluppo dell'autonomia scolastica* - ANSAS¹⁴ formerly *Indire*), promotes and

12 Law n. 244/2007, 'Disposizioni per la formulazione del bilancio annuale e pluriennale dello Stato' (Provisions for setting the annual and multiannual Italian state budget), article 2, section 411 and 412 'Disposizioni in materia di organizzazione scolastica' (Provisions for school organisation and planning); Law n.133/2008, 'Disposizioni urgenti per lo sviluppo economico, la semplificazione, la competitività, la stabilizzazione della finanza pubblica e la perequazione tributaria' (Urgent provisions to foster economic development, simplification, competitiveness, public finance stabilisation and tax equalisation), art. 64 'Disposizioni in materia di organizzazione scolastica' (Provisions for school organisation and planning).

13 Practical work in schools lasts 475 hours, 75 of which dedicated to developing skills for teaching disabled students.

14 ANSAS was established by Legislative Decree n. 258/99, 'Riordino del Centro europeo dell'educazione, della biblioteca di documentazione pedagogica e trasformazione in Fondazione del museo nazionale della scienza e della tecnica "Leonardo da Vinci"' (Reorganising the European Centre of Education and the Library for Pedagogical Documentation and transforming the "Leonardo da Vinci National Museum of Science and Technology into a Foundation). A public institution with administrative, financial and accounting autonomy, it operates at national level under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

organises updating or training courses for teachers in ICT. Among these, the most remarkable initiative is the FORTIC project¹⁵ within the framework of the National Training Plan for Computer and Technology Skills of School Personnel (*Piano Nazionale di Formazione sulle Competenze Informatiche e Tecnologiche del Personale della Scuola*). Its aim is to train teachers to effectively use ICT in daily teaching activities. The project includes both classroom-based and distance-learning activities and promotes new forms of interaction and cooperation.

2.2.5.2. IVET Trainers' Training

Trainers' pre-service training is not regulated at national level; there is no nationally recognised register of trainers nor formal recruitment procedures, except for public training centres for which a public examination is sometimes required. As regards access requirements to the training profession, the National Collective Work Contract only sets minimum requirements: a degree or a upper secondary school diploma plus professional experience. In addition, it establishes that – regardless of the role played in the different training contexts (tutor, counsellor, trainer coordinator, etc.) - trainers should regularly participate in professional updating programmes either within or outside the institutions at which they work. At local level, the Regions and Provinces regulate the matter autonomously and some of them have drawn up a list of authorised training providers.

In the last few years, the revision of the accreditation system of training and guidance providers has triggered an important reform process in which human resources have been recognised as a key factor for improving the quality of the training system¹⁶. Within this framework, each Region and Autonomous Province established its own standards for trainers' training with a view to ensuring high quality public VET services. In particular, most of them chose to adopt stricter quality standards for the professional skills of the human resources. In this case, the quality of the training is ensured by the presence of qualified professionals. Private VET centres regulate the matter of trainers' training autonomously and do not have to respect specific laws. In the last few years, a specific university degree course for trainers has been set up (*Scienze della formazione professionale* - Vocational Training Sciences), although most of the trainers have academic degrees in various subjects (i.e. sociology, psychology, economics, foreign languages, etc.) and prior work experience is generally considered more important. According to a survey carried out by ISFOL in 2011, 63% of the trainers who work in VET training pathways have a university degree, around 30% a high school diploma and only 7% a qualification certificate (see figure 2.1). This confirms that training providers consider human resources and their training a key factor to improve the quality of their services.

15 See 'Piano nazionale di formazione degli insegnanti sulle Tecnologie dell'Informazione e della Comunicazione (For TIC)' (National teachers' training plan for ICT – FOR TIC), promoted by the Ministry of Education and INDIRE <http://puntoeduri.indire.it/fortic/>

16 Decree of the Ministry of Labour, n. 166/2001, 'Accreditamento delle sedi formative e delle sedi orientative' ("Provisions for Accrediting VET and Guidance Providers"); State-Regions Agreement 'Nuovo sistema di accreditamento' (The new accreditation system) implemented by the Ministry of Labour and approved in March 2008 by the State-Regions Conference.

Trainers' in-service training varies greatly and participation is discretionary. Activities are mainly promoted by the regional authorities and funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). However, in-service training is not widely spread across Italy and varies from Region to Region (e.g. in-service training services tend to be more structured in the Northern and Central Regions). The providers mainly belong to the private sector. In the 2008-2010 period, an important blended training initiative¹⁷ was implemented to update and increase the knowledge and skills of trainers who work in public vocational training centres and do not have a university degree but a qualification. This was promoted and implemented by ISFOL together with the Ministry of Labour, the universities, the social partners and a number of training institutions accredited by the universities that offer the 'Vocational Training Sciences' degree course. The most remarkable aspect of the project is that students can gain training credits (consequently shortening the university training course) by getting their prior working experience recognised on the basis of the European Qualifications Framework.

