



VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

ITALY

SYSTEM DESCRIPTION



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 - post-secondary, 1-year long higher technical education and training (istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore, IFTS) ISCED 453 programmes leading to EQF level 4 high technical specialisation certificate (certificato di specializzazione tecnica superiore).
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CHAPTER 1.

Summary of main elements and distinctive features of VET

Summary of main elements

Vocational education and training (VET) is characterised by multilevel governance with broad involvement of national, regional and local stakeholders. Ministries of education and labour lay down general rules and common principles for the system. VET schools are in charge of upper secondary VET school pathways (EQF 4-ISCED 354). Regions and autonomous provinces are in charge of VET programmes and most apprenticeship-type schemes. Social partners contribute in defining and creating active employment policies relevant to VET and lifelong learning.

Compulsory education lasts 10 years, up to age 16. At age 14 learners make a choice between general education, secondary VET school pathways and regional IVET pathways (*Istruzione e Formazione Professionale*, IeFP). They have the 'right/duty' (*diritto/dovere*) to stay in education until age 18 to accomplish 12 years of education and/or vocational qualification.

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

- 5-year programmes at technical schools (*istituti tecnici*) or vocational schools (*istitute professionali*) leading respectively to technical or vocational education diplomas (EQF level 4). Programmes combine general education and VET and can also be delivered in the form of alternance training. Graduates have access to higher education;
- 3-year regional IVET programmes (IeFP) leading to a professional operator certificate (*attestato di qualifica di operatore professionale*, EQF level 3);
- 4-year regional IVET programmes (IeFP) leading to a technician diploma (*diploma professionale di tecnico*, EQF level 4).

All upper secondary education programmes are school based but could be also delivered as apprenticeships (Type 1).

There is permeability across VET programmes and also within the general education system. On completion of a 3-year regional IVET path, it is possible to attend 1 additional year leading to an EQF level 4 vocational diploma; this allows enrolling in the fifth year of the State education system and sitting the State exam for an upper secondary technical or vocational education diploma (EQF level 4).

At post-secondary level, graduates of 5-year upper secondary programmes or 4-year IeFP programmes who passed entrance exams may enrol in

- higher technical education and training courses (*istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore*, IFTS): 1-year post-secondary non-academic programmes leading to a high technical specialisation certificate (*certificato di specializzazione tecnica superiore*, EQF level 4).
- higher technological institute programmes (*istituti tecnologici superiori*; ITS academy): 2-year tertiary non-academic programmes which lead to a high-level technical diploma (*diploma di specializzazione per le tecnologie applicate* - EQF level 5 Implementation of the recently (2022) reformed system of higher technological institutes is ongoing in 2023; it foresees introduction of 3-year programmes leading to an applied technologies qualification (EQF level 6).

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 (upskilling) for the low-skilled; these are provided by provincial centres for adult education (*centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti*, CPIA) under the remit of the education ministry.

Continuing vocational training (CVT) to meet enterprise, sectoral and regional needs is:

- supported by the ESF and is managed by regions and autonomous provinces;
- directly funded by the regions and autonomous provinces;
- financed by joint inter-professional funds, managed by the social partners.

Distinctive features

Italian VET is characterised by multiple institutional actors at national and regional levels.

Article 117 of the Constitution provides for ownership either by the State, the regions or mechanisms for cooperation between the different institutions, relative to the type of education and training: the State establishes general education standards; regions have exclusive legislative power over VET; and education falls within the concurrent legislation, except for the autonomy of education institutions and vocational training.

Ministries of education and labour and the regions define, with formal agreements, matters of common interest with different responsibility levels.

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

CHAPTER 2.

Main challenges and policy responses

The Italian VET system is characterised by multilevel governance that requires effective coordination and synergies. Learner exposure to work-based learning is low, while the labour market is [facing](#) skill shortages and skill gaps at regional level. In this context, new funds are allocated for the expansion of the dual system in regional (IeFP) programmes through quality in-company training /virtual business simulations and career guidance schemes (individualised training plans). In turn, the educational value of IeFP programmes is guaranteed through the [transversal skills and guidance pathways](#) (PCTO) scheme in place in upper secondary.

Supporting participation of adults in learning is high in the policy agenda. The [National Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) (NRRP) includes measures to reform active labour market policies, by implementing essential performance levels and promoting the employability of transitioning and unemployed individuals, particularly those considered vulnerable and distant from the labour market. The plan secures financial incentives and benefits for companies involved in dual training through regional calls for tender. NRRP investments in dual VET aim to facilitate entry of young people into the labour market, including in sectors linked to the digital and green transitions. The plan's ambitious target is to increase the number of participants in dual training from 39 000 (baseline) to 174 000 by 2025.

To tackle the high number of low-skilled people, education and labour authorities are running multiannual national plans for the upskilling of citizens; respectively, the [guaranteeing the skills of the adult population](#) plan for the acquisition of basic and transversal skills in the regions and the [2021-27 Strategic plan for the development of the adult population](#).

The operational plan for 2023 of the National Digital skills strategy provides digital education in schools and continuous training schemes, with emphasis to inclusion initiatives for disadvantaged groups. Focus is given to the digitalisation of SMEs through public-private partnerships. Actions are monitored at both national and regional level to ensure the effectiveness of those initiatives.

The update of the national qualifications framework (QNQ) referenced to the European Qualifications Framework in [2022](#) and implemented in national legislation in 2023, brings all qualification sub-systems together and sets common [criteria](#) for levelling national and regional qualifications. This increases the relevance and transparency of qualifications and facilitates European and international mobility of workers. The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and the Regions work together to ensure that QNQ remains relevant to emerging needs at regional and national levels.

CHAPTER 3.

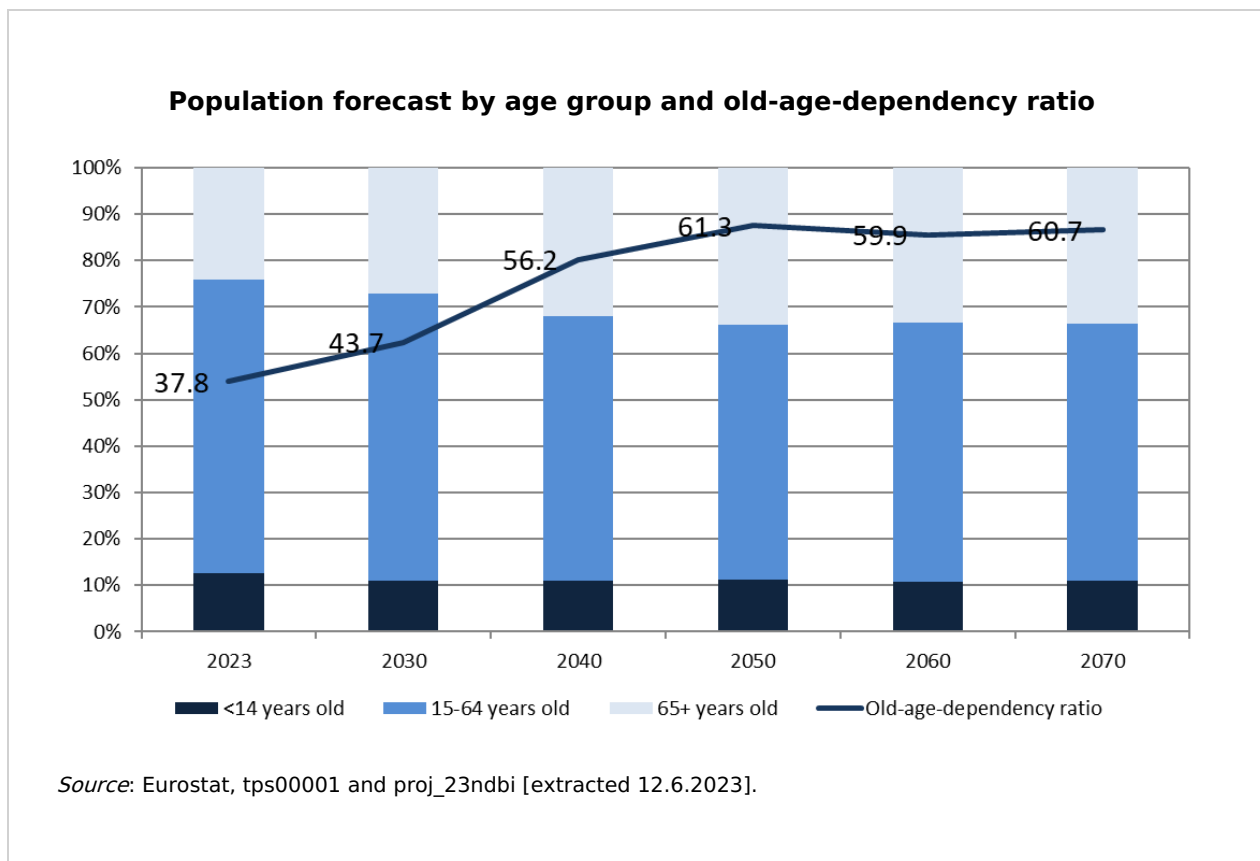
External factors influencing VET

3.1 Demographics

Population in 2022: 59 030 133 (1) .

It decreased since 2017 by 2.6% due to the ageing of the population (2) .

The old-age-dependency ratio is expected to increase from 37.8 in 2023 to 60.7 in 2070.



Demographic trends have an impact on school population, which in the 2020/21 academic year (most recent data available) stood at an overall total of 8 327 187 units and fell by 130 510 enrolments compared to the 2019/20 academic year (-1.5 percentage points), especially at lower secondary level (-20 502 learners). In the same period, the upper secondary school level population has increased (+35 832 learners). The growth in enrolments in upper secondary schools involves both Italians and foreigners.

The decrease in enrolments in the first school levels is in line with the demographic decline in the corresponding age groups, and it is particularly evident among those with Italian citizenship.

If in previous years the increase in members with foreign citizenship managed, although only partially, to compensate for the decline in members with Italian citizenship, in 2020/2021 the

foreign component is also decreasing, due to the Covid-19 pandemic which in 2020 halved migratory flows with foreign countries, which were only partially reactivated in 2021.

The increase in the foreign presence in the Italian school system recorded starting from 2015/16 suffers a setback in 2020/21 and the incidence of foreign students on the total number of students remains stable at 10.3 percent, with limited variations between the different levels: 11.5 percent in nursery schools, 12.0 percent in primary schools, 10.8 percent in lower secondary schools and 8.0 percent in upper secondary schools degree.

3.2 Economics

Most companies in Italy are micro and small-sized (3) .

