
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

ITALY



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This VET in Europe report is part of a series prepared by Cedefop's ReferNet network. VET in Europe reports provide an overview of national vocational education and training (VET) systems of the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. The reports help to understand VET's main features and role within countries' overall education and training systems from a lifelong learning perspective, and VET's relevance to and interaction with the labour market.

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CHAPTER 1.

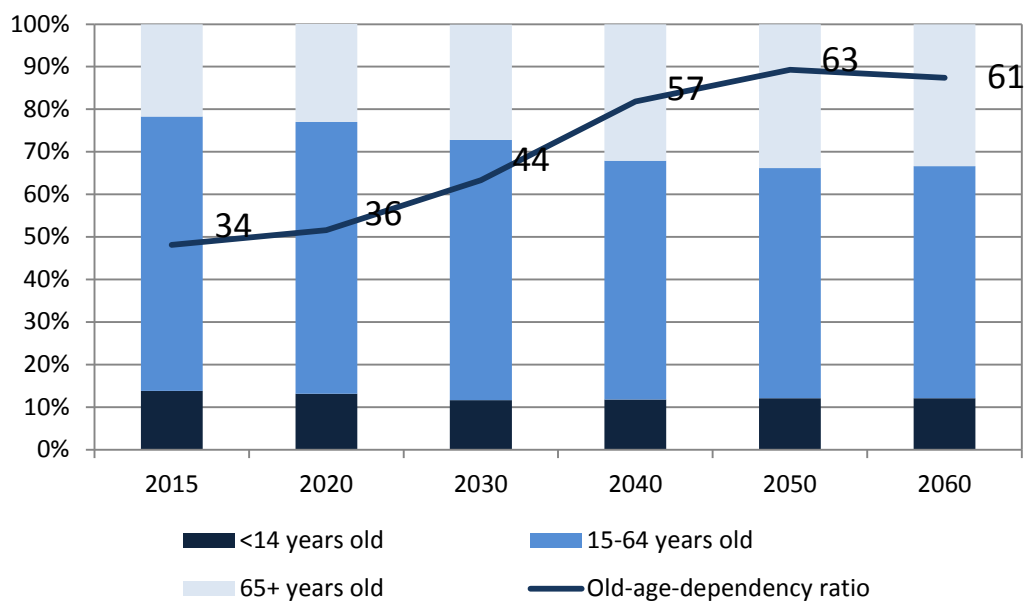
External factors influencing VET

1.1 Demographics

On 1 January 2018, Italy had a population of 60 483 973 ⁽¹⁾ of which 8.4% are foreign citizens. Italy is now home to almost 50 different nationalities each with over 10 000 residents. This fact makes Italy a multi-ethnic country.

Despite the presence of a younger and with high fertility foreign population, the ageing of Italian population has continued to increase. The elderly population is growing, with a percentage reduction in younger generations (Figure 1). Over a fifth of the current Italian population is aged 50 - 64 years. The combination of the growth in the elderly population and the fall in births makes Italy the second oldest country in the world after Japan.

Figure 1. Population forecast by age group and old-age-dependency ratio



Source: Eurostat, proj_15ndbims [extracted on 7.11.2018]

Demographic trends have an impact on school population: according to a recent study ⁽²⁾, the demographic and migratory decrease will make one million students lose in the next ten years, and, consequently, over 50 thousand

⁽¹⁾NB: Data for population as of 1 January Source: Eurostat, tps00001 and proj_15ndbims

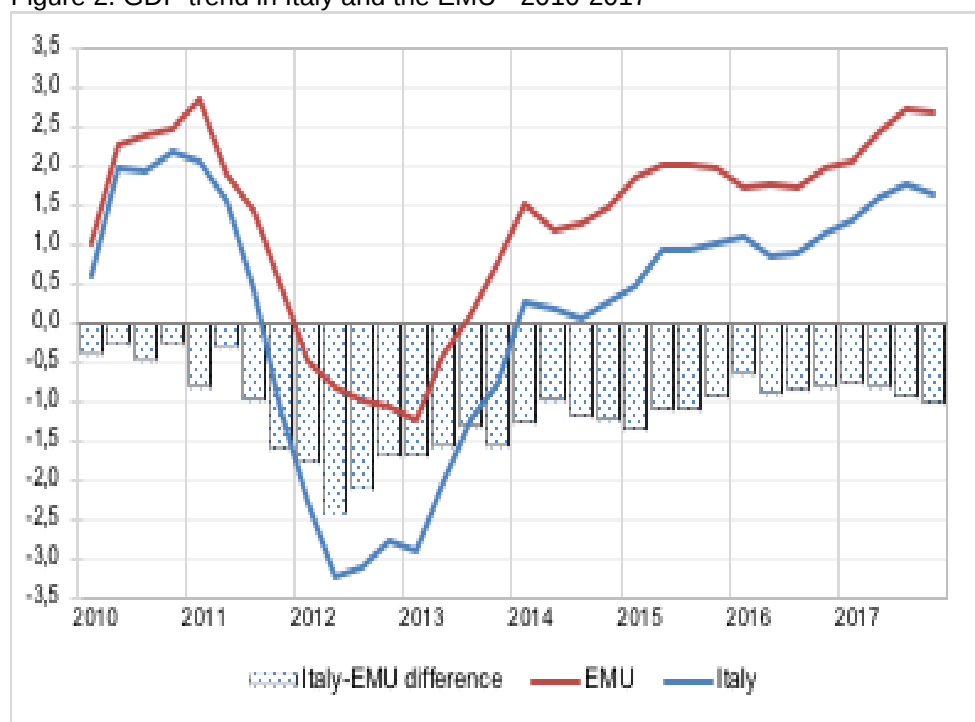
⁽²⁾ Fondazioneagnelli (2018). Orizzonte 2028 Evoluzione della popolazione scolastica in Italia e implicazioni per le politiche. <https://www.fondazioneagnelli.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Fondazione-Agnelli-Demografia-scolastica-2028-Report.pdf>

teachers are at risk of unemployment. Indeed, the school population between the ages of 3 and 18 will drop from the current 9 million to 8 million pupils.

1.2 Economy and labour market indicators

In 2017, the growth of the Italian economy experienced a phase of stability, driven by an expansion cycle that characterised the trend in the international and European economy: in fact, Italy's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 1.5% compared to +0.9% in 2016. However, the recovery was still very fragile ⁽³⁾ and much lower compared to the 3.8% growth recorded on an international level (+4.8% in emerging countries and +2.3% in advanced economies) and 2.4% in the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. GDP trend in Italy and the EMU - 2010-2017



Source: Eurostat, National Accounts

The components that showed a more positive trend in 2017 were exports of goods and services and internal demand, in particular gross fixed investments in systems and machinery and ICT (Information and Communications Technology) appliances, unlike family consumer spending and imports that slumped.

⁽³⁾ In fact, the trend in GDP in the first quarter of 2018 showed an interlude in expansion over recent years, after a phase of progressive deceleration in growth registered in the second quarter; this result implied a decrease in the GDP growth rate trend, with a recently-updated estimate for 2018 of 0.8% (Istat, 2018b).

Table 1. BES indicators in the Economic and Financial Document linked to the labour market - 2008-17

Indicators	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Average disposable income adjusted per capita (euro)	22 154	21 665	21 576	21 886	21 224	21,179	21 245	21 525	21 836	22 226
Index of inequality in disposable income	5.3	5.4	5.7	5.6	5.8	5.8	5.8	6.3	6.3	6.4
Index of absolute poverty (%)	3.6	3.9	4.2	4.4	5.9	7.3	6.8	7.6	7.9	8.3
Healthy life expectancy at birth (years)	-	56.4	57.7	58.2	58.5	58.2	58.2	58.3	58.8	58.5
Early leaving from the education and training system (%)	19.6	19.1	18.6	17.8	17.3	16.8	15.0	14.7	13.8	14.0
Rate of non-participation in employment (%)	15.6	16.5	17.5	17.9	20	21.7	22.9	22.5	21.6	20.5
<i>of which males</i>	11.0	12.6	13.8	14.3	16.2	18.3	19.3	19	18.2	17.3
<i>of which females</i>	21.6	21.7	22.5	22.5	24.8	26.0	27.3	26.8	25.9	24.5
Ratio between the rate of employment of women aged 25-49 years with pre-school age children and women without children (%)	72.4	73.3	71.7	72.4	75.1	75.4	77.5	77.8	76.0	75.5

Source: Istat, BES

In 2017, the rate of employment in Italy for people aged between 15 and 64 was 58% (Table 2). The gender gap in employment remains (67.1% for males, 48.9% for females). With regard to various age groups, the rate of employment is higher in the segment aged 35 to 49 years (equal to 73%) and lower amongst the over 50s (59.2%) and the under 34s (40.6%). The rate of employment, although still higher amongst foreigners (60.6% in 2017) compared to Italians (57.7%), dropped 7 points during the crisis. In 2017, economic inequality reached 6.4%, whilst absolute poverty, concentrated primarily in the south of Italy, was at 6.9% with an increase attributable to a new rise in inflation and a decrease in the spending power of families that have fallen below the poverty threshold.

Table 2. Rates of employment, unemployment or non-participation by main characteristics - 2016 and 2017 (% values and variations in % points)

CHARACTERISTICS	Rate of employment 15-64 years		Rate of unemployment 15 years+		Rate of non-participation 15-74 years (a)	
	2017	Variations 2016-17	2017	Variations 2016-2017	2017	Variations 2016-17
SEX						
Male	67.1	0.6	10.3	-0.6	17.3	-0.9
Female	48.9	0.8	12.4	-0.4	24.5	-1.4
AGE GROUP						
15-34 years	40.6	0.7	21.2	-1.3	32.8	-1.9
35-49 years	73.0	0.6	9.2	-0.3	17.3	-0.9
50 years and over	59.2	1.1	6.2	0.2	14.6	-0.3
QUALIFICATION						
Up to middle school	43.5	0.5	15.4	-0.2	28.7	-1.1
Upper secondary school diploma	64.1	0.3	10.4	-0.6	18.5	-0.9
Degree or equivalent	78.3	0.7	6.7	-0.4	11.7	-0.8
Italy	58.0	0.7	11.2	-0.5	20.5	-1.1
EU	67.6	1.0	7.6	-1.0	10.6	-1.1
EMU	66.4	1.0	9.1	-0.9	12.4	-1.1

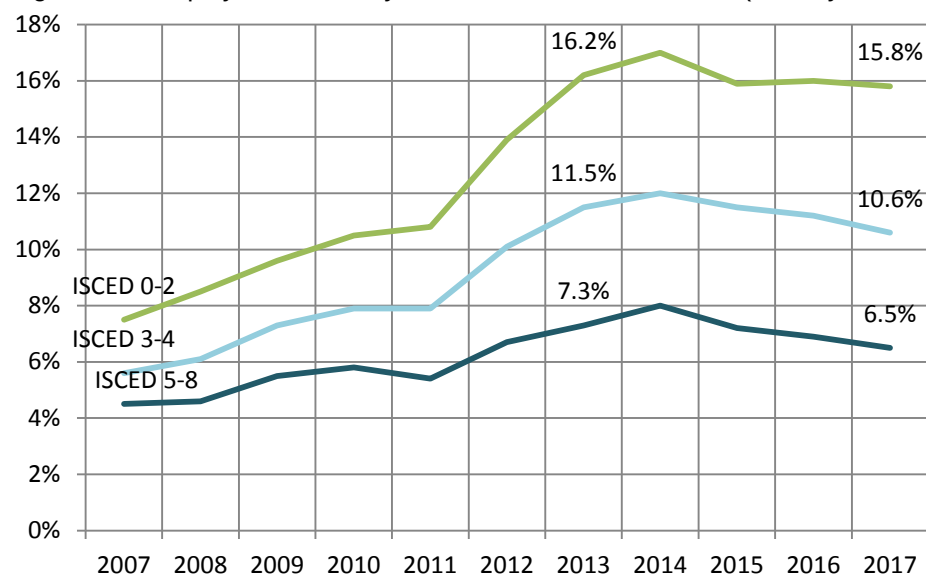
Source: Eurostat, LFS

(a) The rate of non-participation includes: in the numerator, not only the unemployed, but also the inactive who are not actively looking for work but would be available for work and in the denominator, the latter and the labour forces (employed plus unemployed).

In 2017, the rate of unemployment was 11.2% which is below the EU average. There's an increase of 5.1 percentage points since 2007. The rate of non-participation has also increased since 2007 by 4.9 percentage points.

As demonstrated in Figure 3 unemployment is distributed unevenly between those with low- and high-level qualifications. The gap has increased during the crisis as unskilled workers are more vulnerable to unemployment. Compared to 2007, unemployment rates are higher in all groups. Since 2008, the unemployment rate of people with the lowest level of qualification has started to increase faster. Since 2013, the unemployment rate has decreased on the whole, however it remains the highest for unskilled workers.

Figure 3. Unemployment rates by educational attainment level (15-64 years, 2017, %)



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011

ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education

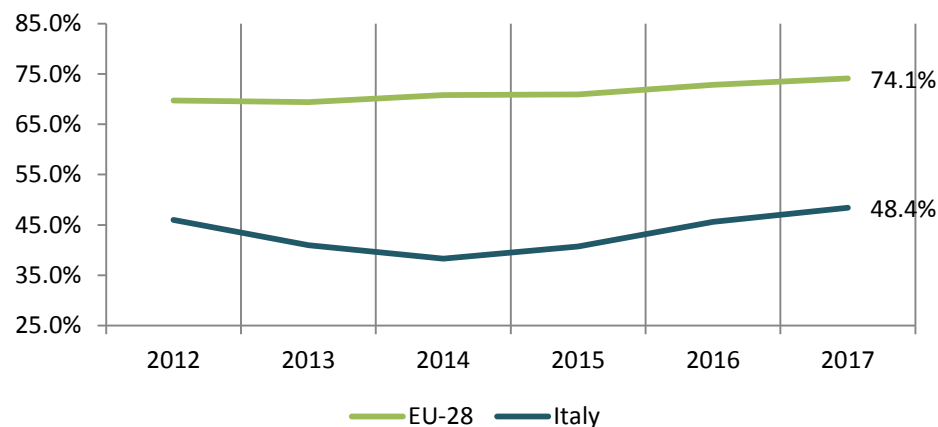
ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education

ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education

Source: Eurostat, Ifsa_urgaed [extracted 7.11.2018]

The employment rate of recent VET graduates increased from 46% in 2012 to 48.4% in 2017 ⁽⁴⁾.

Figure 4. Employment rate of recent VET graduated (20-34 years old, graduated 1 to 3 years ago, ISCED levels 3 and 4)



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011

ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education

⁽⁴⁾ 20 to 34 year-olds who graduated from upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary VET (ISCED levels 3 and 4) (Eurostat edat_ifse_24, extracted 12.11.2018).

The main economic sectors in terms of employment in Italy are displayed in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Employment by industry (Italy, 2018).

	employment in persons (thousands)	%
total economic activities	25 373	100
agriculture, forestry and fishing	919	3.6
mining and quarrying	22	0.1
manufacture of food products, beverages and tobacco products	483	1.9
manufacture of textiles, wearing apparel and leather products, manufacture of wood and paper products, and printing	767	3.0
manufacture of coke and refined petroleum products, manufacture of chemicals and chemical products, manufacture of basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations	196	0.8
manufacture of rubber and plastic products, other non-metallic mineral products, manufacture of basic metals and fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment	1 030	4.1
manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products, manufacture of electrical equipment, manufacture of machinery and equipment n.e.c	765	3.0
manufacture of transport equipment	270	1.1
manufacture of furniture, other manufacturing, repair and installation of machinery and equipment	442	1.7
electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply, water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	306	1.2
construction	1 546	6.1
wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities	6 575	25.9
information and communication	630	2.5
financial and insurance activities	638	2.5
real estate activities	188	0.7
professional, scientific and technical activities, administrative and support service activities	3 163	12.5
public administration and defence, compulsory social security, education, human health and social work activities	4 774	18.8
arts, entertainment and recreation, repair of household goods and other services	2 661	10.5

Source: Istat

A recent study ⁽⁵⁾ forecasts an average annual employment growth rate in Italy of 0.5% between 2018 and 2022 (i.e. 2 576 200 people). Demand is higher in the services sector (2.5%), whilst for industry it does not exceed 1.4%. The sectors for which currently the demand is high are: healthcare and welfare services (3.8%), tourism and food service (3%), public utilities (2.9%) and education (2.8%). The rate is higher for non-qualified professions (3.2%), for

⁽⁵⁾Unioncamere (2018), *Previsione dei fabbisogni occupazionali in Italia a medio termine (2018-2022)*, Roma.
<https://excelsior.unioncamere.net/images/publicazioni2017/report-previsivo-2018-2022.pdf>

qualified professions in the trade and services sector (2.9%) and for specialist professions (2.4%).