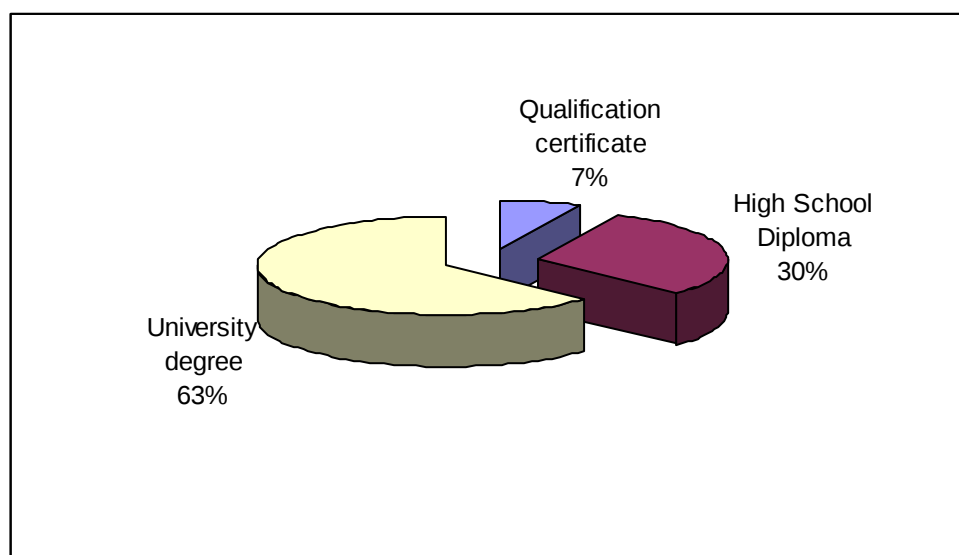


Figure 2.1: Educational qualifications of trainers working in the VET system
Source: ISFOL data, 2011

2.2.5.3. CVET Trainers' Training

In Italy there are no legal obligations nor structured pathways¹⁸ for the pre-service training of CVET trainers which is entirely left to the professionals' will, particularly because these are often freelance or occasional trainers (for instance, professionals or middle/top managers temporarily assigned to specialised technical or vocational training). The training supply is determined by the free market and the most important providers are public and private training bodies and consortia, consultancy firms, professional associations, universities, social partners, Chambers of Commerce and some business schools. Also in the

¹⁷ See Elearning Isfol, <http://elearning.isfol.it>

¹⁸ Structured trainers training pathways have been set up only for some particular sectors (e.g. health and safety at work, health care, etc ..) for which also specific guidelines have been issued.

case of in-service training, CVET trainers can choose from a wide range of activities and participation occurs on a voluntary basis. Financial resources are mainly provided by the ESF and more recently by Joint Inter-Professional Funds for Continuing Training (*Fondi paritetici interprofessionali*)¹⁹. Training is mainly designed to enhance the skills required by technological innovation and market globalisation; foster the recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning and establish reliable standards for the validation procedures; and adjust training interventions to local needs. Some Regions offer individual training vouchers to trainers who wish to attend specialised training courses. Large enterprises or public administration departments with permanent internal training services usually contribute to funding these activities or invest directly in the continuing training of trainers. Special incentives to encourage continuing training are given to specific sectors (e.g. medical and nursing staff in the health-care sector).

2.2.6. VET provision quality assurance

The accreditation of training institutions is to date the main tool for selecting the organisations that wish to provide training services, and consequently the main instrument available to the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, which are the only institutional bodies responsible for ensuring the quality of publicly funded training. The present, new accreditation model is due to a national agreement among the State and the Regions²⁰ that took place in 2008. The national accreditation system comprises five criteria that provide specific indications on the basis of which the Regional administrations can model their own territorial accreditation instruments:

Criterion A – Infrastructure and logistics resources;

Criterion B – Economic and financial dependability;

Criterion C – Management skills and professional resources;

Criterion D – Efficacy and efficiency;

Criterion E – Connections with the territory.

While at national level a new accreditation model was adopted, at EU level the European Parliament and the Council issued a Recommendation for the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF)²¹.

19 These funds are managed by the social partners and supervised by the Ministry of Labour.

20 'Accordo tra il Ministro dell'istruzione, dell'università e della ricerca, il Ministro del lavoro e delle politiche sociali, le Regioni e le Province Autonome di Trento e Bolzano, per la definizione di standard minimi del nuovo sistema di accreditamento delle strutture formative per la qualità dei servizi' (Agreement signed by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, the Regions and Trento and Bolzano Autonomous Provinces to establish minimum standards for the new accreditation system of training providers and ensure service quality).

21 EQARF – Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 for the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (2009/C 155/01)

By comparing the Italian accreditation criteria and EQARF indicators it emerges that in general, the Italian version employs many of the 10 indicators provided by the EQARF Recommendation.

ISFOL, as the Ministry of Labour's research institute, has been closely involved in carrying out research and constantly monitoring the volume of training providers accredited by the Regions. Thanks to the information collected, it is interesting to observe how the number of accredited training providers has remained substantially stable over the past few years. The introduction of a national accreditation model (Ministerial Decree 166/2001) has made it possible to gradually select the training organisations and to enhance the quality of the vocational training system as a whole. The State/Regions Agreement signed in 2008 has further consolidated the position of the training providers. As a result, despite the establishment of more stringent requirements, the volume of the accredited training offer has remained stable, except in a few Regions where different regulatory approaches were adopted. In 2011 ISFOL undertook a survey on a sample of 1 000 accredited organisations to examine the quality procedures they adopted to foster the development of skills in the line with the market of labour needs²². The analysis of the data (see Figure 2.2) shows that the majority of the accredited providers (34%) belong to the third sector (non-profit, social cooperatives and associations), 26% is made up of enterprises, while training bodies, i.e. the organisations traditionally responsible for providing training services, only account for about 20% of the total.