Total: 4 354 142 enterprises, 17 137 907 employees.

Micro enterprises (0-9 employees): 95.2%

Small enterprises (10-49 employees): 4.2%

Medium enterprises (50-249 employees): 0.5%

Large enterprises (250 and more employees): 0.1%

Main economic sectors in Italy are:

- machinery and equipment;
- metalworking;
- electronics and components;
- chemicals;
- textiles;
- furniture;
- food and beverage;
- construction;
- wholesale and retail trade;
- accommodation and food service activities;
- transport and logistics;
- information and communications;
- financial and insurance activities.

Export is very relevant for Italy and comprises several sectors, mainly machinery and equipment, textiles, furniture, transport equipment and vehicles, metalworking, food and beverage, electronics and components, and others.

The sectors most linked to VET are electronics and components, information and communications, financial and insurance activities, machinery and equipment, transport equipment and vehicles, and chemicals.

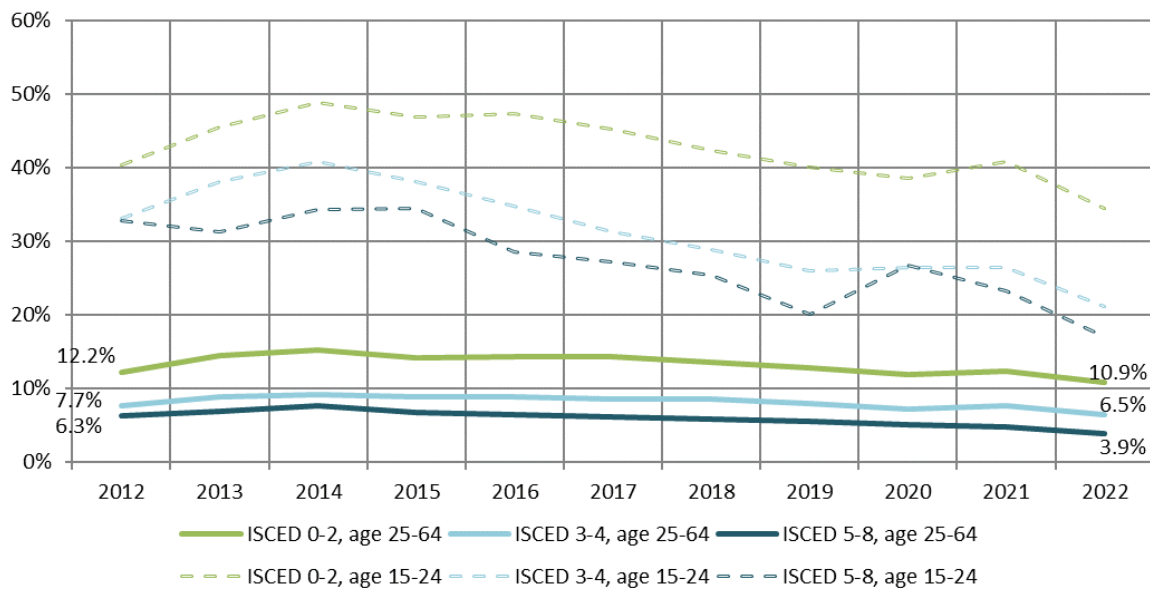
3.3 Labour market

Most occupations and professions are regulated, with the exception of some sectors of self-employment, especially in the southern regions.

In recent years, a series of legislative reforms, inspired by the European principle of flexicurity, have been introduced with the aim of introducing more elements of flexibility into active labour market policies, as well as new social security instruments.

Total unemployment (4) (2022): 7.2% (5.4% in EU-27): it has fallen by 2.3 percentage points since 2018 (5) .

Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2012-2022



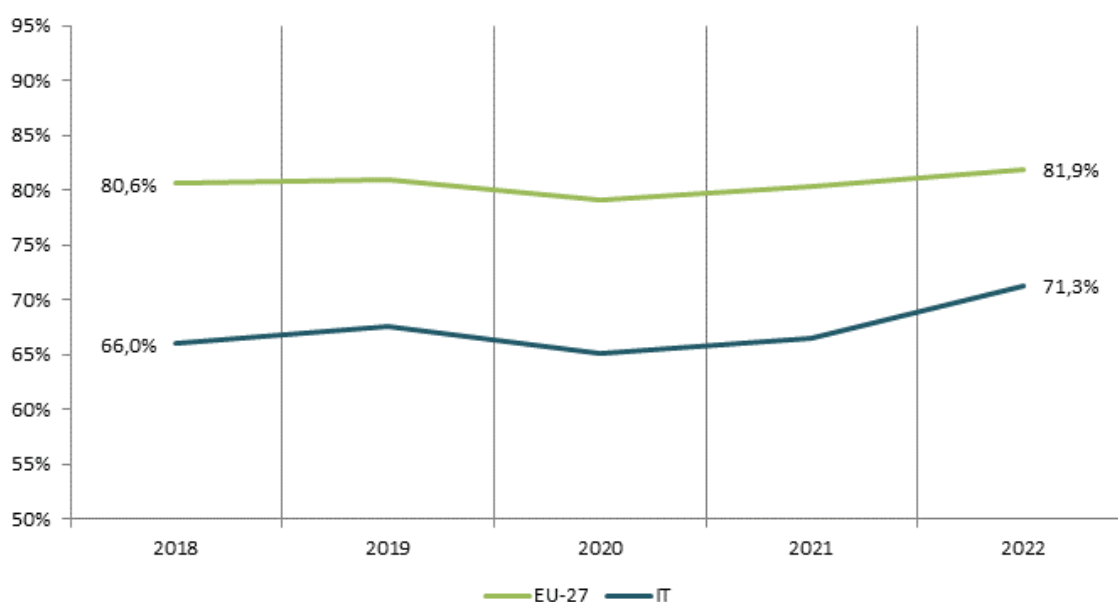
NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series
 ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education.
 ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.
 ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.
 Source: Eurostat, lfsa_urgaed [extracted 12.10.2023].

Unemployment is distributed unevenly between those with low- and high-level qualifications. The gap has increased during the pandemic crisis as unskilled workers are more vulnerable to unemployment.

In 2021, employment increased by 169 thousand units (+0.8%), but did not recover the sharp decline recorded in 2020: the employment rate of the population between 15 and 64 years stands at 58.2 percent, with an increase of 0.8 percentage points equal to half the loss suffered in 2020; this translates into a number of employed people, equal to 22 554 000, more than half a million lower than the pre-pandemic level. The employment rate of 20 to 34 year-old VET graduates increased from 66.0% in 2018 to 71.3% in 2022 (6) .

These changes suggest that VET programs need to be flexible, responsive and aligned with labour market demands. The focus should be on reskilling the workforce, especially vulnerable groups such as unskilled workers, continuously adapting to employment trends. Investing in VET can help close the skills gap, improve employability and support economic recovery in the post-pandemic period.

Employment rate of VET graduates (20 to 34 years old, ISCED levels 3 and 4)



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.
ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.
Source: Eurostat, edat_ifse_24 [extracted 12.6.2023].

The increase (+5.3 pp) in employment of 20 to 34 year-old VET graduates in 2018-22 was slightly higher compared to the increase in employment of all 20 to 34 year-old graduates (+ 5.1 pp) in the same period in Italy (7) .

For more information about the external drivers influencing VET developments in Italy please see the case study from Cedefop's changing nature and role of VET in Europe project (8) .

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- [1] NB: Data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 12.5.2022].
 - [2] NB: Data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 12.5.2022].
 - [4] Percentage of active population, 25 to 64 years old.
 - [5] *Source:* Eurostat, une_rt_a [extracted 6.5.2021].
 - [6] NB: Breaks in time series. *Source:* Eurostat, edat_ifse_24 [extracted 22.10.2023].
 - [7] NB: Breaks in time series. *Source:* Eurostat, edat_ifse_24 [extracted 12.6.2023].

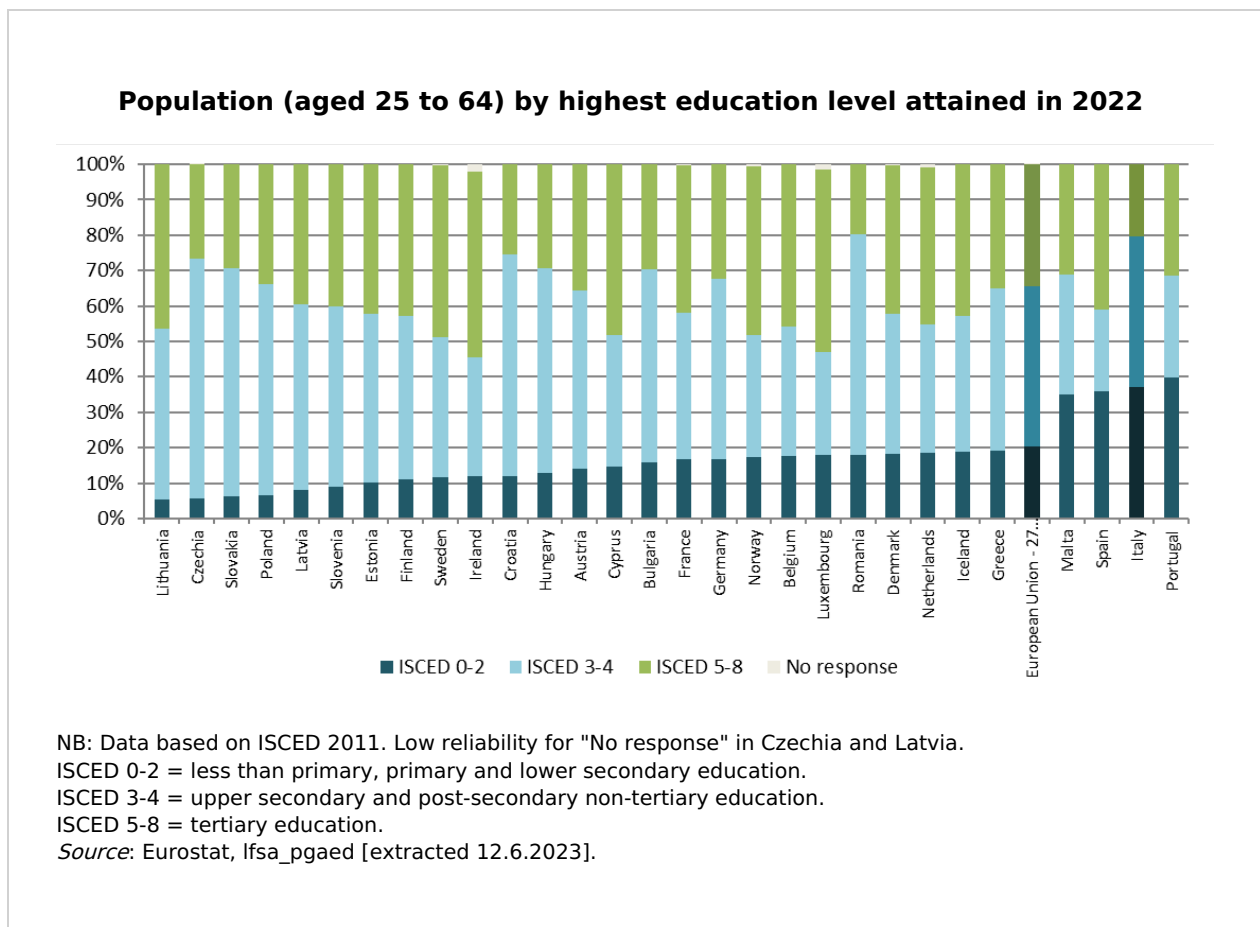
CHAPTER 4.