Considering the levels of education required, 62% of overall demand for labour force should be constituted by university and upper secondary school graduates; the former with a demand of 3.1%, higher for the teaching and training sector (7.3%), statistics, engineering and economics. However, the trend in the offer of university graduates highlights a potential deficiency, with a considerable difference based on the area of study.

With regard to upper secondary school graduates (EQF level 4, ISCED levels 344, 354), the next few years should see the abundance in offer continue, in this case too, with considerable differences depending on the area of study. For high school (upper secondary general education- EQF 4, ISCED 344) graduates, where the average rate of demand is around 2%, very high levels are registered in the healthcare and welfare sector (9.3%) and transport and logistics (6%). There are lower values, around 3%, in information technology and telecommunications, tourism and languages.

The provisional data of the II OFP Survey (Forthcoming, 2020: *The Vocational Training Supply in Italy: the results of the II OFP Survey*. Rome: Inapp) show that among the training structures that have carried out VET courses (IeFP, post-secondary education and training, apprenticeship, adult education and continuing vocational training) in Italy in 2018, 45% carried out courses in the personal services sector (hotels and restaurants, tourism, sports and leisure, home services, wellness, entertainment), 42% in the business, administrative and commercial activities sector, followed by: 37% health and workplace safety, 30% mechanics, plant maintenance, metalworking, motor vehicles, ships and aircraft, 29% agri-food, 28 foreign languages.

Due to the mismatch that exists between the professions and skills demanded by enterprises and those effectively available on the labour market, it is very difficult to estimate the measure in which the production system could absorb this need. This difficulty seems more evident amongst specialist (37%) and technical professions (33%) and skilled workers (31%). Despite very high rates of unemployment, Italian companies declared in 2017 that they had 1% of vacancies for which they could not find suitable available personnel, whilst five years previously the percentage of vacancies was no more than 0.5%.

The increasing demand for digital and technological skills could also lead to an increased risk that in future years the mismatch gap between demand and offer will continue to grow. According to OECD estimates ⁽⁶⁾, the risk of

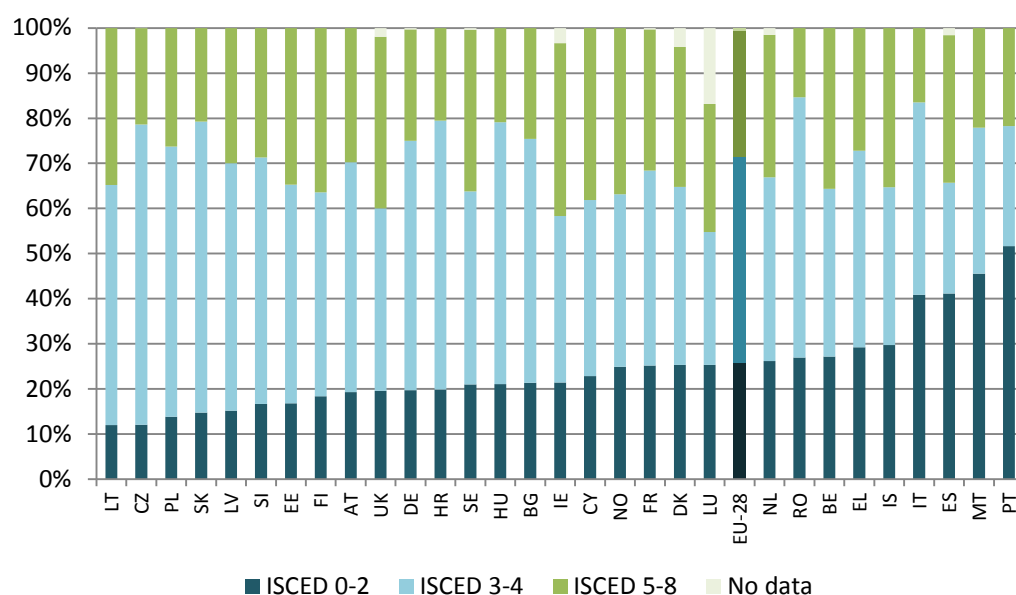
⁽⁶⁾ OECD (2018), *OECD Employment Outlook 2018*, Paris: OECD Publishing.
https://doi.org/10.1787/empl_outlook-2018-en

automation could concern 12% of predicted demand for the 2018-2022 period, leading to the loss of over 300 000 jobs (of the 2.5 million forecast) due to possible replacement of labour by machinery, computers or algorithms.

1.3 Educational attainment

In Italy, the share of population aged up to 64 with higher education (19.3%) is below the EU 28 average (32.2%) as Figure 5 demonstrates. This is also the case for the share of population aged up to 64 with medium or low qualifications.

Figure 5. Population (aged 15 to 64) by highest education level attained in 2017



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011

ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education

ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education

ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education

Source: Eurostat, lfsa_pgaed [extracted on 7.11.2018]

Based on analysis carried out using data from the ISFOL-PLUS survey ⁽⁷⁾ having a higher educational qualification would not appear to have a significant effect on the probability of finding a good job match. In general, compared to a graduate, those with a higher secondary qualification have a job that is more coherent with their qualifications. Despite this, many of the latter still complain of a mismatch between their position and their educational qualification ⁽⁸⁾. It would

⁽⁷⁾ Mandrone Emiliano, Pastore Francesco, Radicchia Debora (2015). *Educational mismatch: new empirical evidence from the ISFOL Plus data*. Draft paper.

<https://www.aiel.it/cms/cms-files/submission/all20160620104811.pdf>

⁽⁸⁾ It seems evident that negative judgements on job satisfaction are connected to a higher over-education, reinforcing the interpretation that a bad matching fosters a growing work discomfort. The phenomenon of over-education varies by age, qualification and gender. The educational mismatch decreases with age, suggesting that over time, even if

therefore appear that there is not much coherence between the formal value of an educational qualification and its effective usability in corresponding jobs.

In VET there are 50.3% males compared to 49.7% females. In terms of ages of VET learners the following aggregates are available ⁽⁹⁾:

- 14-17: 18.8%
- 18-34: 45.8%
- 35+: 35.4%

In 2017, the share of young people aged 15 to 29 years who are 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEETs) continued to fall, although still very high (2.2 million). According to an OECD estimate ⁽¹⁰⁾, between 2005 and 2015 the number of NEETs grew more in Italy than in other countries (+10 percentage points). This situation is very widespread amongst women (and mothers) and children, especially in southern regions, where they represent 34.4% of young people aged 15 to 29. Almost half of all NEETs have a school-leaving certificate.

The share of early leavers from education and training has decreased from 19.1% in 2009 to 14.5% in 2018. It is below the national target for 2020 of not more than 16% but above the EU-28 average of 10.6% as Figure 6 demonstrates.

slowly and partially, an adjustment between human capital and work eventually occurs. At age 40-49, more than 42% of employed individuals report no factor of mismatch (36% at age 18-39), and the share increases to 47% for those over 50. The only mismatch of over skilled is difficult to be absorbed over time; in fact, there are no significant variations between different age groups. The gender analysis shows that mismatch is higher for men. The analysis of indicators of over-education per educational qualification highlights that, roughly speaking an upper secondary school graduate is generally less overqualified than a university graduate.

The gap is a structural one: workers with higher work dissatisfaction report 10 extra percentage points of over-education the gap related to career prospects and economic treatment is less severe.

Over-education seems to be structural and a relevant share of individuals is mismatched even after many years in employment. Skills that are wasted often generate work discomfort, while a missing educational qualification is often superseded by the acquired professionalism.

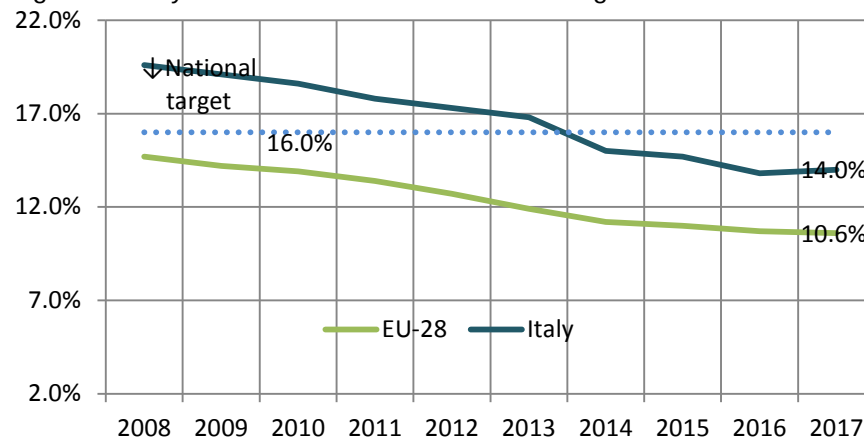
Further analysis shows that over-education is associated with a lower return both in terms of labour income and job satisfaction.

(9) Most recent aggregate data available for the reference year 2012: ISFOL 'OFP Survey': Angotti et al., 2015. The next estimate will be available for the reference year 2018: Forthcoming (2020).

(10)OECD (2018), *OECD Employment Outlook 2018*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

https://doi.org/10.1787/empl_outlook-2018-en

Figure 6. Early leavers from education and training in 2008-17

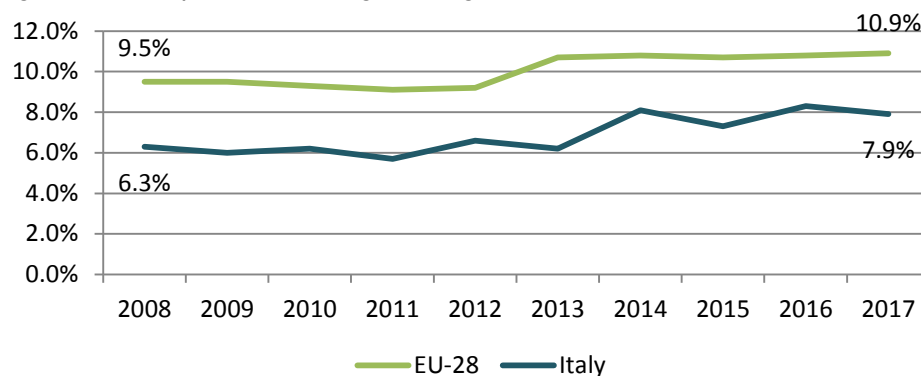


NB: Share of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training.

Sources: Eurostat, edat_lfse_14 [extracted on 12.11.2018] and European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/info/2018-european-semester-national-reform-programmes-and-stability-convergence-programmes_en [accessed on 14.11.2018]

Lifelong learning offers training opportunities for adults, mainly low qualified people, imprisoned people and refugees. Participation in lifelong learning is the same since 2014 (though a decreasing trend was obvious until 2017 when it reached 7.0%). In 2018, it reached 8.1%, three percentage points below the EU 28 average (11.1%) (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Participation in lifelong learning in 2008-17



NB: Share of adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training. Source: Eurostat, trng_lfse_01 [extracted 12.11.2018]

1.4 Employment policies influencing VET

The Italian welfare system has been substantially modified by the legislative reforms implemented in the end of the 1990s, inspired by the European flexicurity concept and aimed to reduce rigidity of the labour market policy. This first generation of reforms has allowed employers to use short-term and part-time

contracts and to dismiss employees with greater flexibility. The reforms also guarantees support services to workers (mobility and replacement opportunities). The most recent reforms are based on the implementing provisions of the Jobs Act law (Law 183/2014 ⁽¹¹⁾). The subsequent nine legislative decrees that are setting the different issues covered by the Law greatly expand the reform course opened by Law 92/2012 ⁽¹²⁾ and draw a new framework of law work. In particular, the legislative process under way intervenes in the field of labour market flexibility, both inbound and outbound, the review of social safety nets in the event of involuntary unemployment and in persistence of employment, provides new services and active labour market policies, increases the protection of maternity and the reconciliation of life and work.

One of the most relevant innovations compared with the previous reforms are typologies of national job contracts. The market of labour policies introduced by the new Job Act legal framework aim at simplifying and limiting the huge number of the so called atypical or temporary employment contracts introduced by the previous reforms and seek to stimulate enterprises to favour the employee work, through a system of increasing protections from temporary to permanent recruitments ⁽¹³⁾. It should be taken into account that increasing competences and training experiences (acquired also through apprenticeship schemes) are considered fundamental for pursuing better employment prospects.

⁽¹¹⁾
https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/atto/vediMenuHTML?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=2014-12-15&atto.codiceRedazionale=14G00196&tipoSerie=serie_generale&tipoVigenza=originario

⁽¹²⁾ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2012/07/03/012G0115/sg>

⁽¹³⁾ CNEL (2017). *Labour market and collective bargaining 2016-2017*. (Mercato del lavoro e contrattazione collettiva 2016-2017)
https://www.cliclavoro.gov.it/Barometro-Del-Lavoro/Documents/2018/Rapporto_mercato_lavoro_contrattazione_2016-2017.pdf

CHAPTER 2. Provision of VET

2.1 Introduction

Compulsory education lasts 10 years, up to age 16. At age 14, learners make a choice between general education and VET. They have the 'right/duty' (*diritto/dovere*) to stay in education until the age of 18 and to complete 12 years of education and/or vocational training.

Young people complete lower secondary education at age 14. At this stage, they sit a state exam to acquire a certificate (EQF level 1) granting admission to the upper secondary level (general or technical and vocational education).

At upper secondary level, young people may opt for:

(a) five-year programmes which include the two last years of compulsory education and three years (under the right/duty of education and training) in:

- (i) high schools (*licei*). These provide general education programmes at upper secondary level;
- (ii) technical schools;
- (iii) vocational schools.

High schools (*licei*) offer artistic, classical, linguistic, scientific, human sciences, music and dance programmes.

At upper secondary level, the following VET programmes are offered:

- five-year programmes (EQF level 4) at technical schools (*istituti tecnici*) leading to technical education diplomas or at vocational schools (*istituti professionali*) leading to professional education diplomas. Programmes combine general education and VET and can also be delivered in the form of alternance training. Graduates have access to higher education;
- three-year programmes (*Istruzione e Formazione Professionale*, *leFP*) leading to a vocational qualification (*attestato di qualifica di operatore professionale*, EQF level 3, ISCED level 353);
- four-year programmes leading to a technician professional diploma (*diploma professionale di tecnico*, EQF level 4, ISCED level 354).

All upper secondary education programmes are school based but could also be delivered as apprenticeships (Type 1). There is permeability across VET programmes and also with the general education system. On completion of a three-year vocational qualification, it is possible to attend one additional year leading to a four-year vocational diploma; this allows candidates access to the fifth year of the state education system and sitting the state exam for a general, technical or professional education diploma. At post-secondary level, VET is

offered as higher technical education for graduates of five-year upper secondary programmes or of four-year leFP programmes that pass entrance exams:

- higher technical education and training courses (*istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore*, IFTS): one-year post-secondary non-academic programmes leading to a higher technical specialisation certificate (*certificato di specializzazione tecnica superiore*, EQF level 4);
- higher technical institute programmes (*istituti tecnici superiori*, ITS): two- to three-year post-secondary non-academic programmes that lead to a higher-level technical diploma (*diploma di tecnico superiore*, EQF level 5).

The Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR) defines the VET framework in national school pathways (technical and vocational institutes) for Higher Technical Education and Training pathways (IFTS) in agreement with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (MLPS). It has sole responsibility for Higher Technical Education (ITS) in terms of defining guidance documents and the monitoring and assessment of the training chain ⁽¹⁴⁾. The MIUR also deals with redefining the ITS National Index, with the introduction of new technical figures and the updating of those already on the index itself. The labour ministry defines the VET framework for interventions provided for within the scope of leFP, (in agreement with the education ministry) for training interventions for apprenticeship and for continuing training provided within the scope of the public system. The regions and autonomous provinces are responsible for the planning, programming, organisation and implementation of interventions provided for within the scope of leFP, ITS, IFTS, (in agreement with the social partners).

The Law 107/2015 ⁽¹⁵⁾ and the Decree no. 61/2017⁽¹⁶⁾ regarding the revision of the curricula of vocational education have introduced some important quality innovations (Inapp et al., 2016).