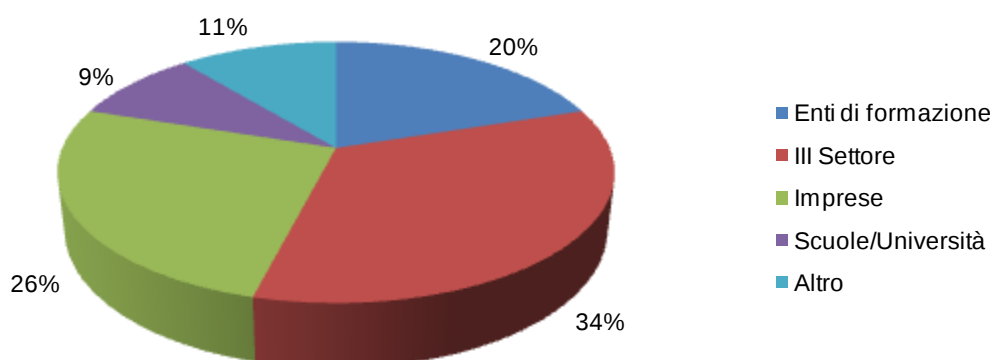


Figure 2.2: Legal status of the accredited training providers (percentage values)

Source : ISFOL data, 2011

Legend: 20%: VET providers; 34%: Third Sector; 26%: Enterprises; 9%: Schools; Universities; 11%: Other

²² 'Indagine campionaria sul presidio dell'efficacia ed efficienza dei servizi formativi da parte delle strutture formative accreditate' (Sample Survey on Efficacy and Efficiency Management of Training Services by Accredited Training Providers) started in 2011 and is included in the ISFOL Activity Plan for 2012.

In fact, over the last few years a wide range of subjects belonging to different productive and social sectors have been attracted to the training system, including third sector and for-profit organisations (both enterprises and bilateral bodies). The changes in the composition of the accredited training offer have certainly contributed to renovating the training system, while the closer involvement of enterprises and their representative organisations ensure that the training services supplied can best meet the labour market needs.

As regards more specifically the use of monitoring and evaluation procedures, these are widely and sometimes even systematically used by the surveyed training organisations, as shown in table 2.5.

PROCEDURES	%
On-entry assessment of students' knowledge	80%
On-going learning assessment	83%
Intervention rearrangements on the basis of students' actual knowledge	78%
Courses monitoring	87%
Corrective actions adopted on the basis of the monitoring results	80%
Final learning assessment through structured tests	87%
Final learning assessment through tests taken at the workplace	65%
Drop-outs detection	83%

Table 2.5: *Implementation of monitoring and assessment procedures by the accredited organisations (% value)*

Source: ISFOL data, 2011

The widespread adoption of specific procedures (e.g. learning assessments, corrective actions undertaken on the basis of the monitoring results etc.) shows that the accredited training organisations are paying increasing attention to the users and their needs by closely monitoring the learning process and seeking to provide them with labour-relevant skills. This is confirmed by the fact that a remarkable share of the surveyed training organisations (about 80%) also provides guidance services that include both standard actions (information provision, introductory interviews and skills assessments etc.) and personalised interventions aimed at identifying difficulties and adopting support measures. In addition, as regards post-training support measures, about 70% of the training organisations provide help for work transfer as part of their ordinary services and 73% carry out follow-up actions by checking employment results. The promotion of training pathways increasingly targeted at people's needs and aimed at enhancing users' human capital appears to be now a well-established principle among accredited training providers.

This is confirmed by the data on the skills needs analysis carried out by the organisations: about 80% of them monitor the needs of the territory in which they operate, for instance by examining enterprises' professional needs or designing their programmes on the basis of the analysis produced by the institutional actors (the Regions, Provinces and

Municipalities). From what has been said so far, it is evident that the organisations' management skills have been strengthened and specific strategies have been adopted to enhance users' skills and bring the training services more in line with the training market needs.

2.3. Other types of training

2.3.1. Continuing VET training

The Italian CVT system has been supported by relevant legislation since the 1990s. The European Social Fund (ESF) played for a long time a major role in this development. In particular, it is worth to mention:

1. Law 236/93 establishes that the Ministry of Labour (with the support of the social partners and the Regions) finances in-company training, teachers' training, system actions, sectoral and territorial plans promoted by the social partners, as well as training on request of workers who apply to the regional authorities. The implementation of this Law has been an important step for the development of continuing training by extending funding to a range of training activities, including training addressed to enterprises, plans targeted at individuals through training vouchers and sectoral and territorial plans promoted by the social partners and systemic actions. In 2010, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies issued the last decree concerning the reallocation of resources provided for under the Law to support training initiatives aimed at enterprise employees and more generally to boost the system's competitiveness. In all, 150 million euro were given to the Regions and Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, 30% of which were used to fund re-qualification interventions aimed at employees receiving redundancy pay (*Cassa Integrazione Guadagni* - CIG);
2. Law 53/00 provides for the funding of CVT vouchers for employees by financing training leave, in accordance with the regulation on working hours. It recognises workers' right to lifelong learning by granting specific leave for training activities. These can be chosen independently by the workers or arranged by the companies. The vouchers are assigned by the Regions according to funding allocated by the State. The Law also establishes that enterprises that are given funds taken from the national budget can also access other financial resources through the European Social Fund and the Joint Inter-Professional Funds' continuing training.
3. Law 388/00: Joint Inter-Professional Funds (JIF - *Fondi paritetici interprofessionali*) are promoted by the social partners who finance training plans at company, sectoral and territorial level, individual training programs and system activities, such as training needs surveys. Companies may choose whether to join these new inter-professional funds or not. If so, they must request INPS (*Istituto nazionale per la*

previdenza sociale – National Institute for Social Security) to pass the levy of 0.3% onto the fund they have joined. If not, the payments remain at INPS. In this case the resources are used by the Ministry of Labour in financing CVT under 1) and 2).

In these frameworks, the main actors are the Ministry of Labour, which sets the goals of CVT according to Laws 236 and 53, and the Regions which have the general responsibility in managing most training activities, financing spending by selecting the appropriate local-level target and reporting to government. The Ministry of Labour and the Regions co-operate in goal setting with the social partners, who promote IJFs at intersectoral level. The social partners play an important role in promoting company-level training plans (single companies or group of companies) to be financed by either Regions or IJFs.