Education attainment

4.1 Share of high, medium and low level qualifications

Education has high value in Italy. However, the share of the population aged up to 64 with higher education (20.3%) is below the EU-27 average (34.2%). This is also the case for the share of population aged up to 64 with medium qualifications while the gap regarding low qualifications is still very wide. In Italy, there are some contradictions in the relationship between the education and training system and the production system. An example is the low presence of qualified labour in the production system, due mostly to the still fairly low number of graduates compared to other European countries.

Having a higher educational qualification would not appear to have a significant effect on the probability of finding a good job match. Also, over-education is associated with both lower labour productivity and lower job satisfaction.



For more information about VET in higher education in Italy please see the case study from

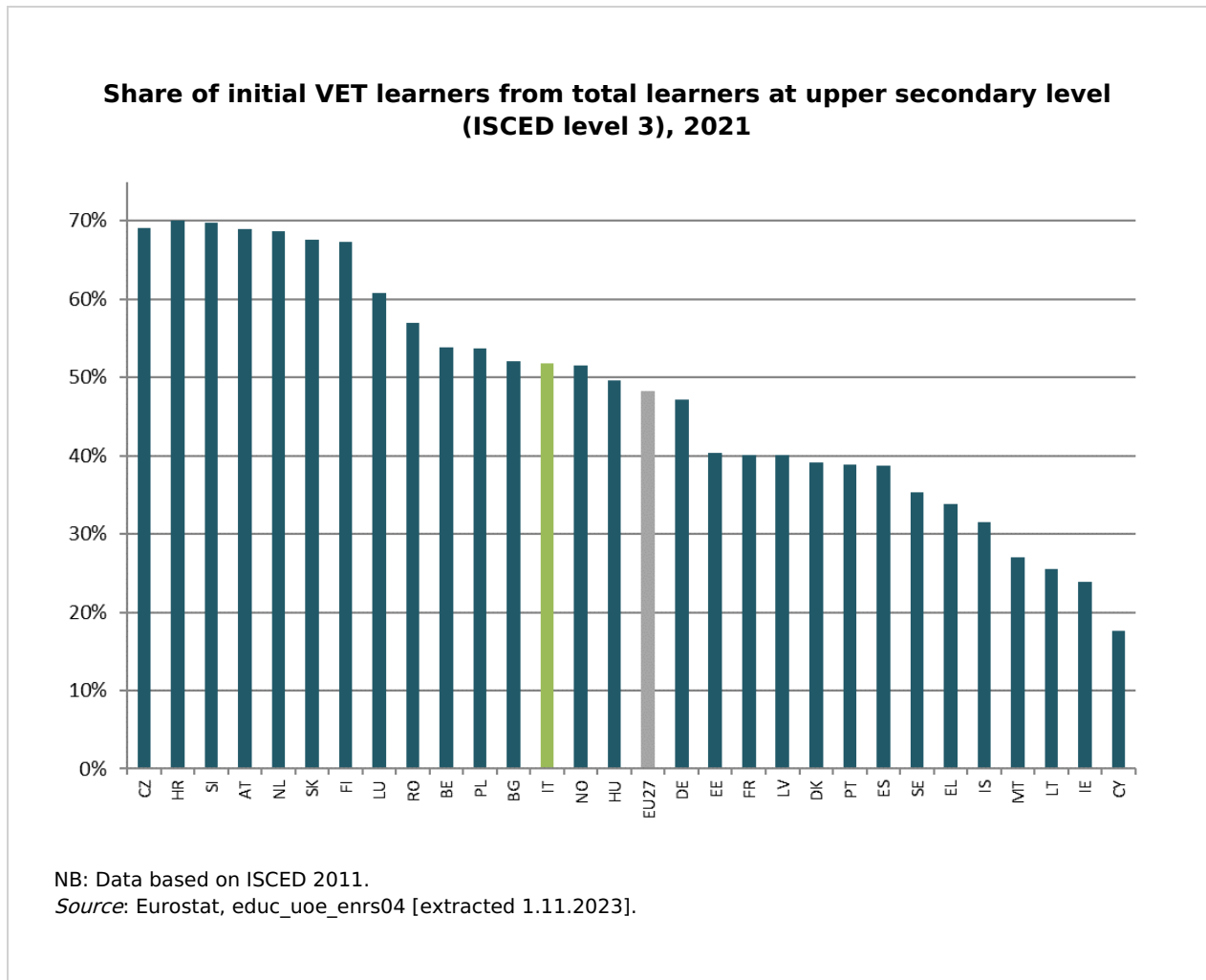
4.3 VET learners by level

Share of learners in VET by level in 2020

| lower secondary | upper secondary | post-secondary |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Not applicable | 52.5% | Not applicable |

NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs01, educ_uoe_enrs04 and educ_uoe_enrs07 [extracted 13.6.2023]



4.4 Female share

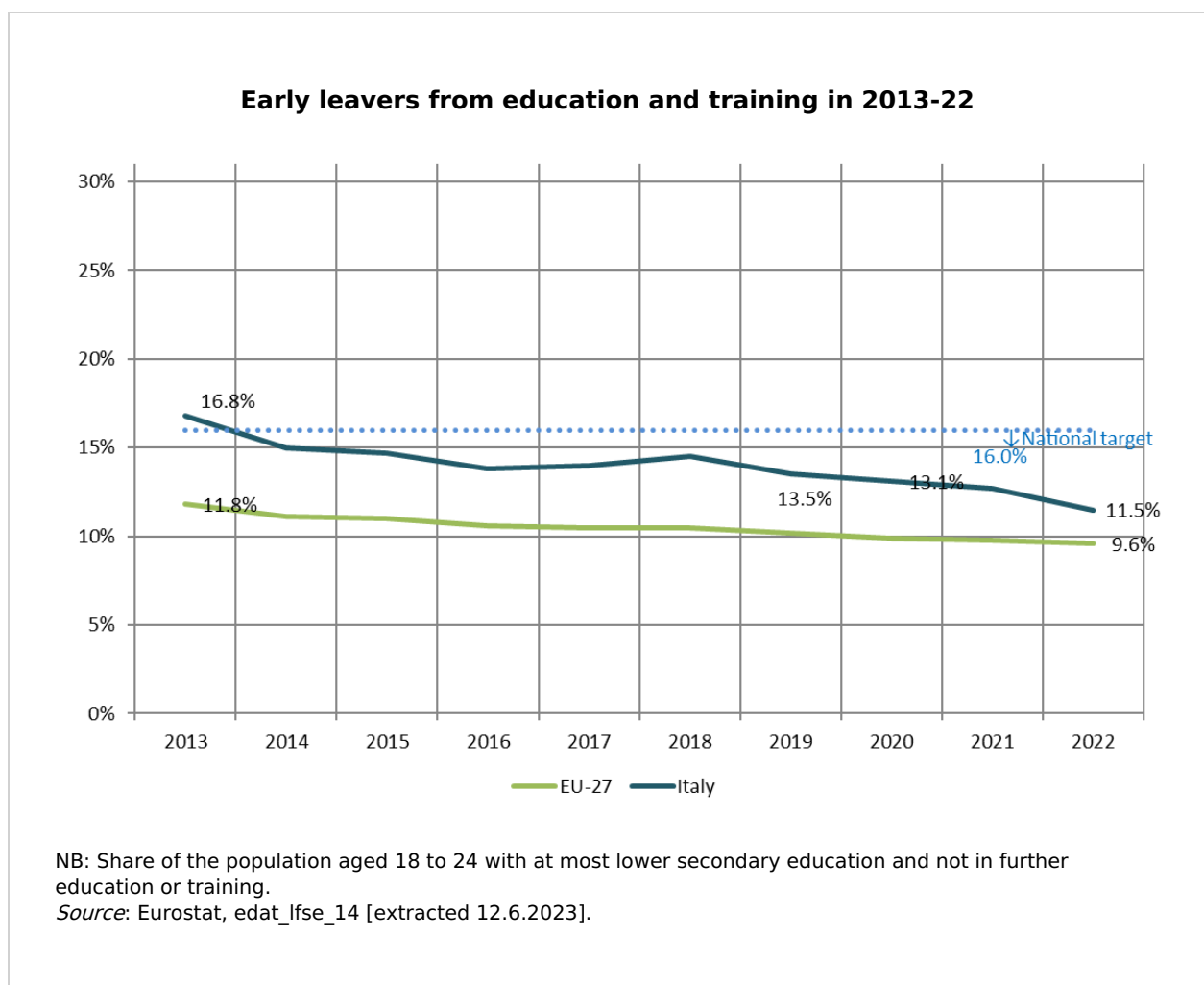
In VET there are 56.8% males compared to 43.2% females (reference year: 2022) (10) .

The educational attainment is as follows: 40.9%, less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2); 34.4%, upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4); 14.6%, tertiary education (levels 5-8) (11) .The study fields (ISCED 2013) that they follow most are: Development and management of IT products and services (31.6%), Mechanical Processing and Machine Production (21.6%), Catering services (21,6%), Marketing,

business development and public relations (20.9%), business and administration (20.9%), Management and provision of beauty treatment and hairdressing services (20.5%), Agricultural, horticultural and forestry crops and construction/maintenance of parks and gardens (17,7%), Installation and maintenance of electrical, plumbing and heating systems (17,1%), Organization, human resources management and safety (17%), Hospitality services (16%), Management of the production, transformation and packaging processes of food products (15,9%), Distribution and wholesale and retail trade of food and non-food products (15,1%), Logistics, shipping and road transport (14,6%), Management of the production process, quality, technical functions and internal logistics (14,5%), Provision of interventions in social services (14,3%), Provision of technical healthcare and parasanitary interventions (13,9%) (12) .