Apprenticeship is available at all levels and programmes and is always defined as an open-ended employment contract. Type 1 apprenticeship is offered for all programmes at upper secondary level and IFTS programmes. Type 3 apprenticeship (higher training/education apprenticeship) is offered in ITS programmes and all tertiary education level programmes leading to university degrees, Higher Technical Institutes' (HTI) diplomas and doctoral degrees corresponding to the tertiary level. Type 2 apprenticeship does not correspond to any education level, diploma or qualification, but leads to occupational qualifications recognised by the relevant national sectoral collective agreements

⁽¹⁴⁾ Training chain (*Filiera formativa*) : Set of pathways to achieve technical education and vocational education diplomas, at the end of the five-year school courses, of technical institutes and professional institutes.

⁽¹⁵⁾ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/07/15/15G00122/sg>

⁽¹⁶⁾ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/05/16/17G00069/sg>

applicable in the hiring company. Type 1 and Type 3 apprenticeships are associated with formal education and training, while Type 2 is not.

VET for adults is offered by a range of different public and private providers. It includes programmes leading to upper secondary VET qualifications to ensure progression opportunities for the low-skilled. These are provided by Provincial Adult Education Centres (CPIA - *Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli Adulti*) under the remit of the education ministry.

Continuing Vocational Education and Training (CVET), which mainly addresses the employed, consists of a set of training initiatives that are promoted on the basis of some legislative measures and some support tools coordinated and managed by the labour ministry, the economic development ministry, the regions and autonomous provinces and the social partners ⁽¹⁷⁾.

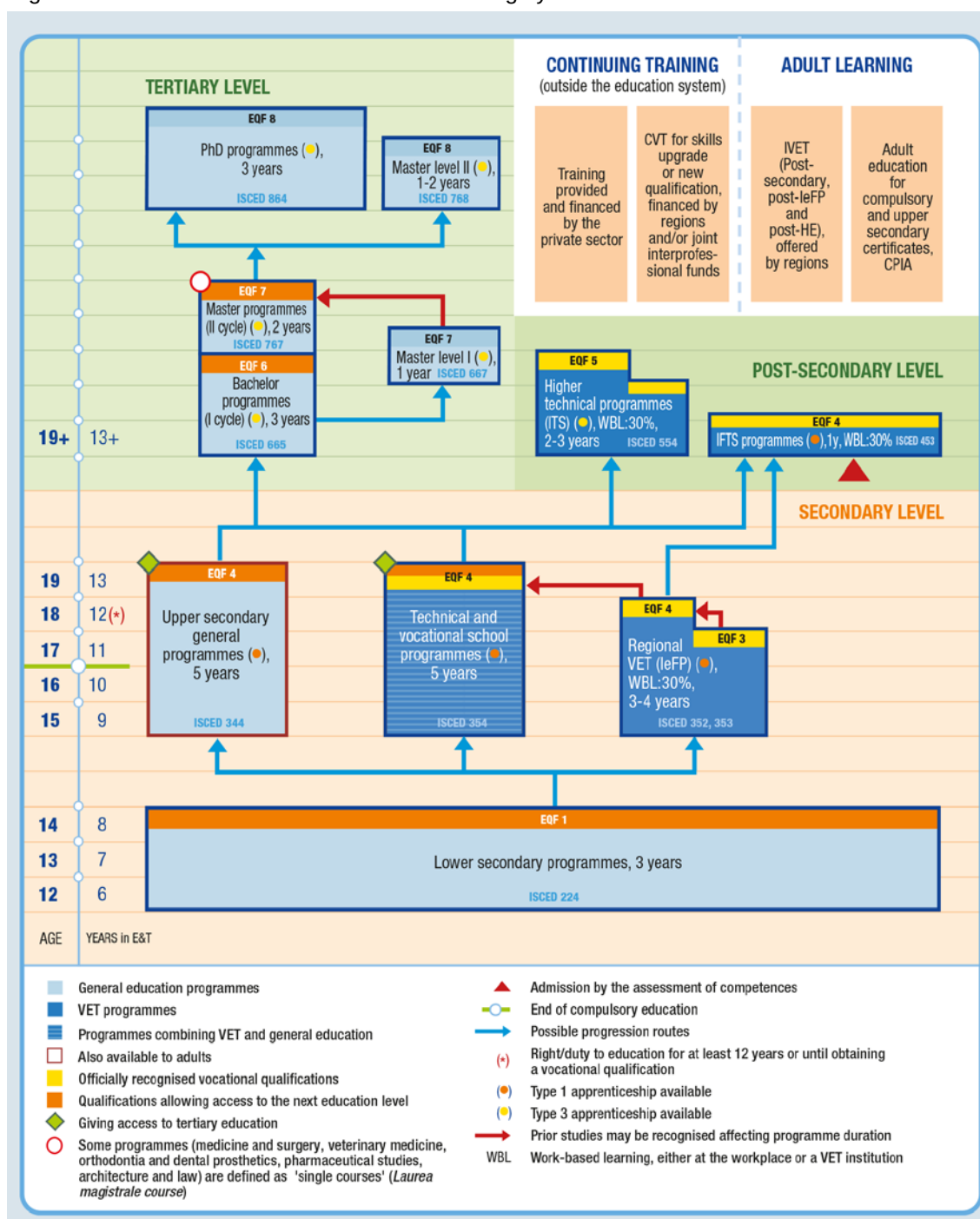
⁽¹⁷⁾ The most important legal framework for CVET can be summarised as follows:

- Law 236/1993 supports private-sector enterprises and workers through corporate, sectorial, territorial and individual training programmes or tailored individual training interventions (vouchers);
- Law 53/2000 recognises the right of workers to lifelong training and the possibility to use leave for training;
- Law 388/2000 establishes the joint inter-professional funds for continuing training, bilateral organisations which finance corporate, sectorial, territorial and individual training programmes and enterprise vouchers;
- The European Social Fund (ESF) regional operational programmes finance training activities addressing the employed, the unemployed and inactive and enterprises;
- Law 205/2017 establishes tax credit for enterprises that invest in training activities. Eligible for tax credit are those enterprises which can prove investment in training activities related to technologies defined in the Industry 4.0 national plan.

See: Par. 2.3.6 National and regional continuing vocational training systems

2.2 Chart of the national education and training system

Figure 8. VET in the Italian education and training system in 2018



NB: ISCED-P 2011

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Italy

2.3 Government-regulated VET provision

2.3.1 Technical and vocational school programmes

In technical school programmes (*istituti tecnici*) learners can acquire knowledge, skills and competences to carry out technical and administrative tasks. These programmes start at the age of 14 and finish at 19. They offer an upper secondary education diploma – Technical schools EQF 4 (such as: tourism, graphics and communication, administration, finance and marketing).

In vocational school programmes (*istituti professionali*) learners acquire specific theoretical and practical preparation enabling them to carry out qualified tasks in production fields of national interest. These programmes start at the age of 14 and finish at 19. They offer an upper secondary education diploma – Vocational schools EQF 4 (such as: services for agriculture and rural development, social and health services, etc.).

The share of work practise (practical training at school, in-company practice) can be no more than 70%.

At the end of the upper secondary school education, learners who successfully pass the final state examination of the second cycle of education receive a certificate diploma that gives them access to higher education or higher technical education and training programmes.

In 2016 more than 1% of VET learners were enrolled in these programmes.

2.3.2 The Vocational Education and Training (IeFP) system

Vocational Education and Training (IeFP) pathways are an alternative channel to school for fulfilling the obligation to participate in education (with the legal requirement for all young people to attend school from age 6 to 16) and the right-duty (which must be guaranteed for at least 12 years or until attainment of an upper-secondary school qualification or a vocational qualification before the age of 18) to it.

From the age of 15, young people can also fulfil this right-duty to education through an apprenticeship to obtain a vocational qualification or diploma by attending a training pathway outside the company. With the start of the dual system in IeFP ⁽¹⁸⁾, young people can obtain a vocational qualification and/or diploma by following educational pathways that provide for an alternance between school and work experience (400 hours). More specifically, these pathways can be completed by means of:

- a) apprenticeships to obtain a qualification, a vocational diploma or a higher technical specialisation certificate (IFTS);
- b) alternance between school-based and work-based learning;
- c) simulated business training.

⁽¹⁸⁾ State-regions agreement of 24.9.2015.

Access to leFP pathways requires completion of lower-secondary school (formerly middle school) education and a passing score on the relevant state examination. leFP pathways fall under the responsibility of the Regions and can be provided by accredited training agencies. Since the academic year 2011-12 vocational training institutes can also offer this type of VET programmes, adopting one of the two models that have been put in place –‘supplementary subsidiarity’ and ‘complementary subsidiarity’⁽¹⁹⁾.

Based on minimum standards shared on a national level, the educational planning of leFP pathways guarantees the attainment of key skills (literacy, numeracy, language skills, etc.), as well as those relating to technical-professional specialisation areas, both expressed as learning outcomes.

The share of work practice (practical training at school, in-company practice) is up to 70%.

Upon successful completion of the 3-year leFP pathways, a professional operator certificate (EQF level 3, ISCED level 353) is obtained, whilst at the end of the 4th year it is possible to obtain a professional technician diploma (EQF level 4, ISCED level 354).

Regions issue qualifications and diplomas that are recognised on a national level, defined on the basis of the national classification of professional role profiles (*Repertorio nazionale di figure professionali*). Table 4 lists titles of qualifications and diplomas that can be obtained through successful completion of the 3 and 4 year leFP pathway respectively.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Further to the State-regions agreement approved at the unified conference of 16.12.2010 and by the education ministry decree no. 4 (18.1.2011). Under ‘supplementary subsidiarity’ in the third year, the learners attending 5-year courses can achieve one of the 22 professional qualifications corresponding to the specialisation chosen.

In the case of courses under ‘complementary subsidiarity’, learners can achieve, in the same school institutions, 3-year professional qualifications and 4-year diploma for leFP courses. To this purpose, institutes create classes with the same training standards and system regulation of leFP courses.

Table 4. List of qualifications and diplomas in leFP pathways (22 qualifications and 21 diplomas).

leFP qualifications	leFP diplomas
1. Clothing operator	1. Building specialist
2. Footwear operator	2. Electrical specialist
3. Chemical production operator	3. Electronic specialist
4. Building operator	4. Graphic specialist
5. Electrical operator	5. Artistic work specialist
6. Electronic operator	6. Woodwork specialist
7. Graphic operator	7. Motor vehicle repair specialist
8. Thermohydraulic plant operator	8. Specialist in running and maintaining automated systems
9. Artistic works operator	9. Industrial automation specialist
10. Woodwork operator	10. Beauty treatment specialist
11. Pleasure boat assembly and maintenance operator	11. Catering services specialist
12. Motor vehicle repair operator	12. Enterprise services specialist
13. Mechanical operator	13. Sales specialist
14. Wellness operator	14. Agriculture specialist
15. Catering operator	15. Tourism-sport entertainment and leisure time services specialist
16. Tourist incoming and promotional services operator	16. Clothing specialist
17. Secretarial administrative operator	17. Hairstyling specialist
18. Sales services operator	18. Cooking specialist
19. Logistics services and systems operator	19. Thermal plant specialist
20. Food processing operator	20. Incoming and promotional services specialist
21. Agricultural operator	21. Food processing specialist
22. Sea and fresh water operator	

Source: Regional State Accord July 27, 2011 Attachment 4: Reference figures for professional diplomas referred to in the national directory of education and training offer

In terms of progression those who obtain a professional operator certificate can attend one additional year leading to a professional technician diploma. Those who obtain the professional technician diploma (i.e. complete the 4-year programme) may enrol onto the fifth year of the technical or vocational schools programmes (EQF 4-ISCED 354) and obtain a general, technical or professional education diploma or enrol in a higher technical education and training programme and obtain the higher technical specialisation certificate. In the academic year 2015-16 an increase in enrolments for the 4th year at both training institutes and schools confirmed the tendency of continuation of training within the leFP training chain. Also in the same year a total of 69 237 young people obtained a qualification in the 3rd year.

More than 1% of the total numbers of VET learners enrol onto these pathways. A regional breakdown of the number of learners is provided below in Table 5.

Table 5. Students on leFP courses by region (years I-III), 2015-16 training year (r.v.)

Regions	Total students	At training institutes	Supplementary subsidiarity	Complementary subsidiarity
Piedmont	25 964	15 887	10 077	0
Aosta Valley	699	197	437	65
Lombardy	56 153	44 609	0	11 544
Bolzano	5 505	5 505	0	0
Trento	5 199	5 199	0	0
Veneto	21 640	19 216	0	2 424
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	4 602	3 966	422	214
Liguria	5 329	1 728	3 601	0
Emilia-Romagna	27 893	7 280	20 613	0
Tuscany	17 888	2 582	13 950	1 356
Umbria	4 856	565	4 291	0
Marche	10 321	798	9 523	0
Lazio	20 042	11 030	9 012	0
Abruzzo	5 800	346	5 454	0
Molise	1 960	316	1 644	0
Campania	23 685	0	23 685	0
Apulia	23 224	1,780	21 444	0
Basilicata	2 597	0	2 597	0
Calabria	90	90	0	0
Sicily	37 025	12 148	24 161	716
Sardinia	7 856	534	7 322	0
Total	308 328	133 776	158 233	16 319

Source: INAPP and labour ministry based on regional and provincial figures

With regard to breakdown by gender, the percentage of young males of total students is extremely high (61.5% compared to 38.5% females).

2.3.3 The post-secondary education and training system

The current structure of the Italian post-secondary training system is the result of a complex legislative and official process – which in fact has to be completed, yet – that has led to the definition of two different training types: Higher Technical Education and Training (IFTTS) and Higher Technical Education (ITS). The two pathways, each with their own specific characteristics, are a key segment of the Italian education system.

2.3.3.1 Higher Technical Education and Training (IFTS) pathways

IFTS programmes were established in 1999 and assumed their current status with the inter-ministerial Decree of 2013 ⁽²⁰⁾. They are higher technical training programmes, regulated as follows: 800-1 000 hours (of which work practice in the form of internship at a company must be at least 30%).

IFTS programming is defined by regions and the autonomous provinces terms of provision, curricula, internship and job placement, within specific planning documents called Three-Year Plans. Three-Year Plans are the instrument through which regions and public administration define their strategy in terms of post-secondary training, therefore they do not relate exclusively to technical training but also ITS and training centres. Local governments are therefore asked to have a full knowledge of their territory and, through an integrated approach, to incorporate both local firm requests and training needs expressed by the territory.

Regional programs are defined by the IFTS national repertory (i.e. a catalogue of 20 technical specialisations, related to specific professional areas e.g. mechanics, IT, tourism). People can access to these courses holding or not a diploma but the latter ones can do it only following a specific assessment of candidate's skills done by its teachers. IFTS programmes are to be provided by various providers (on the precondition that a school, a university, an accredited training institution and a company that aggregate into a Temporary Association of Companies (ATI) or a Temporary Purpose Association (ATS) participate) ⁽²¹⁾. The participation of the companies and many internship hours are the key element that effectively links IFTS programmes with local production dynamics.

The IFTS system targets employed and unemployed young people and adults who, after obtaining an upper-secondary school diploma or an leFP diploma, intend to continue their specialisation paths before joining the labour market, if they are unemployed or for those already in employment, in order to develop or renew their professional skills and know-how. Table 6 below lists the 20 IFTS specialisations.

⁽²⁰⁾ Decree of 7th February 2013.

<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2013/04/18/13A03258/sg>

⁽²¹⁾ Temporary Association of Enterprises (ATI), or temporary grouping of enterprises, is a legal form where several companies join together to realise a specific project. Temporary Purpose Association (ATS) is an agreement allowing participants to delegate to one of them (called the Lead Partner) the realisation of a project of common interest.