The enterprises' potential demand for continuing training has increased in comparison with the previous years: 33.5% of enterprises provided training courses for their employees in 2010, compared to 32.1% in 2009 and 25.7% in 2008. Following the introduction of support instruments for CVT (including Joint Inter-Professional Funds), the demand for continuing training has increased. However, training is still largely dependent on enterprises' needs and training initiatives are therefore unevenly distributed across the country and the different production sectors. Also the recent anti-crisis measures adopted by the Government contributed to expanding CVT provision as Joint Inter-Professional Funds can be used to finance targeted training plans. In fact, besides income support measures aimed at temporarily suspended or laid-off workers, the Government adopted a range of active labour policy measures, including compulsory short and medium-length training programmes that should enable people to recover transversal and basic skills (including languages and ICT). In addition, the adults who have a previous VET background can access the IFTS system (the higher technical education and training system). These initiatives offer a range of pathways which provide young people and adults (both employed and unemployed) with sound cultural training as well as extensive technical and vocational training.

The Joint Inter-Professional Funds for continuing training are managed by both employers and the social partners to foster enterprises' development and boost their competitiveness. Each of these Funds is promoted by a specific private sectors (e.g: banks, commerce and distribution, different industrial sectors), and is managed by both social actors (employers and the social partners). These are jointly responsible for planning and organising the access of their employees to the training benefits, according to the rules established in agreement with the Ministry of Labour and the Regional Authorities. There are currently 22 funds; these are joined by 55.8% of all private enterprises (721 000 companies in all) and provide training for 66% of their employees (about 7 800 000). Micro-enterprises (with less than 10 employees) count for 83% of all joining enterprises. Despite the economic crisis, in the 2010-2011 period, participation in the funds increased thanks to 165 000 new subscriptions. In addition, from January 2010 to June 2011, over 19 400 training plans were approved for a total of 95 million training hours aimed at around 1 911 000 participants belonging to more than 61 000 enterprises. The total cost of the plans was around 910 million euro, mostly allocated for enterprise-targeted initiatives. Enterprises made a significant contribution, covering globally 37% of the total cost (the rest being paid as referred

above), with a peak of over 48% for plans aimed at individuals. Almost 22% of the plans had a cost ranging from 20 000 to 50 000 euro. However, a significant number of training initiatives did not exceed 20 000 euro (over 27%).

2.3.2. Training provided by employers

In the last few years Italian enterprises have become more inclined to invest in human capital. As a result, the training market, particularly its private non-State-regulated sector, has expanded both in terms of demand and supply. Although the levels are still lower than in most European countries, the regular increase indicates a positive trend. Enterprises with at least 10 employees that offered training opportunities to their workers grew from 32.2% in 2005 (Eurostat, CVTS) to 45.1% in 2009 (ISFOL, INDACO/CVTS²³). As regards the economic sectors, the highest increase occurred in construction, in finance and insurance and in the other business and personal services sectors (Table 2.6). The growing trend is also confirmed by other indicators, including the participation rate: between 2005 and 2009 this increased by 4.4 percentage points (from 28.8% to 33.2%), indicating that 2.8 million workers were involved in training activities, especially in construction and industry (Table 2.7). However, together with the participation rate, the gender gap also increased (from +4.1% to +6.1% over the four years).

23 The “Survey on Knowledge in Enterprises” (Indagine sulla Conoscenza nelle imprese – INDACO/CVTS) is carried out by ISFOL in collaboration with the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT). It produces indicators harmonised with the Eurostat “Continuing Vocational Training Survey” (CVTS) but unlike this it also collects information regarding micro-enterprises (6-9 employees).

Economic sectors	Enterprises providing courses and other training activities	Enterprises providing courses and other training activities
Sectors with the highest percentage of enterprises providing training activities		
Finance and Insurance	93.3	72.6
Energy supply, water supply etc.	68.6	69.4
Construction	61.5	36.7
Other services for businesses and the public	64.8	44.4
Sectors with the lowest percentage of enterprises providing training activities		
Accommodation and catering services	15.8	14.0
Storage and transportation	31.3	35.6
Manufacturing	39.6	28.1
Commerce	42.7	32.3
Total	45.1	32.2

Table 2.6: Enterprises with 10 employees or more that provided training in the 2005 –2009 period by economic sector (percentage values)

Source: ISFOL, INDACO (Survey on Knowledge in Enterprises – Indagine sulla conoscenza nelle imprese), 2009. Eurostat CVTS, 2005.

Economic sectors	Size class				Total
	10 - 19	20-49	50-249	250 or	
Industry in the narrow sense	13.5	20.1	32.5	48.2	31.2
Construction	32.3	36.2	36.6	70.4	37.2
Commerce	15.5	17.2	31.9	51.0	31.0
Services	16.8	20.6	41.3	42.8	35.5
Total for the year 2009	17.9	21.8	35.4	46.2	33.2
Total for the year 2005	9.2	13.6	23.5	49.6	28.8

Table 2.7: Participants in training courses out of the total number of employees, by size class and economic sector (percentage out of the total number of employees)

Source: ISFOL, INDACO (Survey on Knowledge in Enterprises – Indagine sulla conoscenza nelle imprese), 2009. Eurostat CVTS, 2005.

Overall, about 60 million training hours were provided by enterprises for their employees, or about 21 course hours for each employee at an average cost of 59.4 euro per hour. Service enterprises provided 25.4 course hours for each participant, while the provision supplied by other sectors was lower, the lowest being that of construction (16.2 hours per participant) (Table 2.8).