4.5 Early leavers from education and training

The share of early leavers from education and training has decreased from 16.8% in 2013 to 11.5% in 2022. However, it is higher than the EU27 average (9.6% in 2022).



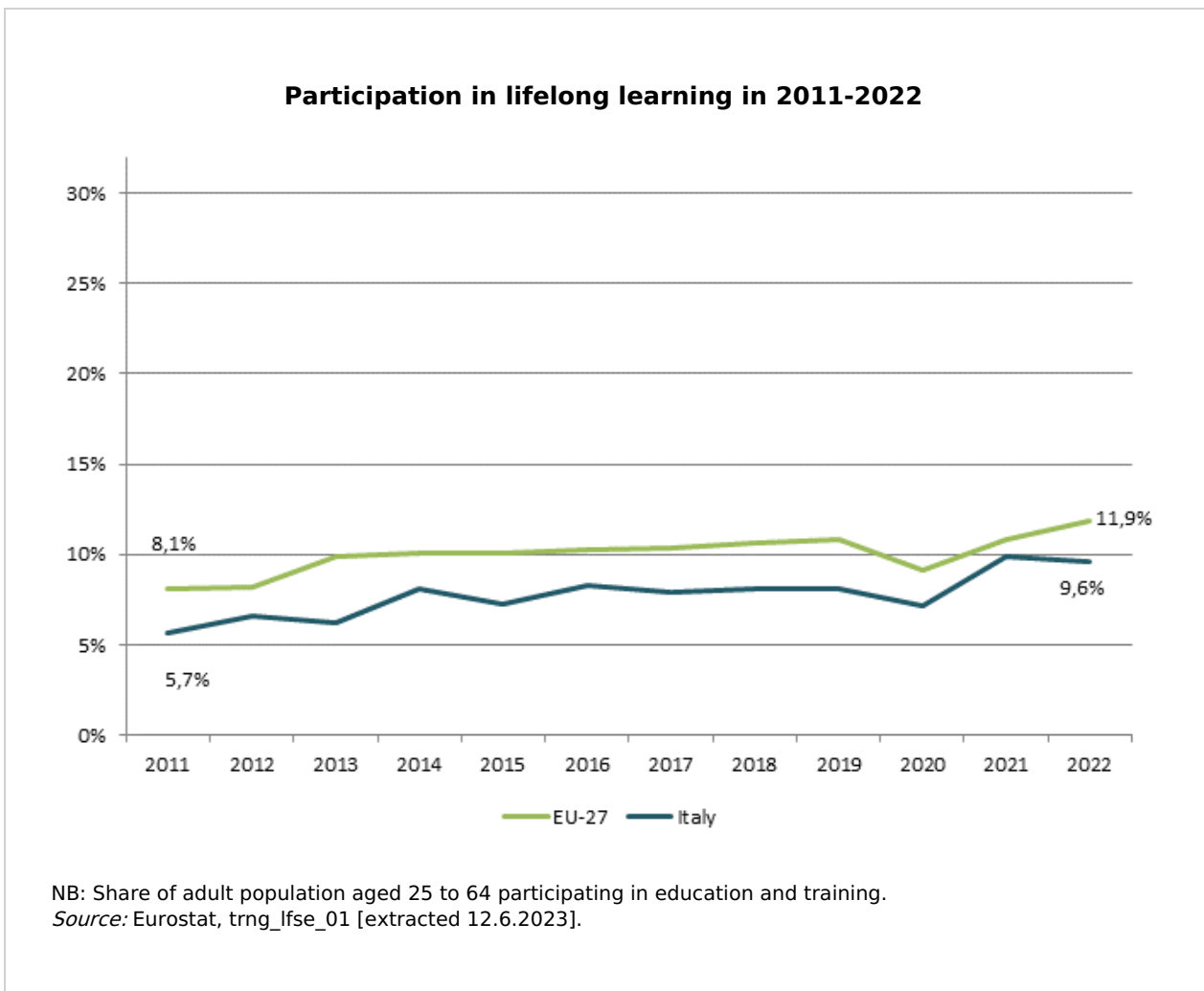
For more information visit [Cedefop project page on tackling early leaving](#) and our interactive toolkits: [Cedefop VET toolkit for tackling early leaving](#) and [Cedefop VET toolkit for empowering NEETs](#)

4.6 Participation in lifelong learning

According to Eurostat (Labour force survey (13)), the share of 25 to 64 year-olds participating in education and training over the 4 weeks prior to the survey was 9.6% in 2022, which is lower than the EU-27 average of 11.9% in 2022.

After the reduction that occurred in 2020 due to Covid-19, in the two-year period 2021-2022 there was a significant growth in the level of adult participation in lifelong learning, which grew by +2.4 percentage points from 2020 to 2022.

Participation in adult education and training is influenced by individual socio-demographic characteristics. Those who participate most in learning paths are younger, educated people employed in skilled professions. The chances of being involved in training activities is lower among those who are poorly educated, are over 45 years of age, and are poorly qualified. Compared to the European average, Italy has lower levels of skills development, with a greater penalty for those with a low level of education and qualification. There is also greater training participation among the inactive population, probably due to the longer duration of tertiary education courses (14) .



Occupation, together with education, is the principal determinant of unequal access to training: 11 percentage points separate the participation rate of the high-skilled (13.9%) compared to the low-skilled (2.7%). Italian values are lower for each age group and the gap compared to the European average is even more evident in the 35-44 age group. The Italian gap by level of education concerns only adults with low qualifications; for those with upper secondary and

tertiary attainment, Italy is equal to European values (15) .

Age is one of the most important factors in determining participation in lifelong learning. Data, from a generational perspective, show that involvement in training activities falls as age increases. Among those in employment, learning opportunities are predominantly concentrated among the most qualified professions. Italy still shows very low values for all professional categories (16) . The data confirm that training tends to qualify further the already qualified, while the risk of exclusion tends to affect the categories of workers most vulnerable, not only for old age or low level of education but also for low qualification of profession (17) .

4.7 VET learners by age

VET learners by age in 2022 (18) :

- 14-17: 27,4%
- 18-34: 33,0%
- 35-50: 25,0%
- 50+: 14,6%

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- [13] The European Union labour force survey (EU LFS) is conducted in all Member States of the European Union, four candidate countries and three countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in accordance with Council Regulation (EEC) No 577/98 of 9 March 1998. At the moment, the LFS microdata for scientific purposes contain data for all Member States plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. The EU labour force survey is a large household sample survey providing quarterly results on labour participation of people aged 15 and over as well as on persons outside the labour force. All definitions apply to persons aged 15 years and over living in private households. Persons carrying out obligatory military or community service are not included in the target group of the survey, as is also the case for persons in institutions/collective households. The data collection covers the years from 1983 onwards. In general, data for individual countries are available depending on their accession date. The labour force surveys are conducted by the national statistical institutes across Europe and are centrally processed by Eurostat. The national statistical institutes are responsible for selecting the sample, preparing the questionnaires, conducting the direct interviews among households, and forwarding the results to Eurostat in accordance with the requirements of the regulation. Thus, it is possible to make available harmonised data at European level. More information is available [online](#)
- [14] Istat (2021), [Livelli di istruzione e partecipazione alla formazione. Anno 2020. Cresce il divario con l'Ue nei livelli di istruzione](#), [Levels of education and participation in training. Year 2020. The gap with the EU in education levels is growing], Statistics Report, 8 October 2021
- [17] An interesting econometrics analysis is available in: Angotti R, Polli C. (2017), [Lavoratori over 50 a bassa qualificazione e crisi economica in Italia](#), *Osservatorio Isfol*, VI (2016), No 3. pp.37-57

CHAPTER 5.

VET within education and training system

The education and training system comprises:

- pre-school education (ISCED level 0);
- integrated primary and lower secondary education (ISCED levels 1 and 2) (hereafter first cycle of education);
- upper secondary education (general, technical and vocational, ISCED levels 3 and) (also called second cycle of education);
- post-secondary vocational education (IFTS, ISCED level 4);
- tertiary non-academic technological education (ISCED levels 5, 6) (19) and higher education (ISCED levels 6, 7 and 8).

Pre-school education is not compulsory and is provided by education services for children aged less than 3 years; for ages 3-6 it is available at pre-primary schools which operate under the responsibility of the education ministry.

Compulsory education starts at the age of 6 and lasts for 10 years up to 16 years of age. It covers the whole first cycle of education (primary and lower secondary and 2 years of the second cycle, upper secondary education). The last 2 years of compulsory education (grades 9 and 10) can be attended either in an upper secondary school or within the regional IVET system (*istruzione e formazione professionale*, IeFP).

Upper secondary school education offers 5-year long general, technical and vocational programmes. At the end of the upper secondary school education, students who pass the final exam receive the end of secondary education certificate that gives them access to tertiary level programmes.

Technical education programmes offer a balanced mix of general education and technical subjects, focusing on both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Programmes last five years, include short internships, and offer specialisations in areas like industrial technology and business. Graduates receive a diploma that qualifies them for both employment and higher education. In contrast, Vocational education and training programmes are heavily oriented towards practical training, aiming to develop specific vocational skills for particular trades or professions. Programs last three to four years in schools and involve extensive apprenticeships. Specializations are closely aligned with labour market needs, and graduates receive a vocational qualification that enables immediate entry into the workforce or further specialized studies.

At post-secondary level, within the higher technical education and training system (*Istruzione e formazione tecnica superior*, IFTS), 1-year long technical specialisation courses are offered to graduates from upper secondary school programmes and graduates from the long-cycle (4 years) regional IVET (IeFP) pathways.

The following institutes offer education at higher level:

- universities (polytechnics included);
- high level arts, music and dance education institutes (*Alta formazione artistica, musicale e coreutica*, Afam);
- higher schools for language mediators (*Scuola superiore pre mediatori linguistici*, SSML);

- higher technological institutes (ITS Academy).

Access to university, high-level arts, music and dance education institutes and higher schools for language mediator programmes is solely for students with an upper secondary school leaving certificate. The university and research ministry and individual institutions establish the specific conditions for admission.

Courses at higher technological institutes (ITS Academy) (20) are accessible to students with an upper secondary leaving certificate (*diploma liceale, diploma di istruzione tecnica or professionale*) and to graduates of long-cycle (4-year) regional IVET programmes (IeFP) having completed an additional 1-year post-secondary specialisation course in the higher technical education and training system (IFTS).