Table 6. Students List of IFTS specialisations and correlated professional area (Annex C to inter-ministerial Decree of 5 February 2013 ⁽²²⁾)

Professional area		IFTS specialisation
1	Agro-alimentary	
2	Manufacturing and crafts	Techniques for creating Made in Italy artisan products
3	Mechanics, plants and construction	Industrial design and planning techniques Product and process industrialization techniques Techniques for production planning and logistics Techniques for installation and maintenance of civil and industrial plant Techniques for environmental safety systems and quality in industrial processes Techniques for monitoring and managing the territory and the environment Techniques for servicing, repairing and testing diagnostic devices and equipment
	3.1 Construction (a professional economic area incorporated in the mechanics professional area)	Organisation and management of construction site techniques Innovative construction techniques
4	Culture, information and IT technologies	Network and system security techniques Techniques for the design and development of IT applications Techniques for the integration of systems and telecommunication equipment Techniques for the planning and management of databases Techniques for medical data processing Techniques for multimedia production Techniques for set design
5	Business services	Economic-financial administration techniques
6	Tourism and sport	Techniques for the planning and implementation of artisan processes and food processing with typical local and traditional food and wine products Techniques for the promotion of tourism products and services with particular focus on the territory's resources, opportunities and events
7	Welfare services	

Source INAPP

The 20 IFTS specialisations are described in terms of training standards, shared on a national level, that are consistent with an organic set of professional technical competences, coherent with both the areas of specialisations that characterise the work processes and the areas of activity of the qualification profiles. IFTS specialisations are expressed as a set of common competencies, applicable to the entire IFTS catalogue, and one or two specific

⁽²²⁾ Decree of 7th February 2013.

<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2013/04/18/13A03258/sg>.

technical/professional competencies. The latter is, in turn, expressed in terms of skills and know-how.

As established at the State-regions conference in July 2011, the 20 IFTS specialisations are structured in line with the economic-professional areas of leFP national job profiles.

Another feature of the IFTS training chain, as a link between training experience and the world of work, is given by the indexing of IFTS specialisations and taxonomic models in the professional field ⁽²³⁾.

Learners must hold an upper secondary education diploma to enrol to these programmes. Higher technical education and training courses are open also to: holders of a professional technician certificate, young people admitted to the 5th year of general upper secondary education (*Liceo*), people without an upper secondary education qualification, but who had their prior learning recognised.

To complete, learners need to pass a leaving examination, on the basis of the features characterising regional job markets and referring to nationally defined and established (in state-regions agreements) occupational profiles. Upon successful completion, learners are awarded a higher technical specialisation certificate ⁽²⁴⁾ (EQF level 4, ISCED level 453). After completion learners can enter the labour market. An Inapp survey (currently in progress) shows that one year after completing a programme, more than 60% of the graduates are employed. Learners in IFTS programmes constituted less than 1% of total VET learners in 2016.

2.3.3.2 Higher Technical Education (ITS)

The Higher Technical Education pathway, another segment of the post-secondary training system, was established by a legislative document ⁽²⁵⁾ that defined the current structure and its position within the Italian education system. The responsibility for this pathway lies with the education ministry, whilst monitoring of ITS courses is carried out by National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research (INDIRE). During 2018, the education ministry has redefined the ITS national repertory that provides for the introduction of new technical profiles and the upgrading of those on the current index. As with the IFTS training chain, ITS diplomas are also referenced with respect to the taxonomies used in relation to the labour market; in particular, reference is made

⁽²³⁾ The National Classification of Occupations (CP 2011- ISTAT) and the Classification of Economic Activities (ATECO 2007- ISTAT). In the field of activities of a technical-scientific nature in higher technical training, INAPP carried out a survey on the quality and quantity dimension of the chain in 2018 too.

⁽²⁴⁾ *Certificato di specializzazione tecnica superiore*

⁽²⁵⁾ Prime ministerial Decree of 25.1.2008 and revised by the inter-ministerial Decree issued in 2013.

to the national classification of occupations (CP 2011) and the classification of economic activities (ATECO 2007).

ITS institutes can be described as 'schools offering high technological specialisation' that, like IFTS, promote highly-specialised education and training designed to offer pupils technical competencies and skills that will appeal to the labour market. In coherence with this approach, ITS planning is defined by the regional administrations on the basis of their particular economic characteristics. They are different from IFTS in terms of the foundations that provide the pathways: although IFTS pathways are also provided by a partnership (schools, training bodies, companies, universities and research centres, local bodies), with ITS the partnerships must necessarily be structured on the basis of the participation foundation model ⁽²⁶⁾.

Learners must hold an upper secondary education diploma (either general or vocational) in order to enrol in ITS programmes.

ITS programmes last 4 semesters – i.e. 1 800/2 000 hours – of which at least 30% is work practice at companies in the form of an (internship) and for which 50% of the teaching staff must come from the world of work and the related professions. Learners must pass a final examination, conducted by examination committees consisting of representatives of the school, university, vocational training and experts from the world of work in order to obtain a higher technical diploma (EQF level 5, ISCED 554). After completion learners can enter the labour market.

Learners enrolled in ITS programmes constituted less than 1% of total VET learners in 2016.

2.3.4 Apprenticeship systems

In September 2015, at the State-regions and autonomous provinces conference, an agreement was signed for a trial project about the dual system ⁽²⁷⁾. This three-year long trial, which began in the academic year 2015-16, was an opportunity to further develop the Italian dual education system, create integration between education/training and to actively combat the youth unemployment crisis.

The trial includes:

⁽²⁶⁾ This means that they cannot be temporary grouping enterprises, but permanent institutions.

⁽²⁷⁾ The project entitled 'Support, Development and Reinforcement of the dual system within vocational Education and training' (*Azioni di accompagnamento, sviluppo e rafforzamento del sistema duale nell'ambito dell'Istruzione e Formazione Professionale*) was proposed by the labour ministry and was subsequently completed and accepted by the regions and autonomous provinces.

- support for the organisation of guidance services and placements (vocational guidance, balance and certification of expertise, matching companies and students, organising school-work);
- alternation of courses and placements and managing protocols with companies;
- training of vocational training centre workers on the legislative and operational features of the new apprenticeship;
- design of educational and vocational courses in which alternating school-work pathways or apprenticeship training are reinforced.

Apprenticeship in Italy is an open-ended work contract aimed at training and employing young people. The apprenticeship contract, which is distinct from other work-based learning, must be drafted in written form, defining the roles and responsibilities of all parties, as well as the terms and conditions of the apprenticeship, the probationary period, occupational tasks, wage increases, entry and final grade levels and the qualification to be obtained. Apprenticeship training consists of on-the-job and classroom training. The training programme is an integral part of the contract. Both the contract and the training programme must be signed by the employer and the apprentice. Regions and autonomous provinces manage training issues.

Within the Jobs Act framework, Legislative Decree 81/2015 ⁽²⁸⁾ revised related regulations in an attempt to enhance the appeal of apprenticeship contracts amongst companies and institutions and increase applications for participation in an economy struck by crisis.

Since apprentices are considered employees, they are entitled to insurance benefits for job injuries and accidents, occupational diseases, ageing and disability, maternity, household allowance and, since 1 January 2013, social security insurance.

The jobs Act established that only enterprises with up to 50 employees can hire an apprentice if, in the previous 36 months, they retained 20% of their previous apprentices. Workers registered on so-called 'mobility lists' ⁽²⁹⁾ and unemployed people receiving unemployment allowance can take part in this scheme to qualify or requalify (usually they are offered a place on a 'professional' apprenticeship scheme, see paragraph (b) below).

The apprenticeship system includes three types of contract:

- Type 1 apprenticeship: Apprenticeships leading to a professional operator certificate and a professional technician diploma (*apprendistato per la qualifica ed il diploma professionale*), an upper-secondary school

⁽²⁸⁾ <http://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto.legislativo:2015-06-15;81>

⁽²⁹⁾ A 'mobility list' refers to collectively-dismissed workers waiting to be placed in other jobs.

diploma (*apprendistato per il diploma di scuola secondaria superiore*), a higher technical specialisation certification (*apprendistato per il certificato di specializzazione tecnica superiore - IFTS*). These schemes are regulated by the regions and autonomous provinces through specific State-regions Conference agreements. Content, which is divided into theoretical and practical learning, the specific qualifications offered, and the number of training hours are established by the regions and autonomous provinces according to minimum standards agreed at national level. The duration of the contract is determined according to the certificate or diploma to attain: it cannot exceed the training period nor be less than the national minimum standard. Apprenticeships leading to a professional operator certificate and a professional technician diploma allow young people to fulfil their 'right/duty' to education and training. There are no specific entry requirements, but learners need to bridge the year between the end of lower-secondary school and the start of apprenticeship on an upper-secondary school or leFP programme, unless they are already 15 years old. These apprenticeship schemes last 3 or 4 years and offer the possibility to acquire qualifications at operator or technician level (in 22 and 21 occupation fields, respectively: professional operator certificate (*attestato di qualifica di operatore professionale* - EQF level 3) or professional technician diploma (*diploma professionale di tecnico* - EQF level 4). These qualifications are part of the national qualifications register. After obtaining the operator certificate, apprentices may proceed to the fourth year to obtain a technician diploma, in the same occupation. Access to university is possible after successful completion of secondary education and an additional one-year course at an education institute. Apprenticeship for a higher technical specialisation certificate (*certificato di specializzazione tecnica superiore* - EQF level 4) lasts a year and targets young people who have fulfilled their 'right/duty' to education and training.

- Type 2 apprenticeship: Professional training apprenticeships (*apprendistato professionalizzante o contratto di mestiere*):

This targets 18 to 29-year-olds who want to acquire a qualification provided for in collective bargaining agreements and required on the labour market. Training comprises two parts: i) acquisition of key skills (120 hours over a 3-year period) regulated by the regions and autonomous provinces and provided by training centres; ii) acquisition of vocational skills for specific occupation areas provided directly by companies. The occupation areas and training content are defined by collective bargaining agreements. These programmes have a maximum

duration of 3 years (exceptionally 5 years for the crafts sector) and lead to regionally recognised professional qualification.

- Type 3 apprenticeship: Higher education and research apprenticeships (*apprendistato di alta formazione e ricerca*):

Despite the name, this scheme leads to an array of qualification levels encompassing EQF levels 4-8. It targets 18 to 29-year-olds and fulfils various purposes. Learners can acquire qualifications that are normally offered through school-based programmes, in higher education or at universities, including a doctoral degree. Apprentices can also engage in research activities in private companies or pursue traineeship required to access the liberal professions (lawyer, architect, business consultant); this has not yet been regulated by collective bargaining. In agreement with the social partners and public education and training centres, the regions and autonomous provinces decide the duration of contracts and the organisation of programmes and ensure they are compatible with school-based curricula. They also define higher education credits (*crediti formativi universitari*) learners obtain at schools, universities or training centres and the skills to be acquired through on the job training at a company. In the absence of a regional regulatory framework, ad hoc arrangements between training institutes and companies are possible. Training costs are defined by local authorities, on the basis of national, regional and ESF regulations.

2.3.5 Adult education

Italy decreed full recognition of lifelong learning with Law 92/2012 ⁽³⁰⁾ (Article 4, paragraph 51). According to the law it is citizens' individual right to have their learning (formal, informal and non-formal) and skills, recognised and validated. For the implementation of the law, an agreement was signed on 10 July 2014 by the government, regions and local bodies, establishing a multi-level governance model for the national lifelong learning system. This agreement defined the strategic lines of intervention for lifelong learning systems and specified the key elements of the 'territorial network' (composition, dimension, mandate) eligible to provide lifelong learning services.

The territorial networks, i.e. the backbone of the system, may provide three main services:

1. interpretation of needs;
2. orientation services;
3. recognition of prior learning.

⁽³⁰⁾ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2012/07/03/012G0115/sg>

The territorial networks provide for the participation of various public and private-sector bodies, including the network of Provincial Adult Education Centres (CPIA-*Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli Adulti*), universities, training agencies, employer and trade union representatives, the Chambers of Commerce, the National Observatory on the Financial Inclusion of Migrants and public research bodies.

The envisaged by the national agreement model establishes that:

- on a national level, the education ministry in collaboration with INDIRE, is responsible for defining specific strategic policies and priorities and monitoring, orientation and assessment;
- on a regional level, the regions and autonomous provinces plan the development of the networks and in collaboration with them they define the assessment of the territorial development programmes, points of innovation and competitiveness, identification of educational and training needs and use of available resources;
- on a local level, the subjects that form the network define the organisational and functioning aspects which guarantee access to citizens, supporting individual learning pathways.

In the academic year 2014/15 CPIA were introduced taking over functions previously provided by the Permanent Territorial Centres (CTPs-*Centri Territoriali Permanenti*) and school institutes that held evening classes.

The following target groups can enrol in CPIA:

- adults, including foreigners, who have not completed compulsory education and who want to obtain their lower secondary school leaving certificate;
- adults, including foreigners, who have obtained their lower secondary school leaving certificate and intend to obtain their upper secondary school or training diploma;
- adult foreigners who intend to enrol on literacy and Italian as foreign language courses;
- young people who are at least 16 years old and who, having obtained their lower secondary school leaving certificate, demonstrate they cannot attend day classes.

CPIA adult learning courses, including those held at penitentiaries, are based on the following pathways:

- first-level education pathways;
- literacy and Italian as foreign language pathways;
- second-level education pathways (technical institutes, vocational institutes, art schools).

First-level education pathways and literacy and Italian as foreign language pathways are provided by the CPIA, whilst second-level education pathways are provided by technical or vocational institutes or art schools.

First-level education pathways are divided into two periods:

- An initial period of 400 hours which aims to help participants obtain the lower secondary school leaving certificate. For candidates with no primary school certificate, the total number of hours can be increased by 200 hours. This share can also be dedicated to courses teaching Italian as a foreign language;
- A second period totalling 924 hours, equal to 70% of the total hours provided for by the corresponding systems in the first two years of technical or vocational training schools for general education and aimed at obtaining a certificate attesting the acquisition of the basic skills linked to compulsory education, pursuant to ministerial Decree 139/2007 ⁽³¹⁾.

Literacy and Italian as a foreign language pathways target at obtaining a qualification which attests achievement of Italian language, at a level at least equivalent to level A2 of the common European framework for languages.

Second-level education pathways, lead to an upper secondary school diploma (technical, vocational or artistic). Second-level technical and vocational education pathways are divided into three periods, namely:

- first period for acquiring the certificate needed to be admitted to the second two-year educational period at technical or vocational training institutes, depending on the direction chosen by the learner;
- second period for acquiring the certificate needed to be admitted to the last educational year at technical or professional institutes, depending on the direction chosen by the learner;
- third period for acquiring a technical and vocational training diploma, depending on the direction chosen by the learner.

The duration of the second-level pathways' is 70% of the duration of the corresponding general education programmes for the first two years of technical or vocational institutes or art schools, with reference to the area of general education and the specific direction which is chosen.

The EQF levels for the abovementioned paths are as follows:

- first level first teaching period EQF 1;
- first level second teaching period EQF 2;
- second level third teaching period EQF 4.

In the academic year 2015/16, there were 126 CPIA. The data provided by the Regional School Offices (UOSSR- *Uffici Scolastici Regionali*) show that in

⁽³¹⁾ https://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/normativa/2007/dm139_07.shtml

that year, 182 863 adults signed an individual training agreement. In the following academic year (2016/17), 229 400 adults signed an individual training agreement.

In the academic year 2017/18, the Directorate-General for Contracts, Purchases and Information Systems and Statistics of the education ministry (MIUR-DGCASIS - *Direzione Generale per i Contratti, gli Acquisti e per i Sistemi Informativi e la Statistica del Ministero dell'Istruzione Università e Ricerca*) activated the registry of the (128) CPIA. Based on data from the registry the number of attendants was 224 799. Among the 153 052 adults who attended the first level courses and the paths of literacy and learning of the Italian language, 10 557 were in possession of only the elementary school certificate, while 66 156 were not in possession of any qualification. There will be 131 CPIA in the academic year 2018/19.

School directors appointed at the new centres have a special platform that offers a series of tools and materials, specifically designed to favour the activities of the CPIA. Various kinds of training methods are available within this framework for the development of skills and the recognition of prior learning:

- planning and organisation of the learning units (UDA - *Unità di Apprendimento*);
- planning and organisation of distance learning courses (FAD - *Formazione a Distanza*);
- planning and organisation of 'agorà classrooms' (interactive environment for managing the adult education offer).

2.3.6 National and regional continuing vocational training systems

The CVET offer, primarily targeting employed people is regulated by a series of legal provisions.

The most important are:

- Law 845/1978 ⁽³²⁾: the framework law on vocational training that defines certain fundamental principles.
- Law 236/1993 ⁽³³⁾: the national law on CVET that attributes the responsibility for planning and defining the priorities for training interventions to the regions and autonomous provinces and, sets aside financial resources to fund in-company, sectoral, territorial and individual training or tailor-made training initiatives for individuals (vouchers).