Economic sectors	Size class				Total
	10 - 19	20-49	50-249	250 and over	
<i>Industry in the narrow sense</i>	20.2	20.1	16.7	18.5	18.4
<i>Construction</i>	16.8	16.5	16.5	13.9	16.2
<i>Commerce</i>	19.4	29.0	20.9	17.5	19.7
<i>Services</i>	27.9	27.3	27.4	24.1	25.4
Total for the year 2009	21.0	22.2	21.1	20.8	21.1
Total for the year 2005	26.0	24.0	24.9	25.8	25.5

Table 2.8: Average number of course hours per participant

Source: ISFOL, INDACO (Survey on Knowledge in Enterprises – Indagine sulla conoscenza nelle imprese), 2009. Eurostat CVTS, 2005.

Enterprises provided training for an overall cost of 3 537 million euro. Each course hour cost 58.3 euro on average, but the cost increased proportionally to the company workforce going from 57.6 euro for smaller enterprises to 58.6 euro for larger ones (Table 2.9).

Economic sectors	Size class				Total
	10 - 19	20-49	50-249	250 and over	
<i>Industry in the narrow sense</i>	59.4	60.7	62.9	59.0	60.4
<i>Construction</i>	51.3	55.8	61.0	52.5	54.6
<i>Commerce</i>	69.8	59.7	57.4	56.5	59.0
<i>Services</i>	55.2	53.9	54.8	59.0	57.2
Total for the year 2009	57.6	57.7	58.3	58.6	58.3
Total for the year 2005	65.1	62.9	60.3	57.9	59.2

Table 2.9: Average cost per course hour (in euro)

Source: ISFOL, INDACO (Survey on Knowledge in Enterprises – Indagine sulla conoscenza nelle imprese), 2009. Eurostat CVTS, 2005.

2.3.3. Training programmes and providers

The increase in CVT provision did not only affect enterprises that provide traditional classroom-based courses but also those that offer alternative learning activities. The majority of these training programmes dealt with environmental protection, labour safety and other content mandated by law. Less common were training initiatives aimed at developing personal skills or at training workers in the use of production techniques and technologies. Other topics, such as accounting and high finance, personal services, transportation, office or secretarial professions, were far less covered.

The providers vary and belong to both the public and the private sector. A particularly significant role is played by consulting and/or training organisations, while enterprise representative organisations and Chambers of Commerce make a minor (albeit not negligible) contribution. Also machinery and software providers, as well as other enterprises and public sector training organisations, play a significant role, while school and university institutions are less active. The Survey on Knowledge in Enterprises also highlights that over the next few years there will be a wider gap in technical than in social skills. In fact, the most required skills are those necessary to use production techniques and technologies and to manage client relations, while there is not much demand for written/oral communication and numeracy and literacy.

2.3.4. Adults' demand for non-formal and informal learning

Useful information about this issue is provided by the Survey on adults' attitudes towards training (*Indagine sui comportamenti formativi degli adulti* - INDACO-Adulti²⁴) that analyses adults' (people aged 18-64) learning activities,²⁵ separated into formal, non-formal and informal²⁶ categories, both in and outside the workplace.

According to the survey carried out in 2011, the levels of adults' participation in training during the 12 months prior to the interviews were 26.9% for non-formal learning and 75.2% for informal activities. However, adult participation – whether in formal or informal learning activities - decreases considerably in the older age groups. An even larger generation gap (24 percentage points) was detected for informal activities: youth participation was 87.3% while that of elderly people 63.1%, with almost 12 percentage points' difference on average (Table 2.10).

24 The survey is included in the National Statistical System (SISTAN)'s programme for the collection of statistical data at national level since 2003.

25 The INDACO-Adulti survey focuses on adults consistently with the AES survey and with a view to analysing more in detail (in comparison to LFS) qualitative and quantitative information regarding participation in training in this section of the population. The 2011 edition involved 16 500 people and focused particularly on the employed (both private enterprise and public sector employees as well as independent workers), unemployed and inactive. The aim was to acquire information regarding people's training and learning needs, their economic investments in training, access gaps due to socio-demographic, cultural and professional reasons and the features of the training activities undertaken on the basis of the interviewees' own statements.

26 Learning categories and activities were established by taking into account Eurostat's *Classification of Learning Activities* (CLA, 2006). The INDACO survey experimentally applied the classification at national level. This is also being employed in the AES national edition currently under way.

Age class	Non-formal learning	Informal learning
18-24	31.3	87.3
25-34	34.3	82.8
35-44	28.3	76.4
45-54	25.5	71.4
55-64	16.2	63.1
Average	26.9	75.2

Table 2.10: *Participation in training activities for 18-64 year olds by age class. 2011, %*

Source: ISFOL (INDACO), Indagine sui comportamenti formativi degli adulti (Survey on adults' attitudes towards training); year 2011.

Another factor strongly influencing participation is the employment condition. In the case of non-formal learning activities undertaken by employed people a generation gap was detected in particular among independent workers and - in a narrow rate - among public sector employees (Table 2.11).

Age class	Private sector employees	Public sector employees	Independent workers	Total
18-24	32.0	28.1	36,2	32.3
25-34	37.2	49.9	40.0	38.5
35-44	31.8	56.7	29.9	34.2
45-54	29.6	47.5	24.5	32.6
55-64	25.3	43.8	16.5	27.5
Total	32.4	48.9	28.1	33.9

Table 2.11: *Participation in non-formal learning for the employed aged 18-64, by work type and age class. 2011, %*

Source: ISFOL (INDACO), Indagine sui comportamenti formativi degli adulti (Survey on adults' attitudes towards training); year 2011.