At upper secondary level the following VET programmes are offered:

- 5-year programmes (ISCED 354) at technical schools leading to technical education diplomas; at vocational schools leading to vocational education diplomas (EQF level 4). Programmes combine general education and VET, and can also be delivered in the form of alternance training (*see section apprenticeship*). Graduates have access to higher education;
- 3-year regional (IeFP, ISCED 353) programmes leading to a vocational certificate (EQF level 3);
- 4-year regional (IeFP, ISCED 353) programmes leading to a technician professional diploma (EQF level 4).

Graduates of upper secondary general, technical and vocational school programmes and long-cycle (4-year) regional IVET (IePF) programmes who passed entrance exams have access to:

- one-year post-secondary specialisation courses (ISCED 453) (IFTS); leading to a higher technical specialisation certificate (EQF level 4);
- higher technological institute programmes (ITS Academy): 2- to 3-year tertiary non-academic programmes which lead to a high-level technical diploma (EQF level 5 or 6). 2022 legislation reformed the earlier ITS (*istitute tecnici superiori*) into tertiary non-academic technological institutions (*istitute tecnologici superiori - ITS Academy*). Implementation of the new type of applied technology 3-year programmes in the ITS Academy system is ongoing in 2023. Phasing out (ITS) and phasing in programmes (ITS Academy) are running in parallel in 2023.

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 programmes are provided by provincial adult education centres (*centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti, CPIA*) under the remit of the education ministry.

In order to tackle the high number of low-skilled people, the education ministry has promoted the national plan for 'guaranteeing the skills of the adult population'. The "National Strategic Plan for the Development of Adult Skills" (approved in the Unified Conference on July 8, 2021), drafted by the Interinstitutional Table on Lifelong Learning, proposes multi-year operational interventions to address the deficits in basic skills and low qualifications among adults. The plan is guided by three principles:

1. Universality of policies, selectivity of aid, and the centrality of the individual.
2. Subsidiarity of governance, resource concentration, diversification, and proximity of services.
3. Gradual, progressive, and incremental development of systems and services.

The target audience encompasses the entire adult population, starting from the age of 18, especially those with low skills and/or low qualifications, the unemployed, the inactive, those at risk of unemployment, or those with income from work below the poverty threshold. The Ministry

of Education and Merit has envisioned actions, including research and development within the Provincial Centers for Adult Education (CPIA), as well as "Guarantee Pathways" aimed at acquiring basic and cross-cutting skills, leading to a qualification and/or vocational diploma, with the perspective of enabling further education at the tertiary level (university and beyond). The Ministry of Labour's actions within the plan entail the implementation process and establishment of the National Skills Certification System (SNCC).

The actions proposed by the regions include disseminating information and providing training on the SNCC, focusing on training for the qualification and requalification of adults seeking employment, and studying methods and tools for guiding adults in search of employment. Implementation is ensured through the Employability guarantee reform programme (GOL) (see [VET financing mechanisms](#)).

Continuing VET (CVET) targets mainly employed people. Most resources for continuing training have been planned and managed by the regions and autonomous provinces (which have mainly used European social fund regional operational programmes as a source) and the social partners (through joint interprofessional funds).

CVET programmes pursue three goals:

- the maintenance/upgrading of competencies and skills;
- corporate competitiveness and innovation;
- compulsory training.

Compulsory training comprises obligatory courses related to work specific requirements, for which the employer has to make sure that a worker received proper training tailored to the needs and conditions of the workplace. It is a mandatory training at the workplace: mandatory for the employer by law, for all employees in certain occupations, e.g. health and safety. There are also some obligatory training courses by law for some dangerous or potentially dangerous tasks (e.g. driving a fork lift), training for preventive services (occupational physicians may be required by law to do some training regularly, as may workers in the food sector in respect of compliance with hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) food protocol), training for safety representatives who deal with occupational safety and health questions at the enterprise level, and training for first aid measures (by law, a certain number of people have to be able to offer first aid) and for workers to protect themselves and others (e.g. fire drills). Beneficiaries can obtain a formal qualification.

The adult learning and continuous training system for adults and workers in Italy is characterized by various critical issues and potential. Inequalities in access to training, linked to gender, age and level of education, limit the participation of some groups. Companies show a variable propensity to invest in training, influenced by territorial, dimensional and sectoral factors. The regions of Southern Italy are particularly disadvantaged due to the limited training offer and the limited ability of small companies to deal with digitalisation. The quality of training requires more personalized courses consistent with training needs. Public policies play a crucial role, especially in supporting SMEs, but public funding is often residual and fragmented. It is necessary to improve coordination between the different initiatives to avoid overlaps and redundancies. Finally, reskilling and upskilling are essential to adapt skills to the needs of the labour market, especially in sectors involved in the green and digital transitions.

More information on CVET is available in the annual reports of the Italian Parliament, Ministry of Labour and Inapp in some recent publications (special issue) (21) .

See also: [Cedefop thematic review on upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults in Italy - November 2023](#)

[19] implementation of ITS Academy programmes is ongoing in 2023

[20] 2022 legislation reformed the ITS (*istitute tecnici superiori*) into tertiary non-academic

institutions (ITS Academy (*institute tecnologici superiori - ITS Academy*). Implementation of the new type of applied technology programmes in the ITS Academy system is ongoing in 2023. More information is available online at [INDIRE](#) and the education ministry [website](#)

- [22] more information on apprenticeships in the Italian VET system is available at the labour ministry [website](#)
- [23] more information: the regulatory framework for apprenticeship in Cedefop's online [Timeline of VET policies in Italy](#).

CHAPTER 6.

Apprenticeship

The national apprenticeship system is one of the main education and training policy instruments used to upskill and integrate young people in the labour market.

Apprenticeship in Italy designates a work contract with a specific training purpose; it includes both on-the-job and classroom training. The regions and autonomous provinces, together with social partners, are responsible for the definition of the training component and its implementation. The national collective labour agreements or inter-sectors agreements regulate apprenticeships in detail, with the obligation to respect some general principles. The apprenticeship contract, which is distinct from other work-based learning forms in IVET (such as internships), 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, the occupation tasks, wage increases, both the entry and final grade levels, and the qualification to be obtained. 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. Since apprentices are considered employees, they are entitled to insurance benefits for job injuries and accidents, occupational diseases, health reasons, ageing and disability, maternity, household allowance and, since 2013, labour social security insurance.

The apprenticeship system (22) includes three types of contract:

- Type 1 - (*apprendistato per la qualifica e il diploma professionale, il diploma di istruzione secondaria superior e il certificato di specializzazione tecnica superior*) Apprenticeship for young people aged 15 to 25 enrolled in three- or four-year school-based regional IVET (IeFP) programmes and post-secondary higher technical (IFTS) programmes in view to acquire the corresponding qualifications, as well as to take up the examination for entry to higher technological tertiary education. The labour ministry has the overall coordination of Type 1-apprenticeship implementation strategies, regulations and activities at national level, also through dedicated bodies.
- Type 2 - (*apprendistato professionalizzante*): professionalisation apprenticeship, for young people aged 18 to 29, which is enterprise-based. It is targeted at young people but also adult workers who have been made redundant. It has a training component, which is marginal: a maximum 120 hours in three years, to be carried out inside or outside the company. No qualification from the formal education system is awarded upon completion, but the apprentice can become a skilled worker by acquiring a contractual qualification defined and recognised by collective labour agreements.
- Type 3 - Higher education and research apprenticeship, for young people aged 18-29, which leads to a university degree or fulfils requirements for carrying out research or compulsory traineeship to access liberal professions.

The [National Technical Board for Apprenticeship](#) coordinates and technically supports apprenticeship programmes at national level. Its main functions include developing guidelines, monitoring and evaluating apprenticeship programmes, as well as promoting this type of job placement. It is made up of representatives from various ministries, regions, social partners and sector experts.

The dual system in IVET (IeFP and IFTS programmes)

The apprenticeship system -mainly types 1 and 3 leading to formal education qualifications- was reformed (2015) and has been gradually redesigned by the competent national authorities in cooperation with the regions and autonomous provinces (23) . The National Institute of Public

Policy Analysis (INAPP) monitors the dual system in IVET, in collaboration with the Regions.

Through -mainly- type 1-apprenticeship, which is formally recognised as an instrument supporting integration between the education and training system and the labour market, the labour ministry underpins the development of a national dual training system ([Sistema duale](#)) with dedicated financial measures allocated to this goal (see also *Financial incentives*). To support apprenticeship take up, the labour ministry issued guidelines (2022) for VET institutions and companies (an *operational manual* detailing all steps, from the feasibility analysis to the organisation, management, and evaluation of training in the company), as well as a guide for employers on the follow up phase after the publication of the apprentice examination results (extension of the apprenticeship contract, its conversion into an open-ended (employment) contract or a professionalisation contract (type 2 apprenticeship) or, termination of the apprenticeship contract).

In Italy, the dual system of Vocational Education and Training (IeFP) and Higher Techniques (IFTTS) is supported by three structural tools linked to apprenticeship contracts. Type 1 Apprenticeship allows young people (15-25 years) to obtain professional qualifications by combining school training and business practice. Type 2 Apprenticeship (18-29 years) focuses on the acquisition of specific technical-professional skills, which can be integrated into IeFP and IFTTS courses, strengthening the connection between training and work. Type-3 Apprenticeship (18-29 years) allows to obtain higher education qualifications, alternating study and work, facilitating the transition to the world of work through concrete work experiences. These tools are essential to implement the dual system in Italy.

Learn more about apprenticeships in the national context from the European database on apprenticeship schemes by Cedefop: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/apprenticeship-schemes/scheme-fiches>

CHAPTER 7.

VET governance

The education ministry defines the VET framework in national school pathways (technical and professional institutes) for higher technological education and training courses in agreement with the employment ministry. It has sole responsibility for higher technological institute programmes with regard to the definition of guidance documents and the monitoring and assessment of the training chain (24) .

The education ministry also deals with redefining the higher technical institutes' national repertory of occupational profiles, with the introduction of new technical profiles and the updating of those already included in the inventory. The repertory is a list of occupational profiles which are taken into consideration in the design of training courses. Monitoring of higher technological institute courses is carried out by the National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research (*Instituto nazionale documentazione innovazione ricerca educativa - INDIRE*).