⁽³²⁾ <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:1978-12-21;845!vig=>

⁽³³⁾ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1993/08/30/093A4795/sg>

- Law 53/2000 ⁽³⁴⁾: recognises the right of workers to CVET throughout their lifetime and the possibility to use paid leave for training. It reserves financial resources to fund both training projects proposed by companies and projects proposed by individual workers who apply for tailor-made vouchers.
- Law 388/2000 (Article 118) ⁽³⁵⁾ and subsequent modifications: provides for the establishment of 'joint inter-professional funds for CVET', i.e. bilateral association-type bodies established on the basis of agreements between employer and employee trade union organisations representing at national level the main sectors of economic activity. They manage the 0.3% contribution levy paid by employers.
- The regional operational programmes of the ESF: these fund training activities targeting the employed (salaried and self-employed) and the unemployed or inactive, as well as companies..
- Law 205/2017 ⁽³⁶⁾: establishes tax credit for companies that invest in training (especially training related to the national Industry Plan 4.0).

In recent years, most resources for CVET have been planned and managed by the regions and autonomous provinces (which have mainly used ESF regional operational programmes as a source) and the social partners (through the inter-professional funds). Furthermore, the decree implementing the Jobs Act (Legislative Decree 150/2015) established a national network of services for active labour policies and included Inter-professional funds. This was helpful in recognising the important role of the funds as providers of funding for training activities and as a relevant tool for addressing labour market needs. It had also helped in inserting the funds in a composite system that involves a process of coordinated governance.

Between 2008 and 2016 a total of 83 000 training programmes were completed, amounting to 300 000 projects (approved by inter-professional funds). It is estimated that over the eight-year period a total of 388 000 companies were involved and 11.9 million workers were trained.

Since 2004 inter-professional funds have managed about EUR 6 billion, an average of EUR 460 million per year.

In 2017, regional and provincial administrations promoted the in-company training projects proposed by companies, individual continuing training initiatives proposed by individual workers and in-company, inter-company and sectoral

⁽³⁴⁾

https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/atto/serie_generale/caricaDettaglioAtto/originario?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=2000-03-13&atto.codiceRedazionale=000G0092&elenco30giorni=false

⁽³⁵⁾ <https://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/00388l02.htm>

⁽³⁶⁾ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/12/29/17G00222/sg>

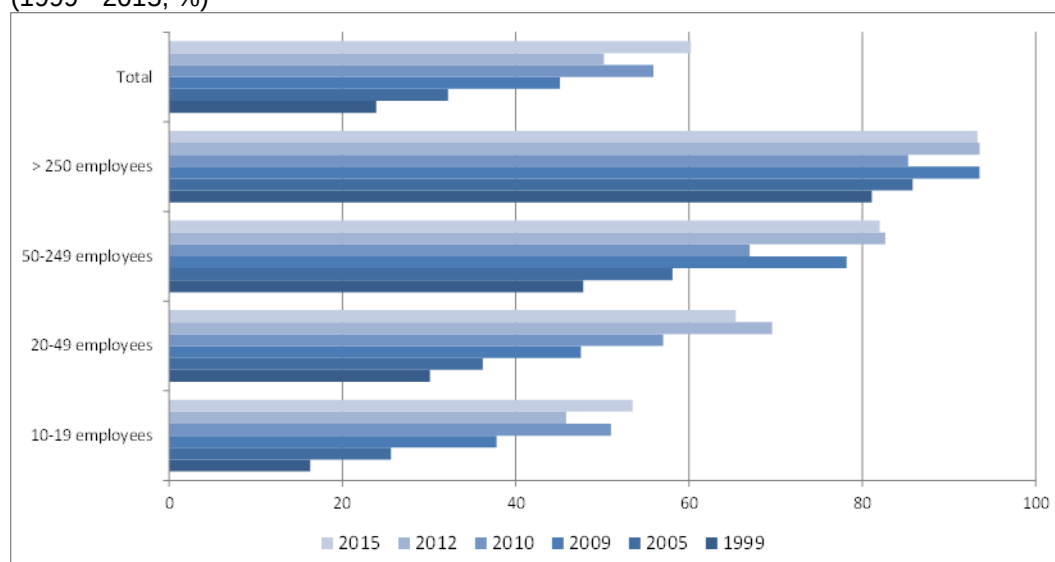
training programmes. In fact, several public tender calls were published aiming to fund training activities targeting both employed people and recipients of welfare benefits. They focused on the themes of technological innovation and digitalization of company processes, in relation to the Industry 4.0 programme.

2.4 Other forms of training

2.4.1. Employer-provided vocational training in Italy

Employer-provided vocational training, realised within the work context and organised by the employer, had registered a gradual and consistent growth in Italy in the period 1995-2015 regardless the size of the company⁽³⁷⁾ (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Enterprises with 10 employees or more that provided training activities in Italy (1999 - 2015, %)



Source: Eurostat/Istat, CVTS2/3/4/5 1999/2005/2010/2015 (Statistical survey on personnel training in enterprises); INAPP, INDACO-CVTS 2010 (Survey on Knowledge in Enterprises); INAPP, IAS 2012 (Intangible Assets Survey)

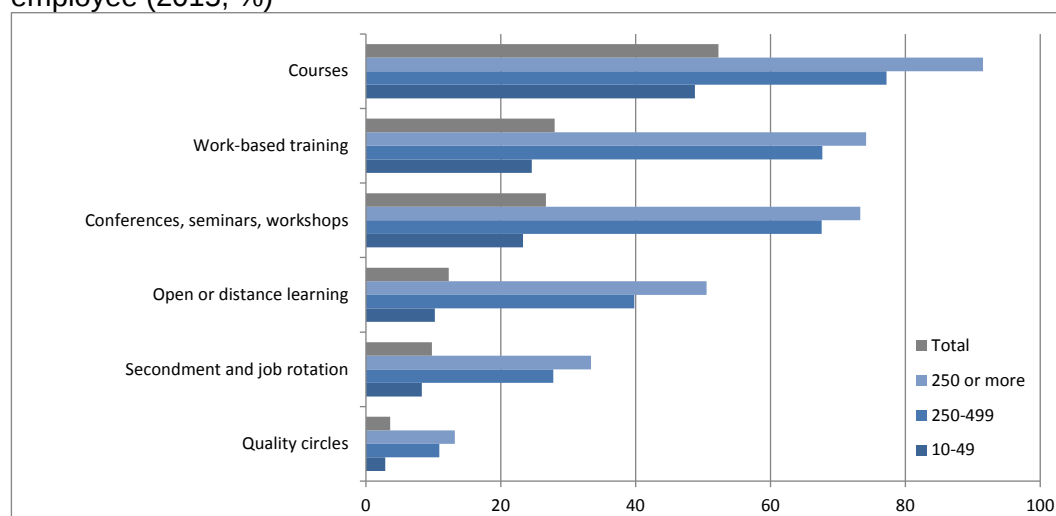
In 2015 enterprises with at least 10 employees providing training activities amounted to 60.2% (an all-time high).

In terms of training types adopted by enterprises, we can see that internal/external CVET courses are by far the most common training method in Italy (52.3% of enterprises have organised at least one course), followed some way off by guided-on-the-job training (28%) and attendance of conferences, seminars and workshops (26.7%). Even further behind are other methods, such as self-directed learning/e-learning (12.3%) and job rotation, exchanges,

⁽³⁷⁾ A slight reduction was observed during 2010-13 (Angotti 2013, 2017), which came to a halt in 2014. Since then an increasing trend was observed, with recent data suggesting a stabilisation in the job training investments. Also regional, sectorial and gaps related to the size of the companies continue to exist.

secondments or study visits (9.8%), whilst learning or quality circles are present in only 3.6% of Italian companies. Analysis of the size of the company highlights a greater difficulty for smaller ones, whilst those with a workforce of 20 to 45 employees are similar to the average. Meanwhile, there is considerable commitment in the use of more innovative methods by larger enterprises and less so, by medium-sized enterprises (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Enterprises with 10 or more employees by type of training and class of employee (2015, %)



Note: The sum of values does not necessarily correspond to the total as the same enterprise could give a positive reply for several methods.

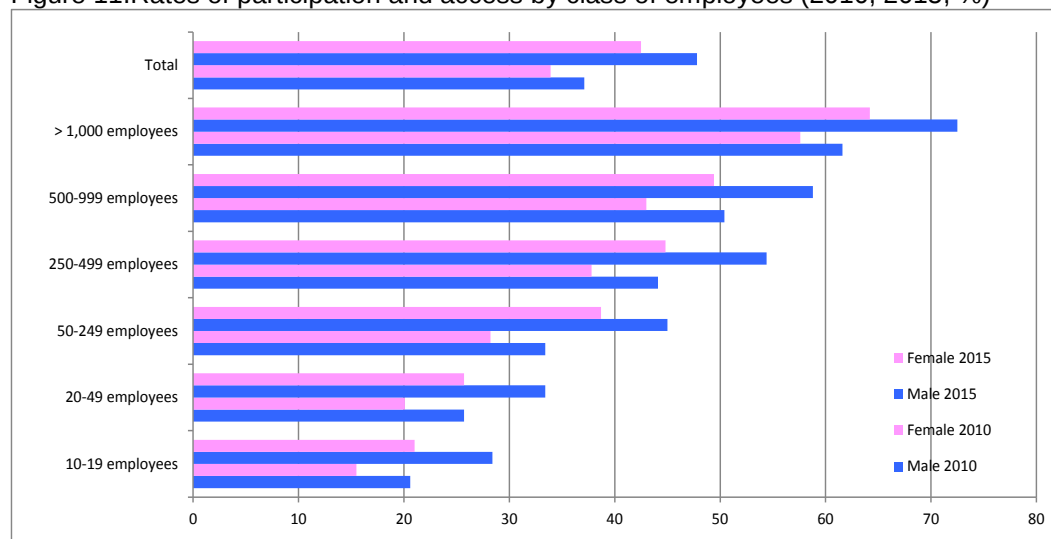
Source: Eurostat/ISTAT, Statistical survey on personnel training in enterprises - CVTS5

In 2015, workers trained on employer-provided courses amounted to a total of 45.9% of employees, a considerable increase compared to the 2010 figure (36%). Participation in enterprise courses was greater amongst men (47.8%) than women (42.5%). Participation grew, with an increase in the size of the enterprise as Figure 11 below demonstrates.

Concluding, investment in training by Italian enterprises shows a trend that is characterised by growth that is still slow, compared to the rest of Europe ⁽³⁸⁾. Despite considerable financial investment from public resources there has not yet been a real cultural shift in updating and developing the competences of the personnel (Angotti, 2017). This situation requires a review of the relevant policy framework.

⁽³⁸⁾ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2015); Eurofound (2016); MIUR, MLPS, (2018).

Figure 11. Rates of participation and access by class of employees (2010, 2015, %)



Source: ISTAT, Statistical survey on personnel training in enterprises – CVTS4/5

2.5 VET funding

2.5.1 Funding of leFP courses

In 2015, total financial resources committed by regional administrations were a little under EUR 700 million, whilst provisions amounted to over EUR 654 million, an increase of 35.5% and 34.5% respectively compared to the previous year. This increase can primarily be attributed to funding from the labour ministry that, thanks to the 2015 Allocation Decree, earmarked an additional EUR 87 million to the experimentation of the dual system (partly from amounts usually allocated to apprenticeships), and to community funding, made available with the implementation of the new 2014-20 programme.

With respect to the sources of funding, the breakdown of resources highlights that the share from regional/provincial sources prevails, in terms of both resources committed (36.4%) and those dispensed (40.8%). However, they are lower compared to 2014. In 2015 there was an increase in the economic resources by the labour ministry, which settled at 30.4% with regard to resources committed and at 28.6% for those dispensed. A slight increase can be seen in the resources committed by the education ministry (3%) compared to 2014, whilst provisions fell slightly (1.3%). Resources from community sources, 30.2% of the total amount committed and 29.4% of the total dispensed, were more or less similar to previous years.

In terms of geographical allocation the north and centre primarily draw on sources from local administrations, both in terms of resources committed and those dispensed. The south draws mainly on community resources (50.3% for committed resources) and almost totally from the labour ministry (90.6% for dispensed resources). For the islands, the labour ministry is the main source of committed resources (90.2%), whereas the labour ministry (37.9%) and community sources (40.4%) prevail in terms of dispensed resources. Summarising, in 2015 there was a return to a more balanced redistribution of financial commitments from various sources, with a bigger participation by the Labour ministry.

2.5.2 Funding of IFTS and ITS courses

In terms of funding the methods used for IFTS and ITS courses are the same. Monitoring shows a marked uniformity between the Regions that use the ESF to fund courses. Within this framework, the only exception is Lombardy which has also used a share of funding from the labour ministry for the experimentation of the dual system ⁽³⁹⁾. The 2018 Budget Law ⁽⁴⁰⁾ provides for ad hoc funding for the system amounting to EUR 10 million in 2018, EUR 20 million in 2019 and EUR 35 million from 2020 onwards.

2.5.3 Funding of apprenticeships

Training activities for apprenticeship are funded by the labour ministry. For 2017, it earmarked EUR 15 million for this activity. The amount due to the regions is calculated on the basis of the number of apprentices (sum of apprentices on an apprenticeship contract and of the number of apprentices on training pathways).

Analysing the data broken down by source of funding, it emerges that the training activities for apprenticeships, in terms of national geographical coverage, are primarily funded by the resources from the labour ministry (75.1%). North-west regions draw almost exclusively on this source of funding.

The resources of the regions and autonomous provinces represent 18.7% of the total and are the source that most of the central regions draw on (38.7%), whilst they are not used in the south.

The regions and autonomous provinces co-finance training activities dedicated to apprenticeships through their own resources or the resources of the ESF. The latest management data relating to the commitment and expenditure of the regions and autonomous provinces for training activities for apprentices refer

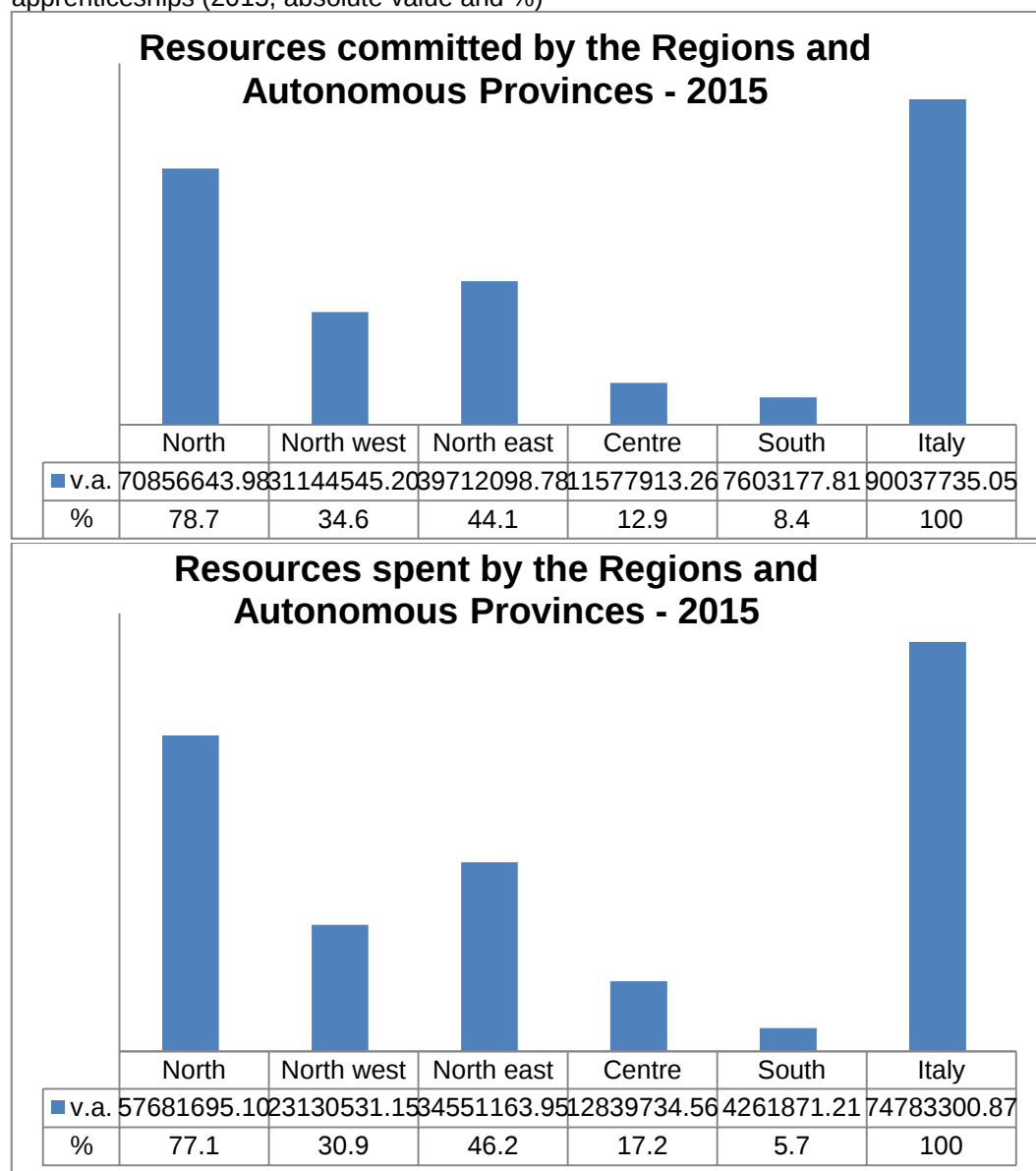
⁽³⁹⁾ Labour ministry-regions bilateral agreement of 24.9.2015.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Law 205 of 27.12.2017, Article 67.