Within the private employees' category, the classification into different levels of staff highlights very unequal levels of participation: non-formal participation rates were almost double the average for managerial staff (both middle and top) and almost half of the average for unskilled workers.

3. Shaping VET Qualifications

3.1. Qualifications Design: Processes and Responsible Bodies

The Italian system of education and vocational training has been traditionally programme-based, where a programme is to be intended as a prescriptive list of disciplinary contents to be taught to students in a specified period of time. However, in time, the focus has been shifted from programmes to curricula, i.e. a range of learning outcomes comprising knowledge, skills and abilities to be achieved in each subject. During the last decade, all segments of the VET system have been affected by an important reform process still not entirely concluded. The high number of Regulations that complemented the legislative provisions shows a common intention to place students rather than programmes at the centre of the training activity and, at the same time, to get training organisations to design their pathways. In the case of the secondary education system reform, for instance, the documents attached to the Regulations of Law 53/2003 issued for each type of training offer included in the cycle, lay out the expected outcomes in terms of knowledge, abilities and skills results. In particular, the 'Student educational, cultural and professional profile' defined in Annex D of the Regulations indicates the learning outcomes common to all pathways and the learning outcomes for each pathway included in *lyceums* and technical and professional institutes, making it clear that these should comprise skills, abilities and knowledge often outlined on the basis of EQF standards.

Specific guidelines to support training institutions in drawing up their Training offer plans (*Piano dell'Offerta Formativa* - POF) according to a learning outcomes approach were also provided by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with thousands of teachers of different subjects, the social partners, professional associations and the Regions and Autonomous Provinces. More recently, since 2008, new regulations for the upper secondary education and training system have been introduced²⁷ aiming at increasing its stability and foster cooperation at multi-regional and national level as well as with the social partners. In this legal framework, a new body was set up besides the *Comitato Nazionale IFTS*²⁸

27 Law n. 40/07, art.13: 'Disposizioni urgenti in materia di istruzione tecnico-professionale e di valorizzazione dell'autonomia scolastica' (Urgent provisions for technical and professional education and for enhancing school autonomy); Prime Minister Decree n. 86/08 'Linee guida per la riorganizzazione del sistema di istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore e la costituzione degli Istituti Tecnici Superiori' (Guidelines for reorganising higher technical education and training and establishing higher technical institutes); Inter-ministerial Decree dated 7th September 2011, 'Norme generali concernenti i diplomi degli istituti tecnici superiori – ITS e relative figure nazionali di riferimento, la verifica e la certificazione delle competenze' (General rules concerning Diplomas of higher technical institutes and national reference profiles, skills assessment and certification); Decreto-legge n. 5/2012 convertito con legge n. 35/2012, art. 52: 'Misure di semplificazione e promozione dell'istruzione tecnico-professionale e degli istituti tecnici superiori – ITS' (Simplification and promotion measures for technical-professional education and higher technical institutes).

28 The National Committee for Higher Technical Education and Training was established in 1998 to identify general guidelines for the new education segment. It is made up of representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, the Local Autonomies and the social partners, besides some institutes entrusted with the task of providing technical assistance (i.e. ISFOL, ISTAT and ANSAS). To date, the National

established in 1998 (National Committee for Higher Technical Education and Training): the ‘*Conferenza annuale nazionale*’ (National Annual Services Conference) promoted by the Ministry of Education, and made up of representatives of the State/Regions Conference, the social partners, the Ministry of Labour, and the Ministry of Economic Development, aiming at evaluating systems adjustments in light of the labour market needs.

3.1.1. The introduction of new qualifications

The introduction of new qualifications in the national qualification system is directly managed by the authorities that are responsible for awarding them: the Ministry of Education and the Regions. Those awarded by the Ministry of Education are regulated by the principle of ‘legal value of the qualification’ (*valore legale del titolo studio*). This principle implies that any qualification - either newly established or pre-existent- should be formally recognised as official qualification by the public body responsible for the specific VET segment involved. As regards education and vocational training, which falls under the Regions’ responsibility, the qualifications that can be acquired by attending the courses (‘*Attestato di qualifica di operatore professionale*’ – Certificate of Professional Competence and ‘*Diploma professionale di tecnico*’ – Professional Technician Diploma) are strictly limited to those included in the ‘*Repertorio nazionale stabile di qualificazioni*’, a national index of the qualifications which was established by the State/Regions Conference, the most important forum for political negotiation between the central and the local administrations, with the drawing up of a State/Region Agreement. Any modification or addition to the index has to be authorised by the same body. Also for higher technical education and training (*Istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore*; post-secondary level, ISCED 4), partly managed by the Regions (‘*Certificati di specializzazione tecnica superiore*’ – Certificate of Higher Technical Specialization) and partly by the Ministry of Education (*Diploma di tecnico superiore* – Higher Technician Diploma), qualifications are in limited number and any addition can be made only through an across-the-board consultation process.

3.2. Forecasting labour market needs - The Contribution of the National Information System for Professional Needs

This section illustrates the characteristics of an information system managed and promoted by ISFOL for the last ten years on behalf of the Ministry of Labour to support the actions undertaken by market operators to prevent skill mismatches. The system (available at: <http://professionioccupazione.isfol.it/>) contains data and information obtained from a wide range of studies and surveys among which it is worth mentioning:

- ‘*Indagine campionaria sulle professioni*’ (Sample Survey on Occupations): A sample survey centred on the 800 occupational units listed in the National Occupational

Committee is still the technical body responsible for setting guidelines, features of the courses provided and training standards as well as operational instructions in accordance with which each Region can design its own courses.