The labour ministry defines the VET framework for interventions provided for within the scope of vocational education and training pathways, for higher technical education and training (in agreement with the education ministry), for training interventions for apprenticeships, and for continuing vocational training (CVET) provided within the scope of the public system.

The National Institute for Public Policy Analysis (INAPP) monitors national vocational education and training pathways, apprenticeship training pathways and CVET interventions.

The regions and autonomous provinces are responsible for the planning, programming, organisation and implementation of interventions provided for within the scope of vocational education and training pathways, higher technical education, higher technical education and training, post-vocational education and training pathways, and post-university education for most types of apprenticeship-based training and for publicly funded CVET interventions (in agreement with the social partners).

The State-Regions Conference is part of the multi-governance Italian system, and more specifically an 'institution' that promotes cooperation between the State and Regions and Autonomous Provinces.

Programming of higher technical education, and higher technical education and training, interventions, is provided for in specific planning documents known as three-year plans. Through these documents, the regions and autonomous provinces define their strategy on the post-secondary education and training offer (ITPS, bringing together and integrating the various supply chains of higher technical education, higher technical education and training hubs (25) .

Social partners play an advisory role in the formulation of training policies and contribute to their interpretation into the pathways that then constitute 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 interprofessional funds for continuing training; they help to elaborate and organise active policies in the labour market. Beyond their advisory role at national and local levels, social partners play a crucial part in professional apprenticeship regulation.

[24] 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.

- [25] As defined in Inter-ministerial Decree dated 7 February 2013, professional technical hubs are intended to be the functional interconnection between the subjects in the training chain and companies in the production chain and are therefore identified as 'training venues for learning in situ', established thanks to network agreements for sharing public and private workshops that are already operating; this interconnection also establishes venues dedicated to learning in applicative contexts, in order to make full use of existing professional resources, even based on 'workshop at school' and 'enterprise school' modes.
- [26] specific data for individual training supply chains can be found in the dedicated pages of the labour ministry on leFP programmes ([here](#)), on apprenticeship in the [2023 monitoring report](#) and on continuing training in the [XXIII report](#) on continuing vocational training for the year 2021-22.

CHAPTER 8.

VET financing mechanisms

Italy makes a distinction between funds that are committed and dispensed. With respect to the sources of funding, both in terms of committed and dispensed funds, regional/provincial sources prevail (26) . In short there are three sources of funding:

- regional/provincial;
- ministry of education;
- ministry of labour.

Funding of regional IVET pathways (*istruzione e formazione professionale, leFP*)

Regional vocational education and training 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 to it (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). Each year the labour ministry allocates EUR 189 million to the regions and autonomous provinces for the financing of vocational and training pathways, following criteria shared between the labour ministry and the regions.

Funding of higher technical education and training (IFTS) and higher technological education (ITS Academy) courses. The funding methods used for higher technical education and training and higher technological education are the same. Monitoring shows a marked uniformity between the regions that use the European social fund to implement courses.

Funding of the dual VET system (Sistema duale) (leFP, IFTS and higher vocational education)

Since 2018, the labour ministry has allowed regions to finance dual pathways with financial resources originally allocated only for regional IVET pathways (see previous point funding leFP). More specifically, regions, after having exhausted the financial resources provided for dual pathways, could employ in dual pathways (namely, type 1 apprenticeships) the financial resources earmarked for VET pathways.

As part of the 2022 national recovery and resilience plan (PNRR), additional funding of EUR 600 million is allocated by 2025 to dual VET (Sistema duale) with a target of at least 135 000 more young people participating in the scheme. Implementation is foreseen through the Regional programming documents (DdPR) adopted by the regions following approval by the labour ministry. Each DdPR is aligned to the PNRR objectives and targets; it details the intended training actions, potential beneficiaries identified, as well as specific targets set in the local socio-economic context. Programmes are co-financed using, from an integrated programming, national, community and PNRR funds (EUR 120 million from the PNRR already distributed to the regions with [Directorial Decree No 54 2022](#)).

Funding of apprenticeships

Training activities for apprenticeship are funded by the labour ministry. Since 2017, the labour ministry has earmarked EUR 15 million annually for this activity (for funding training courses); the amount due to the regions is calculated on the basis of the number of apprentices with an apprenticeship contract (type 2) and the number of apprentices on training pathways (apprenticeship types 1 and 3).

The regions and autonomous provinces jointly finance training activities dedicated to

apprenticeships through their own resources or the resources of the European Social Fund.

Funding of continuing vocational training (CVET)

Continuing vocational training interventions are funded using a variety of sources and tools. Most of the financial support for CVET derives from the so-called 0.30% contribution paid by private-sector enterprises to the National Institute for Social Security (*Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale, INPS*). This contribution was introduced by Law 845/1978 that provided for an increase (equal to 0.30%) in salaries subject to obligatory social security contributions that employers must pay for compulsory involuntary unemployment protection insurance.

Until 2003, this contribution was managed by the regions, which were provided financial resources for CVET through three channels: Law 236/1993, that had most of the revenue derived from this 0.30%; Law 53/2000, that provided for annual funding of a little under EUR 15 million; ESF, partly also funded by the 0.30% (part of the share allocated to the economy ministry).

Since 2004, joint inter-professional funds have been financed by INPS based on the choices made by enterprises that indicate directly which inter-professional fund they intend to subscribe to. This has led to an increase in the financial resources available for continuing learning and their reorganisation.

Finance for inter-professional funds comes from a part of the 0.30% of gross payroll compulsory involuntary unemployment contribution paid to INPS by all private-sector enterprises with employees. Each enterprise can choose which fund to subscribe to and INPS transfers resources accordingly. In total, INPS has transferred approximately EUR 6.5 billion to interprofessional funds from 2004 to 2020, an average of EUR 500 million euro. In the period 2018-2022 the Interprofessional Funds allocated 2,041 million euros, equal to over 400 million euros per year (27) .

Resources from the 2014-20 European Social Fund operational programme allocated EUR 575 million to priority 8.v Adaptation of workers to change. That represents 7.03% of thematic objective 8 Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility and 3% of the total ESF over the 7 years. With an average overall annual national availability of a little under EUR 180 million, the adaptability axis funds the target of continuing training. In the period 2018-22, the Regions and autonomous Provinces have allocated ESF resources of 508 million euros, equal to over 127 million euros per year (28) .

The New skills fund (*Fondo nuove competenze*)

In line with the [National skills strategy](#), Legislative Decree No 34 dated 19 May 2020 (so called [Decreto Rilancio](#)) implemented several measures to support the Italian economy, severely affected by the COVID-19 emergency. The decree has established the New skills fund, with the aim to invest in lifelong learning of workers and development of their competences.

The New skills fund, which initially had a budget of EUR 230 million, has been increased for 2020-21 to a total of EUR 730 million. This fund is dedicated to redefining working times, through trade union agreements, and keeping the same overall hours and salaries, in order to encourage training, reskilling and redeployment of workers. More specifically, it provides for the possibility for company-level and local-level collective agreements to adapt working hours, as a result of changing organisational and production needs, assigning some hours to training courses. The fund is used to cover the costs of training hours for workers, including the related social security and welfare contributions.

The New Skills Fund's goal is to support workers acquire new or improved skills and adapt to changing labour market conditions while supporting businesses in adapting to new organizational and production models due to the COVID-19 crisis. Companies and employers can negotiate specific work-hour adjustments to meet changing organizational and production needs or facilitate worker reallocation. The role and purpose of this fund was expanded, becoming one of the guiding programmes of the National New Skills Plan *see below in this section*). With a

refinancing of EUR 1 billion, as decreed by the Minister of Labour in agreement with the Minister of Economy and Finance on September 22, 2022, the Fund's purpose has been further strengthened to support digital and ecological transitions.

The New Skills Plan (*Piano nazionale nuove competenze*, PNC)

The National New Skills Plan (PNC) was adopted in late 2021, as a strategic coordination framework for interventions aimed at updating and enhancing skills to address the demands of digital and ecological transitions and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes three flagship programmes to run national investments complementary to the national recovery and resilience plan (PNRR):

- the Employability guarantee reform programme (*Programma nazionale per la garanzia di occupabilità dei lavoratori*, GOL), dedicated to unemployed individuals who are beneficiaries of the programme for skills upgrading or requalification. The goal of the programme is to enhance the efficiency of active labour market policies by providing specific employment services and personalised guidance and support services for employment (called 'pathways' in the national context, *percorsi di accompagnamento al lavoro*). The programme offers various pathways, such as reemployment, upskilling, reskilling, employment and inclusion, and collective repositioning.
- the Dual System for young people aged 15 to 25 (see *apprenticeship section*); and
- the New Skills Fund aimed at workers from companies that have entered into agreements or collective accords for work-hour adjustments in response to process, product, or organizational innovations within the workforce.

The PNC adoption coincides with the establishment of essential performance levels (LEP) for national vocational training programmes (marking the completion of milestone 5 of the NRRP). Implementation of training programmes based on LEP requirements is made through regional implementation plans for the delivery of GOL programme in the national territory, thus achieving a unified framework for active labour market policies and overcoming regional disparities.

Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRPP)

The national recovery and resilience plan (NRPP), adopted in mid-2021, amounts to EUR 235 billion, comprising both European (NextGenerationEU) and national resources.

The measures under the purview of the Ministry of Education and Merit, with funding totalling EUR 17.59 billion, are encompassed within the "Futura - the school for Italy of tomorrow" framework, aimed at fostering an innovative, sustainable, secure, and inclusive education system. These measures fall under Mission 4, Component 1 (6 reforms), and 11 investments (Missions 2 and 4), with 6 allocated to infrastructure and 5 to skills.

In particular, Measure 4 Component 1 includes:

- Reform 1.1: "Reform of Technical and Professional Institutes," which seeks to align the curricula of technical and professional institutes with the skills demanded by the productive sector.
- Reform 1.2: "Reform of the Higher Technical Institutes (ITS) system," aiming to increase enrolment and enhance connections with the business network in various regions.
- Reform 1.3: "Reorganization of the educational system."
- Reform 1.4: "Reform of guidance," including guidance modules in secondary schools and a digital platform for tertiary educational offerings from universities and ITS.
- Reform 2.1: "Recruitment of teaching staff."
- Reform 2.2: "High-level education and continuous professional development" for educational personnel.