<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/12/29/17G00222/sg>

to 2015 ⁽⁴¹⁾. That year, the overall amount committed was over EUR 90 million; these resources were primarily committed by administrations in the north (78.7%), followed by the centre (12.9%) and the south (8.4%) (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Resources committed and spent by the regions and autonomous provinces for apprenticeships (2015, absolute value and %)



Source: INAPP elaborations based on data from the regions and autonomous provinces

In terms of spent resources on a total of approximately EUR 75 million, 77.1% was spent in the north, 17.2% in the centre and 5.7% in the south. However, spent resources can also refer to commitments assumed by the regions and autonomous provinces in the previous year(s).

⁽⁴¹⁾ Data for 2016 will be available by the end of 2018.

ESF resources are mostly used in the south of Italy (21.2%) and less so in northern ones (5.6%). Administrations in central Italy do not use ESF funding.

2.5.4 Funding of CVET

Much of the financial support for CVET comes from the compulsory contribution of the so-called '0.30%' of the payroll costs, paid by the private sector companies to the National Institute of Social Insurance (INPS- *Istituto Nazionale Previdenza Sociale*). This contribution was introduced by Law 845/1978, which provided for an increase of 0.30% on wages which were subject to ordinary compulsory contributions (due by employers to compulsory insurance against involuntary unemployment). It represents an additional quota of the contribution that the enterprises pay to INPS for the compulsory insurance against involuntary unemployment, which is equal to 1.61% of the total wages. Then INPS transfers the 0.30 % contribution paid by one firm to the training fund chosen by this firm. The 0.30% contributions of enterprises not joining any training fund are utilised to finance some specific programmes in CVET and related to the Law 263/1993 and Law 53/2000.

In 2004 the INPS started financing the joint inter-professional funds, with companies choosing which fund(s) to join. This led to a progressive reduction of regional financial resources in favour of the inter-professional funds.

The overall revenue of 0.30%, which in 2011 amounted to EUR 744 million, peaked at over EUR 984 million in 2016 thanks to the stabilisation of the process of expanding the new targets of workers and enterprises that could adhere to the Inter-professional funds and as a consequence, pay the 0.30% contribution.

During the period of economic crisis, there was a shift in the use of resources allocated to continuing education towards passive policy measures (integration to the income of workers in difficulty due to the crisis – exceptional unemployment allowance and mobility allowance). From 2016 onwards, cuts were made to resources provided to the regions for funding of training interventions (Law 236/1993 and Law 53/2000). Also, since 2016 and for subsequent years there was an annual withdrawal of EUR 120 million from the total conferred by INPS to inter-professional funds ⁽⁴²⁾. As a result of these decisions, between 2009 and 2015, approximately EUR 1.04 billion earmarked for continuing training were used for measures to combat the crisis, whilst in 2016 and 2017 additionally about EUR 200 million from the budget of inter-professional funds and the regions was used for other purposes. This situation has led both regions and inter-professional funds to better focus their objectives on training interventions.

⁽⁴²⁾ Stability Law 2015, published in the Official Gazette on 29.1.2014.

With regard to contributions pursuant to Law 236/1993 and Law 53/2000, in 2016 and 2017 the labour ministry did not intervene with a new decree for allocating resources for 2016. During 2016, based on the interventions implemented by the various regions, the ministry continued to fund the initiatives based on past legislation.

Regarding the ESF, continuing training is funded with a little less than 180 million euro.

With regard to regional interventions in 2017, in many cases a decision was made to integrate the financial resources of Law 236 with those of the ESF and with those provided for by Law 53 (Article 6, paragraph 4) bearing in mind the legislative peculiarities of various funding channels. To this end, in some regions a system of tailored individual continuing training was funded that relies on various funding tools or alternatively, uses the resources of Law 236 along with those of the Inter-professional funds.

With regard to Law 53/2000, some regions have chosen to fund vouchers for tailored individual training or in-company, inter-company and sectoral training programmes in favour of enterprises that, in order to combat the employment crisis, have preferred to reduce working hours rather than lay off workers.

With regard to the use of ESF, each region has promulgated one or more public tenders to fund training activities in favour of those in employment and recipients of welfare benefits, including exceptional benefits, or has focused particularly on the themes of technological innovation and the digitalization of corporate processes, to offer enterprises the appropriate tools for predicting changes and proposing effective solutions for tackling such changes successfully.

In addition, tax relief was introduced for enterprises that invest in training (Law 205/2017 ⁽⁴³⁾) in 2018. Pursuant to this law, there are tax incentives and tax relief for enterprises that show they have spent on training activities designed to acquire or consolidate the technological skills provided for in National Industry Plan 4.0 (see section 4.2 Incentives for enterprises).

2.6 VET governance

The education ministry defines the VET framework in national school pathways (technical and professional institutes) for IFTS (in agreement with the labour ministry). It has sole responsibility for ITS in defining guidance documents monitoring, and evaluation. The education ministry also redefines the ITS national repertory, with the introduction of new technical profiles and the update

⁽⁴³⁾ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/12/29/17G00222/sg>

of those already included in the inventory. Monitoring of ITS courses is carried out by INDIRE.

The labour ministry defines the VET framework for interventions provided for within the scope of leFP, for IFTS (in agreement with the education ministry) for training interventions for apprenticeships and for CVET provided within publicly funded programmes.

On a national level, the National Institute for Public Policy Analysis (INAPP) monitors leFP pathways, IFTS courses, apprenticeship training pathways and continuing training interventions. INAPP also drafts various annual reports ⁽⁴⁴⁾.

Since 2018, in accordance with the labour and the finance ministries, the Ministry of Economic Development (MISE) has coordinated tax relief for companies investing in training.

The regions and autonomous provinces are responsible for the planning, programming, organising and implementing interventions provided for leFP, ITS, IFTS, post-secondary level and post-university education, for most types of apprenticeship-based training and for publicly-funded continuing training (in agreement with the social partners). In particular, for the programming of ITS and IFTS interventions planning documents known as 3-year Plans are prepared. Through these documents, the regions and autonomous provinces define their strategy on the post-secondary education and training offer, bringing together and integrating the various training chains (ITS, IFTS, training hubs).

Social partners play an advisory role in the formulation of training policies and contribute to the training offer. They also play a key part in promoting in-company, sectoral and territorial training programmes funded by the regions or realised thanks to joint inter-professional funds for CVET and also help with the elaboration of active labour market policies. Social partners play a crucial role in regulating professional apprenticeship.

2.7 Teachers and trainers

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

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Report on Vocational Training Activities (Law 845/1978); Report on leFP Pathways Monitoring; Report on Apprenticeship Monitoring (Law 144/1999); Report to the Parliament on CVET (Law 144/1999). See: D'Agostino, Vaccaro, 2018; Angotti, Vaccaro, 2018; Inapp, Ministero del Lavoro, Camera dei Deputati, 2017; Inapp, Ministero del Lavoro, 2017; ISFOL, Ministero del Lavoro, Camera dei Deputati, 2016.

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.

Teachers are employed by the education ministry. The ministry is also responsible for the regulatory framework for teachers. They work in state vocational schools and in CPIA. Some also work at higher technical institutes. Trainers mainly work in vocational training centres that are managed directly by the regional and provincial authorities, as well as in private vocational training centres accredited by the regions. Some trainers also work in companies, consultancy agencies, non-profit organisations and public employment services.

In terms of VET teachers' pre-service training, universities provide teachers' initial training on behalf of the education ministry in collaboration with schools. The minimum requirement for accessing the teaching profession is a five-year bachelor degree in specific teaching subjects (maths, chemistry, foreign languages).

Recent years have seen repeated changes and reforms relating to entry-level training and the recruitment of teachers and in 2018 a new recruitment system has been developed. The latest key features introduced include the requirement to have not only a degree, but also knowledge of psychological and pedagogical disciplines and didactic methodologies and technologies, confirmed by passing specific university exams. Another fundamental new feature is the post-degree Initial Training and Internship pathway (FIT- *Formazione iniziale e tirocinio*). This is a paid, 3-year training pathway that aspiring educators must attend before being awarded a teaching post. FIT pathways are only accessed after passing a public examination (*Concorso pubblico per titoli ed esami*). The FIT pathway envisages gradual integration of aspiring teachers into the classroom environment; the first year provides more theoretical training, the second year more integrated training opportunities, with a work placement in a school and the start of specific training activities (short substitutions covering absences and lasting no more than 15 days) and in the third year, aspiring teachers are awarded a vacant teaching position, with all the associated responsibilities.

More generally, pre-service training of VET teachers is aimed at improving their teaching, psychological, pedagogical, organisational and social skills. Special attention is also given to improving their language and digital skills, in compliance with EU recommendations. Educators who wish to teach disabled people must also attend a specific course of study in formal education.

For many years, permanent training for VET teachers was considered an individual right under the national collective labour agreement, but it is now compulsory and regulated by the so-called 'Good School' reform (Law 107/2015). This law 'establishes that teachers' in-service training is compulsory and

continuing, this law provides incentives to support continuous teacher training and systematic need analysis mechanisms. Teachers' in-service training must be in line with the school plan and with the priorities of the education ministry. Training must also involve all fixed-term contract teachers.

Priority areas for teacher training have been established in the 2016-19 3-year plans, also as part of the 'Good School' Law. These are:

1. organisational and didactic autonomy;
2. competency-based learning, methodological innovation and basic skills;
3. digital skills and new learning environments;
4. foreign language skills;
5. inclusion and disability;
6. social cohesion and prevention of general youth unrest;
7. integration, citizenship and global citizenship skills;
8. school and work;
9. evaluation and development, involving the entire school community.

Initial training for VET trainers is not regulated on a national level and there is no nationally-recognised register of trainers or formal recruitment procedures. As regards access requirements to the training profession, the national collective labour contract only sets minimum requirements – a degree or an upper-secondary school diploma plus professional experience in the relevant sector. Additionally, it establishes that – regardless of the role played in the different training contexts (tutor, counsellor, trainer coordinator, etc.) – trainers should regularly participate in professional refresher programmes, either within or outside the institutions at which they work. Although no specific requirements apply to obtaining the qualification to access the trainer profession, the number of university-graduate trainers has increased, thus showing that greater attention is paid to entry requirements in the recruitment process. In addition, in recent years a number of education faculties have been offering university degree and masters' programmes for trainers.

Within this national framework, each region and autonomous province has established its own standards for trainers' training, with a view to ensuring high quality VET services financed by public funds. To access these funds, training organisations must be accredited by the competent authorities (regions and autonomous provinces) on the basis of quality standards, which also affect the skills of trainers, as indicated by the new national accreditation system of training and guidance providers ⁽⁴⁵⁾. Private VET centres, which do not use public funds,

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Labour ministry Decree 166/2001, *'Provisions for accrediting VET and guidance providers'* (*Accreditamento delle sedi formative e delle sedi orientative*), State-regions

can regulate the matter of teacher training autonomously and do not have to comply with specific laws. In-service training for VET trainers is not formalised, varies greatly and participation is discretionary. Many regions and autonomous provinces provide for updating key figures in the training process (including the teacher) as a requisite for obtaining public funding. In particular, most provide for the obligation to update certain key figures and establishes a minimum duration standard, whilst other regions require the training facility to draft a personnel training plan that is not bound to minimum duration ceilings for the training intervention. Only very few regions have yet to discipline the updating of human resources. Therefore, a wide acknowledgement that improving the professionalism of people involved in the leFP system, would be a key aspect for improving the quality of the entire system, emerges. Trainer refresher and training activities are mainly promoted by regional authorities and funded by the ESF and more recently by the joint inter-professional funds for CVET (*Fondi paritetici inter-professionali*)⁽⁴⁶⁾. However, employer-provided in-service training is not widespread across Italy and varies from region to region (e.g. employer-provided in-service training tends to be more structured in northern and central regions). Trainer training supply is determined by the free market and the main providers are public and private training bodies and consortia, consultancy firms, professional associations, universities, the social partners, chambers of commerce and some business schools. With regard to the content of refresher courses, trainer training is mainly designed to enhance the skills required by technological innovation and market globalisation, foster the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, establish reliable standards for validation procedures, adjust training interventions to local needs, create local, national and international networks and develop relationships between training systems and the labour market via traineeship experiences.

More information is available in the Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspective on teachers and trainers⁽⁴⁷⁾.

agreement 'new accreditation system' (*Nuovo sistema di accreditamento*) implemented by the labour ministry and approved in March 2008 by the State-regions conference.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ These funds are managed by the social partners and supervised by the labour ministry.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Carlini, D.; Infante, V. (2016). Supporting teachers and trainers for successful reforms and quality of vocational education and training: mapping their professional development in the EU – Italy. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.

http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2016/ReferNet_IT_TT.pdf

CHAPTER 3.

Shaping VET qualifications

3.1 Anticipating skill needs

For several years now, surveys have been carried out in Italy studying the phenomenon of needs from quantitative and qualitative point of view. They have been carried out by various institutes and bodies on a national and occasionally on a territorial level. The results of these surveys can now be interpreted by integrating them with communication protocols - basically, the classification of occupations (CP 2011) and the classification of economic activities (ATECO 2008). Below are the main indications from some of the surveys carried out over the years funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.

In terms of quantity since 1997 the Excelsior survey carried out by Unioncamere has reconstructed an anticipation framework of labour demand and skill needs expressed by companies. For anticipated recruitment, analytical information is collected on the characteristics of the personnel the company intends to hire; for example, skilled labour, educational qualifications and training levels required, difficulty in finding these profiles, need for further training, previous experience, IT and language skills.

From a primarily qualitative point of view, in 2006 ISFOL – Institute for the Development of Vocational Training of Workers (now INAPP) began to carry out research activities designed to analyse existing professions and trades, aiming to provide a detailed description of changes in job content in the short- (next 12 months) and medium-term (next 5 years). Investigation methods that made it possible to interview entrepreneurs, corporate human resources managers or industry experts, who could outline trends in key sectors of the economy, were used. For example, the audit survey on professional needs, targeting a sample of about 35 000 companies, aimed to collect qualitative information on the needs of companies in terms of the scarcity/lack of specific skills and know-how relating to the skilled workers they employed. Entrepreneurs could therefore reflect not so much on the training that had been carried out in the past, but rather, on what had to be done in the near future to satisfy specific needs.

In Italy, 33% of companies with at least one employee, just over half a million businesses, have declared they employ at least one person for whom they have registered a need to be satisfied within the next few months via specific refresher activities. The in-company professions for which the most pressing needs have been registered – with gaps that must be closed within the next few months via specific training activities – are those attributable to the large groups of skilled jobs in commercial and service activities (23.9%), artisans, specialist workers and farmers (22.9%) and technical professions (20%), followed by office-based

managerial positions (18.3%). The last audit survey on professional needs (the third of its kind) concluded in December 2017.

Information from the quantitative and qualitative surveys that explore the professional and training needs of the labour market is a huge asset as it provides useful indications to all stakeholders of the complex education system that – albeit in different ways and with differing levels of responsibility – have the task of planning and implementing professional training and refresher pathways that are as coherent as possible with the needs of the world of production. In this respect, there have been some interesting attempts to bring together the world of labour and training supply; for example, on technical committees periodically tasked with reviewing and updating standards for professional profiles closely linked to the most vocational training supply chains (for example, profiles relating to leFP and ITS pathways), as well as through specific research and analysis activities that are trying to draw up other methodologies, designed to connect (even on a territorial level, the so-called ‘curvature’ process) the professional needs expressed by companies with the training aims and practices designed by those responsible for the various education and training chains.