Classification (Level five); first conducted in 2007. The survey, carried out using CAPI methodology (Computer Assisted Personal Interview), involved around 16 000 workers and contained about 300 variables clustered in a 10-section questionnaire. Based on the US *ONet Survey methodological model, it aimed at measuring the importance and complexity of each variable in carrying out a job. Its second edition is under preparation and the results will be available at the beginning of 2013;

- *'Audit permanente dei fabbisogni professionali'* (Permanent Audit of Professional Needs): An audit in which the results provided by the aforementioned survey are used as a benchmark. With a sample of 35 000 enterprises selected by size, sector and geographic area, it gathers qualitative information on workers' skills and knowledge needs. The training needs identified will be subsequently listed in the occupational unit profiles included in the information system. Designed as an annual survey, its first edition is under preparation and the results will be available at the end of the year;
- other studies and research conducted simultaneously with the survey described in point 2 to anticipate medium-term sector skills needs using scenario-based methodologies;
- forecast studies on mid-term recruitment needs (five years) conducted both at national and regional level using a model based on the E3ME Model (Energy-Environment-Economy Model of Europe).

ISFOL's information system is connected to the systems managed by other public bodies such as ISTAT (*Istituto Nazionale di Statistica* - Italian National Institute of Statistics), INAIL (*Istituto Nazionale per l'Assicurazione contro gli Infortuni sul lavoro* - Italian National Institute for Insurance Against Industrial Injuries) and the Ministry of Labour to enable users to access all available information on occupations (including, for instance, ISTAT's workforce survey, INAIL statistics on industrial accidents and the portal set up by the Ministry of Labour to help match labour demand and supply). Information comparability is ensured by the use of a common classification for occupations. In addition, the system contains a number of tools designed to support people's job searching, encourage career mobility and offer career guidance. In the first two cases users can identify the skills needed to either access the labour market or take up a new profession; in the third they can compare their personality traits with those deemed suitable for a certain occupation according to the classification drawn up by J.L. Holland.

3.3. Non Formal and Informal Learning Validation

In Italy, despite a general consensus about the right to formal and social recognition of learning, regardless of the context and experiences from which it is derived, the principles that would enable the development of instruments and processes for skills validation and certification have only been partially implemented due to both the lack of a National Qualification Framework and to the specific features of each single regional system. Nevertheless, institutions have become increasingly aware of the need to address the issue

through cohesive and binding regulations, also considering its close connection with the European strategy for people's mobility and employability and a number of other EU initiatives (including EQF, ECVET, EUROPASS, and EQAVET) that have made remarkable progress in the last two years.

In the case of apprenticeships some concrete measures to enhance the value of learning were adopted with Legislative Decree 167/11, '*Testo Unico sull'Apprendistato*' (Consolidated Text on Apprenticeships). The law establishes that the skills developed by apprentices shall be certified in accordance with the criteria set by the Regions on the basis of the Index of Professions ('*Repertorio sulle professioni*'), a national list including all the professional profiles and qualifications that can be gained through apprenticeship schemes currently under construction, and subsequently recorded in the Training Record Book (*Libretto formativo del cittadino*, see below for a brief description). The decree was followed by a phase of close cooperation between the Regions and competent Ministries which resulted in the State/Regions Agreement '*Definizione di un sistema nazionale di certificazione delle competenze comunque acquisite per l'apprendistato*' (Establishing a National Certification System for Skills Recognition within the framework of Apprenticeship Schemes) signed on 19th April 2012.

In addition, in July 2012, Law 92/2012 by the Ministry of Labour '*Disposizioni in materia di riforma del mercato del lavoro in una prospettiva di crescita*' (Provisions for Reforming the Labour Market and Fostering Growth) entered into force. The Law identifies in skills certification and non-formal and informal learning validation two fundamental elements for applying the principle of lifelong learning with a view to boosting people's employability. By addressing the matter comprehensively and fully in line with the European guidelines, the Law lays down a number of important principles for learning recognition:

- skills can be developed in different contexts, be they formal, non-formal or informal;
- certifications are public acts aimed at ensuring transparency and learning recognition, in line with EU guidelines;
- certifiable skills are intended as a structured set of knowledge and abilities, developed in different contexts and for which training credits can be awarded;
- a system for identifying and validating non-formal and informal learning should be set up with a view to increasing the value of people's cultural and professional background and to assessing whether these can be certified or recognised through training credits;
- working experiences should be recognised as an essential part of people's educational, training and professional path;
- checks should be made on the basis of nationally valid reference frameworks and regulations as well as on the basis of the EU referencing levels and systems, to ensure comparability of certified skills across the national territory and fair and equal treatment for all.

In parallel with the measures adopted at national level, all the Regions developed suitable approaches and instruments for their specific contexts. Where the systems and strategies are more firmly established and operational, regulations were also introduced to establish professional standards and qualifications, as well as mechanisms for skills recognition and credits awarding. It is likely that in the next few years also the criteria and instruments devised at national level, as well the more general European guiding principles, will be integrated into the Regional systems.

Among the instruments developed at national level it is worth recalling the Training Record Book introduced by Legislative Decree n. 276/03 (*'Attuazione delle deleghe in materia di occupazione e mercato del lavoro, di cui alla legge 14 febbraio 2003, n. 30'* - Implementing Proxies for Labour Market and Employment as provided for under Law n. 30 of 14th February 2003) and established by Decree n. 256/05 (*'Approvazione del modello di Libretto Formativo del Cittadino'* - Approval of the Training Record Book Model). Neither a certification nor a qualification but an instrument designed to document learning experiences and skills regardless of their source (school, training or everyday life), it has been adopted (whether experimentally or fully integrated into the systems) by several Regions since 2006, albeit in different forms and aimed at different population groups (e.g. unemployed, apprentices, migrant workers, young people who have completed their military service and volunteers). The practices developed to date through the implementation of the Training Record Book are an important benchmark and should be capitalised on to undertake further action and speed up the development of a national framework.