Among the investments:

- Investment 1.4: "Reduction of territorial disparities" focuses on enhancing basic skills for

- students in the first and second cycles of education and combating school dropout by delivering tailored interventions to different regions, addressing students' specific needs.
- Investment 1.5: "Development and reform of ITS" entails expanding the educational offerings of ITS to double the number of skilled professionals, upgrading laboratory infrastructure to align with the demands of the green and digital transition, and creating a national platform listing all active institutes and courses, enabling students to explore job opportunities.
 - Investment 2.1: "Integrated Digital Teaching (DDI) and training on digital transition for educational personnel" seeks to establish a national centre for digital education to train educational staff, create a network of regional training centres, develop a platform for digital education content and innovative teaching methods, and establish "Agreements for digital education and future-ready skills" that are inclusive and sustainable.
 - Investment 3.2: "4.0 Schools: innovative schools and laboratories" envisions innovative classrooms that encourage active and collaborative learning with technological tools and furnishings that incorporate innovative methodologies and pedagogies, facilitating the study of STEM subjects, computational thinking, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and robotics.

The measures under the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies fall under Mission 5, "Inclusion and Cohesion," within the PNRR. Their primary objective is to reform the active labour market and vocational training policies to introduce and implement essential performance levels, promoting the employability of transitioning and unemployed individuals, particularly those considered vulnerable and distant from the labour market. The total investment in these measures amounts to €7.25 billion.

Measure 5, Component 1 - 'Labour Policies' encompasses 2 reforms (Reform of active labour market policies and vocational training; Introduction of a national plan to combat undeclared work) and two investments (Strengthening of Employment Centres; Reinforcement of the Dual System). The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies is also responsible for Measure 5, Component 2 - 'Social Infrastructure, Families, Communities, and the Third Sector'.

CHAPTER 9.

Teachers and trainers

9.1 VET teacher types

In Italy, two main types of professionals are involved in VET: teachers and trainers. The professional profile of teachers is much more clearly defined and regulated than trainers as far as training, recruitment, duties and skills are concerned.

Teachers work mainly in State vocational schools but also in centres for adult education, in universities and higher technical institutes (IFTS system).

Teachers are regulated nationally and are employed by the education ministry. They are recruited through public selection (based on specific competition requirements and the need to pass a State exam) that results in with an employment contract which allows them to acquire the status of public employee.

Teachers' entry requirements are set at national level. To be enrolled, teachers must follow all these steps: a 5-year bachelor degree in specific teaching subjects (e.g. math, chemistry, foreign languages) and specific university courses in an anthropologic/psychologic/pedagogic subject and in teaching methods and technologies; a teaching habilitation in the specific subject that will be taught by means of a national examination, which also tests for a B2 level of a foreign language; after the habilitation the new teacher has to attend 1 year of probation/training to be enrolled.

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. There is no nationally recognised register of trainers or formal recruitment procedures. The national collective work contract only sets minimum access requirements to the training profession: 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) trainers should regularly participate in professional development programmes, either within or outside the institutions at which they work.

9.2 Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers

According to the law, teachers' in-service training is compulsory and continuing, without any specifications about duration. Teachers' in-service training must be in line with the school training supplies, the School improvement plan and the priorities of the education ministry; it must involve all open-ended contract teachers. Incentives are provided to support teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) and systematic need analysis mechanisms.

Training initiatives for teachers can be designed by the school individually or in a network, supporting collaboration with universities, research institutes, professional associations and accredited bodies. Each school has to draw up a teacher CDP plan that can include self-training, peer learning, research activities, but also workshops and working groups to deepen or improve specific subjects or skills. The plan must describe the main features of the training activities and the methods to assess and certificate training results.

VET trainers' in-service training is not formalised; it varies greatly, and participation is discretionary. The national collective labour contract of VET professionals states that all trainers have the right to take part in training initiatives. Training must be financed by the employer (by the VET centres) and must be considered as working time.

In public funded training, the national accreditation system has established that trainers and other professionals who run key functions must attend refresher programmes to upgrade their professional skills, but no indication has been given about duration. Regional accreditation systems have given more specifications about duration; some regions have set the obligation to draft a training plan for the whole staff. In-service training varies from region to region.

Training supply for trainers is determined by the free market; the most important providers are public and private training bodies and consortia, consultancy firms, professional associations, universities, social partners, Chambers of Commerce, and some business schools. Some sectoral professional associations also act as accrediting bodies in the private sector, in the area of business and management training (for example, the Italian Trainers' Association, AIF). Large companies or public administration departments with permanent internal training services usually contribute to the funding of these activities or invest directly in the continuing training of trainers.

Activities are mainly promoted by the regional authorities and funded by the ESF and by Joint inter-professional funds for continuing training (*Fondi paritetici interprofessionali*).

Universities provide VET teacher initial training on behalf of the education ministry in collaboration with the schools. The minimum requirement for accessing the teaching profession was - until 2018 (when a new recruitment system was developed) - a 5-year bachelor degree in specific teaching subjects (maths, chemistry, foreign languages). The 2018 system introduced, in addition to the degree requirement, the need for knowledge of psychological and pedagogical disciplines and didactic methodologies and technologies, validated by a successful, specific university examination.

Another fundamental feature (introduced in 2018) is the post-degree initial training and internship pathway (FIT). This is a three-year, salaried training pathway that educators must attend before being awarded a teaching post. Post-degree initial training and internship pathways are only accessed after passing a public examination. The post-degree initial training and internship pathway envisages gradual integration of aspiring teachers into the classroom environment and comprises:

- theoretical training for the first year;
- 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) for the second year;
- in the third year, teachers are awarded a vacant teaching position, with all the associated responsibilities.
- after the completion of the 3-year course, if they pass the final examination they are offered a 3-year, renewable contract.

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, 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 education ministry's priorities. Training must also involve all open-ended contract teachers'.

The regions (with employers' rights organisations and trade unions) define and plan the specific training measures aimed to develop the minimum skills required to carrying out the functions of a tutor.

Training measures for company tutors, which now cover almost all of Italy, have many distinctive features, due to the methodological requirements and the operational means used. Every regional entity may set different training activities.

For more information visit Cedefop project page on [Teachers' and Trainers' professional development](#) and our interactive toolkits for VET practitioners: [Cedefop VET toolkit for tackling early leaving](#) and [Cedefop VET toolkit for empowering NEETs](#). You may also read [Cedefop/ReferNet country reports on Teachers and Trainers in a Changing World](#) and [Cedefop comparative analysis](#).

CHAPTER 10.

Shaping VET qualifications

10.1 Anticipating skill needs

In Italy, surveys have been carried out for more than twenty years to study the phenomenon of the need for occupations and skills from both quantitative (which and how many professional profiles companies expect to have to recruit in the coming months) and qualitative perspectives (which skills, knowledge and competences should be at the centre of the future refresher courses of company employees).

These surveys are conducted by Unioncamere, the Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture (quantitative survey) and by the National Institute for the Analysis of Public Policies, (INAPP) (qualitative survey) at national and regional level.

The results of these surveys are interpreted with the Classification of Occupations (CP 2011) and the Classification of Economic Activities (ATECO 2008). Since 1997, the Excelsior [survey](#), carried out by Unioncamere, has reconstructed an anticipatory picture of labour demand and skills needs expressed by companies. Analytical information is collected on the characteristics of the personnel that the company intends to hire: skilled labour, qualifications and levels of training required, difficulties in finding these profiles, need for further training, previous experience, IT and language skills. Inapp began to carry out research in 2006 designed to analyse existing [professions and trades](#), with a view to providing a detailed description of changes in job content in the short-term (next 12 months). Investigation methods were used that made it possible to interview entrepreneurs, corporate human resources managers or industry experts who could outline trends in key sectors of the economy. This information helps to update curricula, develop new programmes, professionally orient students and workers, design retraining interventions and plan the training offer. Furthermore, they support evidence-based employment policies, better aligning workers' skills with labour market needs.

The audit survey on professional needs, targeting a sample of about 35 000 companies with employees, 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. Last survey took place in 2021. Entrepreneurs were able to reflect and explain in great detail not the training that had been carried out over recent years, but what had to be done in the near future to satisfy specific needs.

The information from these surveys, which explore the vocational and training needs of the labour market, provides guidance to all stakeholders (including VET providers) on a complex educational system that has the task of planning and implementing vocational training and retraining programmes.

See also [Cedefop's skills forecast](#) and [European Skills Index](#).

10.2 Designing qualifications

Following the approval of [Inter-ministerial Decree 8/1/2018](#) (29) , Italy adopted a national qualifications framework (Quadro nazionale delle qualifiche, QNQ). This is a tool to define and classify the qualifications issued within the national system of certification of competences, making it possible to create a unified [national repertory of education and training qualifications and professional qualifications](#), hereafter the national repertory. The 2021 [guidelines](#) for the

interoperability of awarding bodies of the National system of certification of competences define criteria for the implementation and regular updating of the National repertory.

Thanks to the national qualifications framework (QNQ), 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 for lifelong learning is defined. The scope, descriptors and levels of the national qualifications framework are developed in coherence and continuity with European qualifications framework levels; the QNQ was [referenced](#) to the EQF in 2023. The national qualifications framework and the Atlas of work and qualifications (*atlante di lavoro e delle qualificazione*, hereafter the [work atlas](#)) (30) 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 education ministry, the labour ministry, other ministries and regions and autonomous provinces that now have the possibility to use the descriptors of the work atlas (processes, activities and expected outcomes) as guideline criteria. These have been developed on a national level in collaboration with the regional authorities and are yearly updated, in line with the decree dated 30 June 2015 regulating the functioning of the work atlas and the 2021 guidelines.

The technical investigation part is done via a process conducted by the National Institute for Public Policy Analysis (INAPP) further to a request by, and in collaboration with, stakeholders who are sector experts; it is subsequently validated by the national technical group established in line with the 30 June 2015 decree and the 2021 guidelines.

The technical-institutional decision to create a national benchmark - a reference tool, organised along the lines of job descriptors - has constructed a shared system of technical elements around which to assess the relevance of the needs of the labour market to the competences already described in the national repertory; development of the competences is then possible, if necessary. The qualifications in the national repertory constitute the minimum national standard: 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; and referencing to the national qualifications framework/European qualifications framework.

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. The descriptors of the work atlas are referenced to national qualifications framework levels and are the only benchmarks for the process of comparison between the qualifications issued by the different public awarding bodies.

The national system of certification of competences is designed to be integrated with, and complementary to, public lifelong learning, 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. The technical institutional system that has been developed since 2013 is the single benchmark for organisation of assessment tests, basically designed to ascertain the possession of competences, in line with Article 3, para. 1 of Legislative Decree 13 dated 16 January 2013.

Both components of the national repertory (the national qualifications framework and the work atlas) are anchored to the definition of competence intended as the proven ability to use - in 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 work atlas has descriptions of one or more expected outcomes for each of the 910 areas of activity which make up the classification of economic and professional sectors. 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.