3.2 Designing qualifications

Following approval of the 8 January 2018 decree, Italy adopted a National Qualifications Framework - NQF (QNQ- *Quadro nazionale delle qualificazioni*), a tool to define and classify the qualifications issued within the national system of certification of competences (*Sistema nazionale di certificazione delle competenze*), which will make it possible to create the national repertory of education and training qualifications and professional qualifications (*Repertorio nazionale dei titoli di istruzione e formazione e delle qualificazioni professionali* - hereinafter the national repertory). The institutional and technical process for cross-referencing qualifications issued within the national system to one of the eight levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning is defined ⁽⁴⁸⁾ thanks to the NQF and the atlas for jobs and qualifications ⁽⁴⁹⁾ (hereinafter the job atlas) are the two components of the technical infrastructure of the national repertory.

The competences that compose the national repertory are defined and updated by the awarding bodies that now have the possibility to use the

⁽⁴⁸⁾ See Article 8, paragraph 3, letter d of 13.1.2013 decree.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ The atlas for jobs and qualifications is a classification and information tool created on the basis of the descriptors of the classification of economic and professional sectors, also pursuant to Art. 8 of Legislative Decree 13/2013 and Article 3, paragraph 5 of the inter-ministerial decree of 30.6.2015 and an integral part of the information systems pursuant to Articles 13 and 15 of Legislative Decree 150/2015.

descriptors of the job atlas (processes, activities and expected outcomes) as guidelines. These have been developed on a national level in collaboration with the regional authorities and are periodically updated, pursuant to the decree dated 30 June 2015. As far as the technical investigation part is concerned, this is done via a process conducted by INAPP further to a request by and in collaboration with stakeholders who are sector experts ⁽⁵⁰⁾ and subsequently validated by the national technical group established pursuant to the 30 June 2015 decree.

The technical-institutional decision to create a national benchmark, organised along the lines of job descriptors, has made it possible to construct a shared system of technical elements around which to establish the processes for assessing the relevance of the needs of the labour market to the competences already described in the national repertory and development of the same, if necessary.

The qualifications in the national repertory correspond to a series of elements that constitute the minimum national standard. These elements are:

- reference to the public awarding body;
- description of competences in terms of skills, know-how, autonomy and responsibility;
- referencing to the economic activity statistical codes (ATECO) and the nomenclature and classification of occupations (CP-ISTAT), in compliance with national statistical system laws;
- referencing to the NQF/EQF.

These elements are compulsory for all qualifications for the purpose of validation and certification within the national system of certification of competences, as well as for the purposes of portability in a European context. With regard to this last point, the descriptors of the Job atlas are referenced to NQF levels and are the only benchmarks for comparing qualifications issued by the different public awarding bodies.

The national system of certification of competences is designed to be integrated with and complementary to the public lifelong learning offer, in order to favour development of the cultural and professional skills acquired by individuals in formal and non-formal learning contexts and the portability of qualifications in both national and European contexts, even in terms of geographical and professional mobility. The entire technical institutional system that has been developed since 2013 is the single benchmark for organisation of assessment

⁽⁵⁰⁾ The most representative public and private subjects on a national level, employer and trade union representatives, Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Craft and Agriculture system.

tests, basically designed to ascertain the possession of competences, in line with Article 3, paragraph 1 of Legislative Decree 13 dated 16 January 2013 ⁽⁵¹⁾.

The technical-institutional choices that have made it possible to proceed with implementation of the minimum standards for definition of the outcomes of learning contained in the job atlas and the NQF are described in brief below.

Both components of the national repertory are anchored to the definition of competence intended as the proven ability to use – in a work, study or professional and personal development situations – a complex set of skills and know-how acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. The job atlas contains descriptions of one or more expected outcomes for each of the 840 areas of activity which make up the classification of economic and professional sectors ⁽⁵²⁾. These express the outcome of an activity or a set of activities of a specific area of activity and include indications on the expected product/service, on the service to be provided, on any input elements and on the context and complexities expressed in terms of autonomy and responsibility. In the same way, the NQF provides the reference parameter to define and/or evaluate the elements useful for expressing the minimum expected outcomes, in relation to a specific qualification, in terms of what individuals should know and be capable of doing in relation to each of the eight levels that characterise the increasing complexity of learning for each of the descriptors of the competence (know-how, skills, autonomy and responsibility).

It is clear that the results of learning now represent the national key parameter with all the necessary elements to link the national lifelong learning system with the labour market (VET offer, services related to the certification of competences, wherever and however acquired). In its turn this system can favour a virtuous circle of feedback, from the updating of the content of jobs and professions (expected outcomes of the Job atlas) and the elements that express the minimum expected outcomes of exercising the skills to the know-how acquired during the lifelong learning process (NQF levels), which can favour the development of those competences directly linked with the demands expressed by the labour market and are assessable on the basis of minimum standard parameters shared on a national level.

⁽⁵¹⁾ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2013/02/15/13G00043/sg>

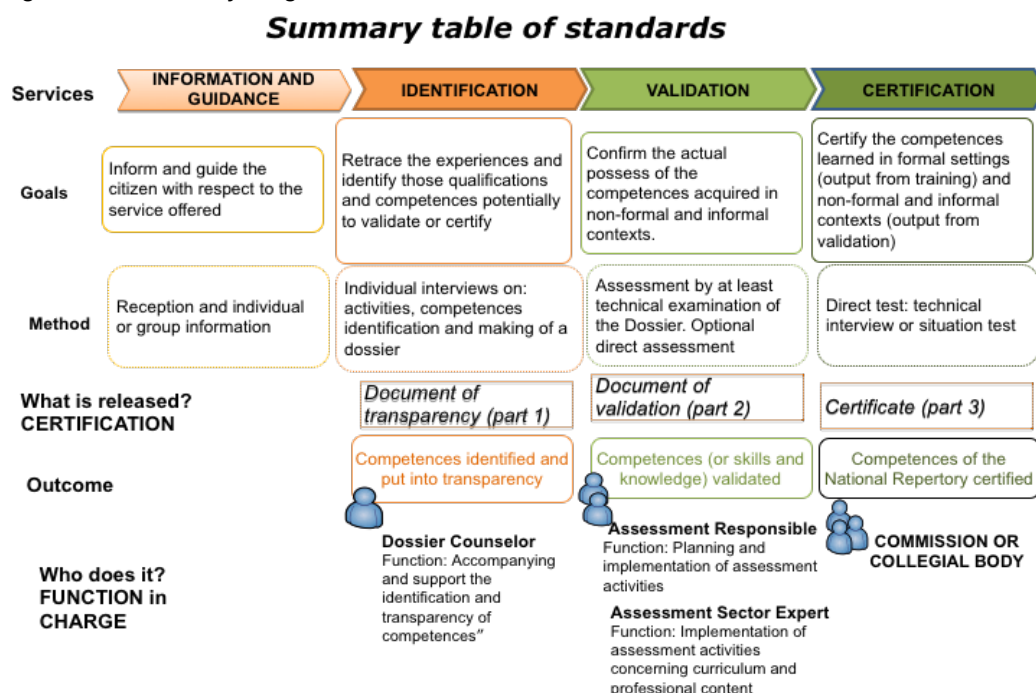
⁽⁵²⁾ Sole technical benchmark for the description of the content of jobs and professions, obtained thanks to integrated development of the Classification of Economic Activities (ATECO) and the Classification of Occupations (CP) and featuring 23 economic and professional sectors, with the addition of another sector described as a 'common area'.

3.3 Recognition of prior learning

The national effort for the validation of non-formal and informal learning had begun before the Legislative Decree 13/2013 on the National system of certification of competences and the inter-ministerial decree of June 2015 which defined an operational framework for the recognition of regional qualifications.

The Decree also defined the meta-organisation of the process of identifying and validating competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning, the nature, type and format of issuable certificates, professional and operational functions connected to each phase and the minimum standards that characterise evaluation processes. Figure 13 summarises the system rules as these are presented in the abovementioned legal framework.

Figure 13. Summary diagram of the identification, validation and certification standards



Source: MIUR-MLPS (2018), *Implementazione in Italia della Raccomandazione del Consiglio 'Percorsi di miglioramento del livello delle competenze: nuove opportunità per gli adulti'*

Though Italy's legislative framework for validation of non-formal and informal learning is solid and coherent, critical issues related to the concrete implementation of services to citizens remain: e.g. training of service providers, promotion of the services themselves, achievement of a balance between quality/reliability and economic sustainability of procedures, assessment of the impact and benefits for the beneficiaries of the service, and for companies and sectors, the community and the national system.

The Italian regions are the main hub for VET services including validation and certification of non-formal and informal learning, contextualising and differentiating tools and approaches. However, different phases of advancement of regional policies and practices on this theme can still be seen, highlighting the need, now more than ever, to maintain national legislative and institutional framework in order to protect the reliability of procedures and therefore continue to ensure equal opportunities for end users. The legislative framework, fully outlined in 2015, is a step towards the coordination of regional rules and services for validating and certifying competences. In some cases, these have already been implemented and have been accessible for broad categories of beneficiaries: in this regard, we should mention the systems already activated in the regions of Emilia-Romagna, Piedmont, Tuscany, Lombardy, Umbria, Aosta Valley and Veneto. Meanwhile, some regions have implemented the indications of the 2015 decree and in 2016 adopted provisions to regulate validation and certification services. These include Basilicata, the autonomous province of Bolzano, Campania, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Lazio, Liguria, Apulia, Sardinia and the autonomous province of Trento. The remaining regions – Abruzzo, Calabria, Marche, Molise and Sicily – are still in the standardisation phase.

Alongside legislative compliance, the organisation of services that require particular, non-immediate organisational and operational effort is progressing at the same pace. It requires more time before reaching stabilisation as it brings into play a plurality of services and stakeholders, as well as new organisational setups.

The training of those providing validation services is of critical importance. The Decree of 30 June 2015 ⁽⁵³⁾ also included measures relating to the functions required for providing validation and certification services.

In other words:

- accompanying and supporting identification of the competences and making them transparent;
- planning and implementation of assessment activities;
- implementation of assessment activities on aspects relating to curricula and professional contents.

We should point out that, that regions (as awarding bodies) guarantee the quality of criteria and methods used for the recruitment of personnel entrusted with validation/certification duties, in compliance with the principles of collegiality, neutrality, impartiality and independence. In those regions where the system is fully operational providers competence training is implemented, whereas where

⁽⁵³⁾ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/07/20/15A05469/sg>

work is still ongoing to make services operational, the debate on professional resources is part of a more general framework regarding system standards.

To help develop and raise awareness on the matter, INAPP has prepared a multimedia training package, which has been designed in an open-source environment (Moodle) and provided on a Massive Online Open Courses (MOOC) platform, to transfer all the useful information, know-how, methodologies and tools for effective management of the various phases of the process by those providing validation/certification services.

More information is available at Cedefop's European database on validation of non-formal and informal learning ⁽⁵⁴⁾.

3.4 Quality Assurance

Within the education and training system, the various segments and pathways are accountable to different competent bodies on matters relating to quality assurance.

3.4.1 Upper-secondary education and higher technical education

The education ministry is responsible for issuing the legislative framework for education and training; schools providing upper-secondary education pathways are either state-run or officially-recognised schools with organisational, educational, financial and research autonomy (in compliance with relevant legislative framework).

A National Evaluation System (SNV- *Sistema nazionale di valutazione*) was established by Presidential Decree 80/2013 with the aim of evaluating the efficiency and efficacy of the national education and training system (*Sistema educativo nazionale di istruzione e formazione*), contextualising evaluation on an international level.

At least every three years, the education ministry issues strategic priorities on the evaluation of the education system which, with reference to the vocational education and training system, are defined further by guidelines adopted in agreement with the State-regions conference, in accordance with the labour ministry⁽⁵⁵⁾.

The National Institute for the Educational Evaluation of Instruction and Training (INVALSI - *Istituto nazionale per la valutazione del sistema di istruzione e formazione*) operates within the national evaluation system. Its primary tasks are:

⁽⁵⁴⁾ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/european-database-on-validation-of-non-formal-and-informal-learning>

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Presidential Decree 80/2013, Article 2, paragraph 4.

1. to guarantee the functional coordination of the national evaluation system;
2. to propose evaluation protocols and plan visits to schools by external evaluation units;
3. to define efficiency and efficacy indicators to identify the school and training institutes that require support and need to be externally evaluated as a priority;
4. to make tools for realising actions linked to evaluation available to individual schools and training facilities;
5. to define indicators for the evaluation of school directors;
6. to handle the selection, training and inclusion on special lists of external evaluation unit experts;
7. to draft a periodical report on the education and training system;
8. to take part in international surveys and other initiatives relating to evaluation.

A key role for improving the quality of the system is played by INDIRE, which provides support to schools in defining and implementing plans to improve the quality of the training provision and the acquisition of learning outcomes by learners. Schools and training institutes adopt such plans autonomously. In order to fulfil its mission, INDIRE supports innovation in processes and focus on the use and diffusion of new technologies, activates research projects for the improvement of didactics, as well as interventions linked to consultancy and the training of teaching, administrative and managerial staff.

According to Article 6 of Presidential Decree 80/2016 the evaluation procedure of schools and training institutes is organised in four phases:

- *self-evaluation*: 1. self-analysis and verification of the service provided based on the data made available by the Ministry's own information system, surveys on learning and data on added value provided by INVALSI, as well as other significant elements integrated by the school itself; 2. drafting of a self-evaluation report in electronic format, based on a reference framework provided by INVALSI, and formulation of an improvement plan;
- *external evaluation*: 1. identification of the situations to be evaluated, based on the efficiency and efficacy indicators defined by INVALSI; 2. unit visits; 3. redefinition of improvement plans based on the outcomes of the analysis carried out by the units;
- *improvement actions*: definition and implementation of improvement interventions, including those with the support of INDIRE or through collaboration with universities, research bodies, professional and cultural associations;

- *social accountability*: publication and dissemination of the achieved results, using indicators and comparable data, both for transparency purposes but also to promote improved services for the community.

The national evaluation system comprises the evaluation of school directors and the evaluation of learning, carried out by INVALSI through periodical and systematic checks on the skills and know-how of students and the overall quality of the training provision by all education and training providers.

3.4.2 Professional training interventions funded by the regions and autonomous provinces

These interventions are the responsibility of the regions and autonomous provinces that regulate quality assurance tools through 21 Regional laws, within the common framework defined by the State-Regions Conference.

The professional qualifications and diplomas of regional initial 3-year and 4-year training pathways (IeFP) are recognised and used both at national and community levels as they are included in a commonly shared by the State and regions special national repertory ⁽⁵⁶⁾. With reference to the Recommendations of the European Parliament and the Council on the establishment of a European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) ⁽⁵⁷⁾ (and the establishment of a European Quality Assurance reference framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) ⁽⁵⁸⁾, a recent decree ⁽⁵⁹⁾ implemented a process for reviewing 5-year and IeFP pathways.

In relation to the responsibilities of the regions and autonomous provinces, various initiatives have been undertaken relating both to the system and the infrastructure. All initiatives used the European Recommendation on quality assurance as reference point, aiming to create an Italian vocational training quality assurance model.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Agreements 27.7.2011 and 19.1.2012

⁽⁵⁷⁾ European Parliament; Council of the European Union; (2017). Council recommendation of 22.6.2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23.4.2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=EN)

⁽⁵⁸⁾ European Parliament; Council of the European Union (2009). Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training. Official Journal of the European Union, C 155, 18.6.2009, pp. 1-10.

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009H0708\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009H0708(01)&from=EN)

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Decree 61 dated 13.4.2017.

Mechanisms for planning regional training offer on the basis of the analysis of the territorial needs are a key, quality assurance, element of the regional vocational training system. Regions draw up long-term programmes and annual implementation plans for education and vocational education and training activities, which are presented to the social partners for discussion. For vocational training funded through the ESF, provisions and procedures that characterise the use of structural funds are followed through.