4. Promoting Participation in VET

4.1. Introduction

It is estimated that 5 billion euro a year are spent on non-formal learning activities, 80% of which is covered by enterprises for the training of their employees and the remaining 20% divided as follows:

1. 10% funded through ESF and national resources (Law 236/93 and 53/00);
2. 10% funded through Joint Inter-Professional Funds for CVT.

Law 236/93 finances in-company training, teachers' training, system actions, sectoral and territorial plans promoted by the social partners and individual training (through vouchers). In addition it allocates a yearly budget of around 100 million euro which is managed by the Regions.

Law 53/00 finances training leave in accordance with the regulation on working hours, particularly by providing for the funding of training vouchers. In addition, it recognises workers' right to lifelong learning by granting leave for training activities. Finally, it establishes that 15 million euro is to be allocated annually by the Ministry of Labour to support employees' training. Furthermore, almost 400 million euro comes from the measures to support continuing training financed by the European Social Fund and 500 million euro from the Joint Inter-Professional Funds.

With regard to the ESF and national Laws 236/93 and 53/00, the key actors are the Ministry of Labour, the Regions, the Autonomous Provinces and the Provinces where a delegation measure can be applied. In detail, the resources allocated by Law 236/93, with a priority for workers of SMEs with less than 15 employees, should fund:

- territorial, sectoral and enterprise-targeted training plans;
- extraordinary intervention plans (Law n.2/2009);
- training vouchers for individuals.

Priority is given to:

- workers over the age of 45 employed by a private enterprise;
- workers employed by a private enterprise holding a compulsory education qualification or only a primary school qualification;
- unemployed people (whose work contracts have not been renewed) to fund either work reinsertion programmes or income support measures;
- training actions aimed at promoting self-entrepreneurship;

- women over the age of 40;
- fired workers who receive unemployment benefits;
- non-European workers or workers belonging to countries that have recently joined the EU.

In September 2010, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies along with the Ministry of Economy issued a decree (Directorial Decree 60/V/2010) concerning the allocation of the resources earmarked by Law 53/2000 assigning around 30 billion euro to the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, to ensure higher participation in VET.

4.2. Tax Incentives Available for Education, Training and Professional Updating National Regulatory Framework

The tax incentives used to encourage enterprises and individuals to invest in education, training and professional updating can be divided as follows:

- *Tax deductions*: expenses are deducted from the gross income to calculate the tax base;
- *Tax detraction*: expenses are subtracted from the taxes due;
- *Tax exemption*: taxes are not applied to a specific group of services;
- *Tax credit*: a certain amount is deducted from the tax due;
- *Tax allowance*: some categories of taxpayers or businesses are granted reduced tax rates;
- *Tax deferral*: the tax payment is postponed.

Many different kinds of incentives exist in Italy, applicable at different degrees and in different forms. However, the matter is regulated by a number of provisions which are often inconsistent with each other and incentives are generally weak. As a result, the various tax relief instruments established over time and aimed at different targets, services and tax types are not regulated by a single comprehensive policy. In addition, the benefits provided are only minor as incentives are supplied more often in the form of tax deductions than detractions or exemptions and are mostly targeted at education rather than vocational training activities. The regulations currently in force are the following:

- *Agevolazioni fiscali per l'aggiornamento dei liberi professionisti* (Tax Relief for Self-Employed Professionals) – Art. 54, section 5, Presidential Decree (DPR) n. 917 dated 1986. The law establishes that 50% of the expenses incurred by self-employed professionals for updating skills can be *deducted* (training-related expenses such as travel etc. are also included). Self-employed professionals are herein intended as individuals holding a VAT registration number;

- *IRAP (Imposta regionale sulle attività produttive* IRAP - Regional Tax on Productive Activities) – all expenses incurred by enterprises for apprentices or work transfer contracts (including employees' wages) can be *deducted* from IRAP;
- *Stamp tax* – all formal documents submitted while attending a training course provided by the Regions or as part of an apprenticeship programme are *exempted* from stamp taxes;
- *IRPEF (Imposta sul Reddito delle Persone Fisiche* – Personal Income Tax) - expenses incurred by those who attend higher education or university courses can be *deducted* from IRPEF (including entrance test fees and also for dependent family members). In the case of private universities only the costs that are equal to those of the state institutions are covered.

In addition, all training, updating, requalification and retraining services are VAT exempted when provided by either institutes or schools recognised by the public administration or non-profit organisations (ONLUS; Art. 10 Section 20 Presidential Decree (DPR) n. 633, 1972). The exemption also applies to board, accommodation and teaching materials expenses. Recognised schools or institutes include:

- State-schools (*scuole statali*);
- Non-state schools that have been granted equal status in the national education system (*scuole partitarie*);
- Schools registered in special regional lists;
- Private organisations recognised by institutions other than the Ministry of Education (accredited organisations).

Schools and institutes can also be recognised with a conclusive action such as the granting of funds by a public administration body. In this case, the VAT exemption only applies to the funded activity. The 2011 Finance Act (*Legge di stabilità 2012* – 2012 Stability Law - 12th November 2011, n. 183) did not establish specific incentives for the enterprises that invested in their employees' training. However, it entirely exempted them from paying social security contributions (Article 22) for apprenticeship contracts signed no earlier than January 1st 2012 and no later than December 31st 2016. The measure was only addressed to employers who hired 9 workers or less for a maximum of three years.

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