To respond to the information requirements which are the basis for correct planning, the labour ministry supports the information intelligence on professions, fuelled by a plurality of surveys (sample survey of professions, audit on skilled labour needs, excelsior anticipated company recruitment survey), which are constantly updated:

- analytical representation of the characteristics of the professions and job contents;
- professional consolidation requirements expressed by companies;
- anticipated recruitment by companies;
- anticipation of changes in professional characteristics and job contents;
- economic and employment scenarios in the activity sectors in the near future.

To guarantee the comparability and complementarity of the various sources of information, the system uses the Classification of Occupations (CP2011), which uses the updates introduced by the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), as a communication protocol.

Vocational training activities are planned with reference to the learning outcome standards relevant for each professional profile which are specified in terms of competences, contained in regional inventories valid specific territories. The benchmark standards for 3- and 4-year leFP and (IFTS), as well as non-university higher education (ITS), have been defined in State-regions agreements and are therefore valid nationally.

The same training standards apply to apprenticeship pathways, for qualifications offered by the entire secondary and tertiary vocational education and training system. The definition of professional standards for vocational apprenticeships is subject to collective bargaining.

The most important and recent legislative framework created with the aim to overcome the problem of the territorial validity of the qualifications issued in much of the regional vocational training offer and in order to promote a system for the recognition, validation and certification of competences regardless of how they are acquired, can be summarised as follows:

- Legislative decree 13/2013 which defines the minimum standards of the national system of certification of competences and validation of informal

and non-formal learning, which defines the general legislation and the essential levels of services for identifying and validating informal and non-formal learning and the minimum service standards of the national system of certification of competences and establishes the national repertory;

- inter-ministerial decree dated 30 June 2015 defines an operational framework for recognising regional qualifications and relevant competences at national level (part of the national repertory).

The operational framework is part of the national inventory relating to regional qualifications. It is the reference for the identification, validation and certification of the qualifications and competences in terms of training credit. The cornerstone of the provision is the National reference framework of regional qualifications ⁽⁶⁰⁾. This is organised around two integrated databanks which are the regional qualifications repertory, the systematic collection of almost 4 000 qualifications issued by the regions and autonomous provinces, and the job atlas, a map of the processes, activities and products/services of the labour market and the professions built on an evolution of statistical classifications (economic activities - ATECO and classification of occupations - CP ISTAT/ISFOL 2011). These make it possible to establish equivalent values and attribute national usability to qualifications contained in regional inventories.

The accreditation of training facilities is another key tool supporting the quality assurance of the regional training system. Accreditation verifies the *ex-ante* satisfaction of certain prerequisites and recognises the eligibility of a body that provides training, guidance, and certification or placement services, on the basis of pre-defined qualitative-quantitative standards. Thanks to accreditation, a training structure is entitled to use public funds for the provision of the abovementioned services.

Accreditation is a consolidated tool defined by regional administrations with reference to a national model adopted by the agreement of the permanent conference for relations between the State, the regions and the autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano in March 2008. Starting with Legislative Decree 150/2015 ⁽⁶¹⁾, which defined the guidelines for the accreditation of the training bodies thanks to a State-regions conference agreement, the labour ministry proposed to the regions and autonomous provinces to reflect on the theme.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ https://atlantelavoro.inapp.org/atlante_repertori.php

⁽⁶¹⁾ Legislative Decree 150/2015. See especially Article 3
<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/09/23/15G00162/sg..>

3.4.3 Continuing training interventions funded by inter-professional funds

Joint inter-professional funds (see section 2.2.5), are also quality assurance tools. In April 2018, the 'Guidelines on managing financial resources attributed to inter-professional funds for Continuing Learning' ⁽⁶²⁾ defined:

- operational principles and practices for inter-professional funds, as well as new parameters in relation to management methods and criteria for the resources allocated to the inter-professional funds;
- specific procedures to improve the legislative framework (acting as point of reference);
- minimum quality standards to be agreed between the labour ministry and the inter-professional funds.

INAPP has supported since 2006 in its function as the national reference point (EQAVET NRP) for the quality assurance of vocational education and training the implementation of the EQAVET recommendation. EQAVET NRP uses European and national funding to support the update of the national approaches to quality assurance in VET and to develop instruments and tools which promote a quality assurance culture in national and regional bodies, for teachers, trainers and learners. Closer cooperation with education ministry, social partners and stakeholders for revision of the national approach has been achieved under the NRP umbrella and supervision of the labour ministry. The 'National plan for the quality of education and training' ⁽⁶³⁾ was revised and approved by the State and the regions on 21 December 2017. The plan represents a framework which allows for territorial differentiations, in accordance with the autonomy of the regions. It aims to reduce and prevent training failure and dropout through the continuous improvement of the training supply chain, as well as the promotion of a quality culture.

⁽⁶²⁾ Guidelines on the management of financial resources attributed to joint inter-professional funds for continuing learning, pursuant to Article 118 of Law 388 dated 23.12.2000.

⁽⁶³⁾ <https://inapp.org/it/eqavet/pianonazionalequalit%C3%A0>

CHAPTER 4.

Promoting participation in VET

4.1 Incentives for VET learners

The legislative provisions that govern lifelong learning in Italy promote different types of training initiatives (see 2.2 and 2.3).

Through the funding provided by Law 236/1993 and the ESF regional operational programmes, regions and autonomous provinces fund personalised training programmes, vouchers for tailored training interventions .

Thanks to the funding provided by Law 53/2000, the regions and autonomous provinces have financed training projects for individual workers by allocating tailored vouchers and leave for training, acknowledging the right of the worker to permanent lifelong training.

Finally, thanks to the funding allocated by Law 388/2000 (Article 118) ⁽⁶⁴⁾ and subsequent modifications, the 'inter-professional funds for Continuing Learning' finance tailored individual training plans and vouchers for managers.

In 2017, some regions funded tools such as endowment, which consists in a nominal monetary amount that the beneficiary can use on the services included in a tailored intervention programme drawn up in agreement with public or private operators accredited to provide such services. The amount of the endowment varies, depending on the employability level of the beneficiary and on the services included in the individual programme. The amount is never paid to the beneficiary directly.

The same year, the region of Tuscany funded individual training vouchers targeting managers, directors and young professionals. The use of this tool is ideal for those able to autonomously choose and orient their training. Vouchers for managers aim to favour training for skills and know-how useful to the enterprise when making choices linked to technological, organisational and managerial innovation and business models in order to develop the Industry 4.0 paradigm. Vouchers for young professionals (self-employed under 40 years of age) aim to support the training of professionals starting their career and facing economic difficulty in fulfilling their training obligations or accessing training opportunities useful for activating resources functional to adaptation and relaunching, especially at times of crisis. Tuscany has also experimented with re-employment cheques (*assegni di ricollocazione*), integrating them with training

⁽⁶⁴⁾ <https://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/00388/02.htm>

vouchers and recruitment incentives. The initiative targets the unemployed, whether or not in receipt of social security benefits, and the economically inactive people. The training activities that can be funded using the voucher system envisage both pathways for qualifying and certifying skills relating to one or more segments of a certain profile and regulated training (qualifications, certificates, etc.). After training it will be possible to spend re-employment cheques to purchase services for assistance with reintegration. The scheme envisages a service pact after the voucher has been granted.

The regions of Piedmont and Liguria have funded individual learning activities using standard individual training vouchers for employed workers (with a maximum of EUR 3 000 euro per capita).

In 2017, in the south of Italy, the region of Apulia funded individual vouchers for the employed, the unemployed and those in a state of non-employment (that is, earners of incomes below the taxable threshold), to be spent on standard regional training offers. The pathways funded with vouchers (with a maximum duration of 400 hours) focus on basic or transversal skills (English, basic IT skills, communication skills) or regulated training (authorisations, certificates, qualifications) or on technical-professional skills, with reference to the professional skills present in the Regional Repertory.

In 2017, tailored individual training courses were financed by inter-professional funds for salaried workers with temporary, permanent or apprenticeship contracts, and for training vouchers, to favour the access of SME employees to standard training courses. Between 2008/16 18 000 individual training programmes were funded through this channel, for approximately 42 000 projects that concerned approximately 90 000 workers and 40 000 enterprises.

4.2 Incentives for VET enterprises

4.2.1 Tax credit for 4.0 training and enterprise vouchers for lifelong learning

Alongside individual training vouchers, several Italian regions (for example, Piedmont and Liguria) also fund standard enterprise training vouchers (for varying amounts, depending on the size of the enterprise). Enterprise vouchers are a simplified management method for small enterprises for which the organisation of training courses is usually difficult.

In 2018, a new measure known as 'Tax credit for enterprises investing in Industry 4.0 training' (*Credito d'imposta per le imprese che investono in formazione Industry 4.0*) was introduced. It works on a national level, grants tax credit to enterprises that prove they have spent on training activities related to technological skills defined in the Industry 4.0 National plan.

The 2018 Budget Law established that tax credit for Industry 4.0 training is granted to enterprises covering 40% of the expenses related to the corporate

cost of salaried personnel, for the time they spend in training activities. The sum can amount to a maximum of EUR 300 000 per year for each enterprise and is granted for training activities stipulated thanks to corporate or territorial collective contracts. Only training activities related to digital technology (e.g. big data and data analysis, cloud and fog computing, cyber security, cyber-physical systems, rapid prototyping, visualisation and augmented reality systems, advanced and collaborative robotics, etc.) are eligible for tax credit.

Training undertaken by employees should end with certification. Tax credit should be indicated in the income tax return for the tax year in which the costs were sustained.

The measure is managed by the economic development ministry, in agreement with the labour ministry and the finance ministry.

4.2.2 Apprenticeship

Employers willing to offer apprenticeships can benefit from several incentives. They can hire an apprentice at an entry grade level up to two levels lower than the final qualification to be obtained and/or pay a salary equal to a percentage of the salary of a qualified worker, according to the provisions of the collective agreement applied. They can take advantage of a reduction in social security contributions, according to the enterprise size. Companies with up to nine employees (micro enterprises) are exempt from paying social security contributions (100%) for the first three years of the contract ⁽⁶⁵⁾. In the fourth year they will pay 10% of taxable social security contributions. Companies with more than nine employees pay a contribution, for the entire duration of the apprenticeship, equal to 11.61% of the taxable social security contribution.

Enterprises that recruit young people on a Type 1 apprenticeship contract are totally exempt from social security payments for the hours the apprentice spends on external training, whilst for the duration of on-the-job training they are granted a substantial reduction in the social security payments owed.

Law 232/2016 introduced financial incentives for companies involved in dual learning. To facilitate the recruitment of young people on a permanent contract in the same company where they were on alternance contracts or types 1 or 3 apprenticeship, certain types of enterprises (with fewer than 10 employees, etc.) are entitled to total social security exemption for the first three years. Companies recruiting apprentices on mobility lists or receiving unemployment allowance can benefit from a subsidised contributory scheme, corresponding to 10% of the salary for 18 months.

⁽⁶⁵⁾This measure was introduced by Law 92/2012 (<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2012/07/03/012G0115/sg>) and refers to apprentices hired between 1.1.2012 and 31.12.2016.

4.3 Guidance and counselling

In the context of Law 150/2015 ⁽⁶⁶⁾, which concerns reorganisation of the system of employment services and active labour policies, it has been established that Italian employment agencies (*centri per l'impiego*) should offer the following specific activities relating to guidance and counselling services:

- basic guidance, analysis of competences in relation to the local labour market and profiling;
- help for job-seeking, including through group sessions, within three months of registration;
- specialist and tailored guidance using competence assessment and needs analysis in terms of training, work experience or other active employment policy measures, with reference to adaptation of the profile to the demand for labour expressed on a territorial, national and European level;
- tailored guidance to self-employment and mentoring through the subsequent start-up phases;
- job placement, even through the use of the tailored outplacement indemnity (*assegno individuale di ricollocazione*).

4.5 Key challenges and development opportunities

Italy has taken significant steps since 2015 towards the reform of its apprenticeship system and has introduced compulsory alternance in upper secondary VET. Initiatives were put into place to secure employers' involvement in work-based learning, taking the form of specific agreements and incentives. Measures have been taken to enhance quality assurance mechanisms for IVET and CVET. A more integrated National approach for quality in education and training, coherent with the EQAVET framework, has been adopted by the state and the regions as a tool to reduce school failure and early school leaving. Significant progress has also been made towards a national qualifications framework and a national common approach to validation. A national strategy to support the development of key competences in initial VET has been launched and legislative and pilot measures to support initial and continuing training for VET school teachers are implemented.

The country's policy priorities for the 2016-20 period in line with Riga conclusions are, more or less, addressed.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/09/23/15G00162/sg>

The reforms promote equality and fair opportunities, along with quality, efficacy and efficiency, and also provide for measures such as:

- school autonomy and a learner-centred education system focus on competences and learning outcomes;
- three-year planning of the training offer to enhance competences, including plurilingual, digital and entrepreneurial skills;
- work-based learning and territorial workshops, even open in the afternoon, to be used as tools to combat early school leaving and provide guidance;
- support for teachers, trainers, school leaders and other educational staff through a National training programme and individual benefits for training;
- support in the creation of digital and innovative learning environments.

The European objectives of the ET 2020 strategic framework ⁽⁶⁷⁾ have played a key role in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of national education and training systems designed to raise the skills level of the workforce and address the imbalance between the supply and demand for skills in the labour market. They have also helped foster social inclusion and equality through education and training, reaching the most disadvantaged to prevent social exclusion and discrimination and ensuring quality education and training for all learners.

However, for the remaining period prior to 2020, there are still some country priorities and challenges to tackle:

- integrating the training and employment of young people within a dual system by reinforcing apprenticeships;
- reinforcing apprenticeship for higher training/education;
- simplifying current legislation and boost the appeal of apprenticeship for enterprises;
- developing innovative pedagogical methodologies;
- reducing early leaving from education and training;
- training teachers and trainers;
- promoting the assessment of education and training outcomes (processes and results) through implementation of a national plan for quality assurance in education and training and in line with the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training recommendation⁽⁶⁸⁾;

⁽⁶⁷⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework_en

⁽⁶⁸⁾ European Parliament; Council of the European Union (2009). Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18.6.2009 on the establishment of a European

- training staff involved in all stages and procedures of the validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- increasing public awareness of the potential benefits of validation of non-formal and informal learning especially to those target groups who could benefit most;
- improving cost-effectiveness of validation of non-formal and informal learning procedures;
- improving monitoring of VET outcomes and adjust VET provision to each learner's training needs;
- developing evaluative analytical tools on the impact of training policies.

Regarding specifically continuing vocational training the following challenges and issues should be addressed:

- developing further the already existing skills forecasting tools and methods and better match training provision to skills needs;
- supporting workers' participation in training, eliminate obstacles that prevent them from training, and motivate the most vulnerable workers, in particular the low-skilled and over 50s to participate in training activities;
- improving the capacity of training providers to offer programmes that enhance technological and in particular digital skills;
- strengthening the involvement of the social partners in corporate decisions relating to training;
- consolidating the certification of skills acquired through continuing vocational training;
- improving coordination and networking between the various stakeholders involved in lifelong learning at national and regional level.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

ATI	Temporary Association of Enterprises - <i>Associazione Temporanea di Impresa</i>
ATS	Temporary Purpose Association - <i>Associazione Temporanea di Scopo</i> -
CPIA	Provincial Adult Education Centres - <i>Centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti</i>
CTP	Permanent Territorial Centres - <i>Centri Territoriali Permanenti</i>
IeFP	Vocational Education and Training- <i>Istruzione e formazione professionale</i>
IFTS	Higher Technical Education and Training - <i>Istruzione e Formazione Tecnica Superiore</i>
INAPP	National Institute for Public Policy Analysis - <i>Istituto Nazionale per l'Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche</i>
INPS	National Institute of Social Insurance- <i>Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale</i>
INVALSI	National Institute for the Evaluation of the School System - <i>Istituto nazionale per la valutazione del sistema di istruzione e formazione</i>
ISFOL	Institute for the Development of Vocational Training of Workers - <i>Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione professionale dei Lavoratori</i>
ITS	Higher Technical Education - <i>Istruzione Tecnica Superiore</i>
MIUR	Ministry of Education, Universities and Research- <i>Ministero dell'Istruzione Università e Ricerca</i>
MIUR – DG CASIS	MIUR, Directorate-General for Contracts, Purchases and Information Systems and Statistics - <i>Direzione Generale per i Contratti, gli Acquisti e per i Sistemi Informativi e la Statistica</i>
MLPS	Ministry of Labour and Social Policies - <i>Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali</i>
USR	Regional School Office - <i>Ufficio Scolastico Regionale</i>

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