The national qualifications framework provides the reference parameter to define and/or evaluate the elements for expressing the minimum expected outcomes, in relation to a specific qualification. It details 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).

The Italian context is one of multiple institutional actors at national and regional levels.

National vocational school programmes that combine general education and VET (31) fall under the competence of education ministry that lays down general rules and common principles. Schools have the autonomy to include specific subjects.

Education and vocational training qualifications, which fall within the competence of the regions, are included in the [national qualifications register](#). These qualifications are the outcome of a technical and institutional process, deriving from the permanent conference for relations between the State, the regions and the autonomous provinces (a privileged forum for political negotiations between the central government and the regions), with the signing of a State-regions agreement. Any modification to the register requires a debate in this forum.

Specific information for VET programmes is presented below.

Initial VET programmes (IeFP).

Title V of the current Constitution provides that regional IVET pathways (IeFP) fall under the exclusive competence of the regions. This means that the State sets 'common standards' (essential levels of performance, *livelli essenziali delle prestazioni*, LEP, defined by Legislative Decree 226/05) and regions define, by their own legislation, the system of vocational and training pathways, taking into account the characteristics and needs of the territory. Regions design the training provision. In 2011, regulations issued by the State-regions conference have introduced several important systemic elements: a set of training standards for basic skills to be developed in the 3- and 4-year programmes; a set of minimum standards (valid at national level) for technical and vocational skills in relation to the occupational profiles included in the national qualifications register (Repertorio nazionale delle qualifiche)⁽³²⁾ intermediate and final certifications that are valid at national level.

The [national qualifications register](#) created in 2011 contains the national occupational profiles and the corresponding qualifications and programmes or learning pathways, as well as minimum education and training standards (valid at national level). Qualifications leading to a certain national occupational profile need to be described in terms of learning outcomes and to be allocated the corresponding EQF level.

The update of the occupational profiles is made through an institutional process also involving social partners and approved in State-regions conference.

Legislative Decree 226/05 also defines the essential levels of competence assessment and certification. Regions ensure the fulfilment of essential levels related to the assessment and certification of competences: every year an examination commission made up of teachers and experts (as established in Article 19 of the decree) evaluate the level of achievement of learning outcomes; at the end of the pathways, students must pass an exam.

In 2019, with an agreement reached by the State-Regions Conference, the national repertory reference figures for the professional qualification (EQF level 3) and diploma (EQF level 4), the minimum training standards of basic, technical and professional competences, and the intermediate and final certification models of the VET pathways, were renewed.

The labour ministry has allocated new national resources aimed at the promotion of the dual system in IeFP, for the implementation of pathways characterised by a high number of corporate training hours or enterprise simulation.

Technical and vocational school programmes

The education ministry defines by legislative decree, for each kind of pathway, the areas of the curriculum (agricultural, industry, etc.), the timetable of subjects and the educational cultural and professional profile (33) of learners. The educational cultural and professional profile is a document describing the skills, abilities and knowledge that the learner must possess at the end of pathways. Its purpose is as reference and guideline in defining the pathways curriculum.

Technical schools (*Instituti tecnici*) offer pathways in 11 areas allocated in two sectors: economic and technological (34) .

Vocational schools (*Instituti professionali*) offer pathways in 11 different areas. Each school can decline these courses according to the local context consistent with the priorities indicated by the regions (35) .

At the end of both pathways, learners must pass the State exam that consists of two written tests and an oral test. The first written test is common to all upper secondary education pathways, while the second is specific for each pathway. The education ministry defines by decree the evaluation grids for the assignment of the exam marks.

Higher technological education and training programmes (*Istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore, IFTS*)

The institution of the higher technological education and training pathways is planned by the regions, within their exclusive competences in the planning of the training offer. At national level a joint Decree (2013) adopted by the education minister and the labour minister (in accordance with the State-regions conference) defines the 20 specialisation areas for the training offer and the minimum standard of skills. Additional skills may be further defined at regional level, based on the analysis of local professional needs and through consultation with institutions and social partners. At the end of pathways, learners must pass an exam for the assessment of competence acquired. The examination commission takes into account the indications of the region and is made up of representatives of the school, university, vocational training and the world of work.

Higher technological institutes (ITS Academy)

Qualifications on offer from higher technological institutes are the result of a strong synergy between different actors: enterprises, universities/centres of scientific and technological research, schools, and local authorities.

The status of ITS institutes was reformed (L.99 of 2022) and recognised as integral part of the tertiary non-academic higher technological education; this is reaffirmed by their renaming as higher technological institutes (ITS Academy). In line with national priorities and the national resilience and recovery programme (PNRR), the aim of the reform is to guarantee institutes are in direct relationship with the local economies and productive fabrics and provide high skilled professionals in strategic sectors -such as the digital and ecological transition, new technologies and information, communication, and data technologies. In the long cycle of a 3-year programme they will provide increased work-based learning (company internships in the country or abroad) and at least 60% teaching from professionals in the sector. Implementing provisions for the organisation of higher technological programmes and qualifications are expected.

With the reform (L.99 of 2022) the Higher Technical Institutes have become "Higher Technological Institutes", or ITS Academy, and become an integral part of the tertiary system of Higher Technological Education. The standard strengthens the ITS network, guaranteeing the direct relationship with the territories and their productive fabrics, the real strength of this training system. The reform, in line with the dictates of the National resilience and recovery programmes (NRRP), entrusts the new Higher Technological Institutes with the task of strengthen and expand the vocational training of higher technicians with high technological and technical-

professional skills; systematically support measures for the economic development and competitiveness of the country's production system; and contribute to the dissemination of scientific, technological and green culture.

Each ITS Academy will refer to one of the specific technological areas that will be defined by Decree. The training supply will be aimed at providing high skilled profiles in strategic sectors for the country development, in line with the territorial needs within the following areas:

- digital transition;
- ecological transition, including transports, mobility and logistics;
- new technologies for Made in Italy;
- new technologies for life;
- services to enterprises and organisations;
- technologies for artistic and cultural heritage and tourism;
- information, communication and data technologies.

The ITS reform divides training pathways into two different levels, depending on the European Qualification Framework (EQF), namely:

- EQF level 5, lasting two years, or divided into four semesters, with at least 1 800 hours of training including hours of theoretical, practical and laboratory activity; and
- EQF level 6, lasting three years, or divided into six semesters, with at least 3 000 hours of training including hours of theoretical, practical and laboratory activity.

More information on national qualifications frameworks and the qualification types can be found in the [NQF online tool](#).

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- [30] The Atlas of work and qualifications (work atlas) 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 Art. 3, para. 5 of the Inter-Ministerial Decree of 30 June 2015 and an integral part of the information systems pursuant to Arts. 13 and 15 of Legislative Decree 150/2015.
- [31] Vocational schools (Istituti professionali).
- [32] Repertorio nazionale delle qualifiche.
- [33] Profilo Educativo culturale e professionale P.E.Cu.P.
- [34] Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica, 15 marzo 2010, No 88 and Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica 31 luglio 2017, No 134.
- [35] [Decreto Legislativo, 13 aprile 2017, No 61](#)

CHAPTER 11.

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.

In terms of issuing general laws on education and defining essential levels of provision on educational matters, upper secondary education and higher technical education are regulated on a national level by the education ministry.

A national evaluation system was established by Presidential Decree 80/2013 within the national education and training system. Its aim is evaluating system efficiency and efficacy, contextualising the evaluation on an international level.

At least every 3 years, the education ministry issues strategic priorities on the evaluation of the education system that, with reference to the vocational education and training system, are defined by guidelines adopted in agreement with the State-regions conference and the labour ministry.

The National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training System (*Istituto nazionale per la valutazione del sistema di istruzione e formazione*, **INVALSI**) operates within the national evaluation system (Sistema Nazionale di Valutazione - SNV). INVALSI is responsible for the national evaluation system which implements quality assurance in the education and training system, from primary school to upper secondary school (art. 51 of Legislative Decree 5/2012 converted with amendments into law 35/2012).

Its main tasks are:

- to carry out periodic and systematic checks on students' knowledge and skills and on the overall quality of the training offer of educational and vocational education and training institutions, also in the context of lifelong learning; in particular to manage the National Evaluation System (SNV);
- to study the causes of school failure and dropout with reference to the social context and the typologies of training provision;
- to carry out the necessary surveys to evaluate the added value achieved by schools;
- to provide for the evaluation of students' learning levels at the end of their upper secondary education courses, using the written tests of state exams according to criteria and methods consistent with those applied internationally to guarantee comparability;
- to provide support and technical assistance to school administration, regions, territorial bodies, and individual educational and training institutions for the implementation of autonomous monitoring, evaluation and self-evaluation initiatives;
- to carry out training activities for the teaching and management staff of the schools, connected to the evaluation and self-evaluation processes of educational institutions;
- to ensure the participation of Italy in European and international research projects in the evaluation field, representing the country in the competent bodies;
- to formulate proposals for the full implementation of the evaluation system for school principals, to define the procedures to be followed for their evaluation, to formulate proposals for the training of the evaluation team members and to carry out monitoring of the development and outcomes of the evaluation system.

A key role for improving the quality of the system is played by the National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research (*Istituto nazionale di documentazione, innovazione e ricerca educativa*, **INDIRE**), which provides support to school institutes in defining

and implementing plans to improve the quality of the training offer and the learning outcomes of students, which schools and training institutes independently adopt.

It supports innovation processes centred on the use and diffusion of new technologies, activating research projects designed to improve didactics, as well as interventions linked to consultancy and the training of teaching, administrative and managerial personnel.

Article 6 of Presidential Decree 80/2016 provides for the evaluation procedure of the school and training institutes, a procedure which should be organised in four phases:

- self-evaluation: self-analysis and verification of the service provided based on the data made available by the education ministry's own information system; surveys on learning and data on added value provided by national institute for the evaluation of the education and training system, and other significant elements integrated by the school itself. This is the first step of self-evaluation. The second step is the preparation of a self-evaluation report in electronic format, based on a reference framework provided by the national institute for the evaluation of the education and training system, and the formulation of an improvement plan;
- external evaluation: the first step is the identification of the situations to be evaluated, based on the efficiency and efficacy indicators defined by national institute for the evaluation of education and training system. The second step consists of unit visits. The third step is the redefinition of improvement plans based on the outcomes of the analysis carried out by the units;
- improvement actions: this phase consists of the definition and implementation of improvement interventions, including those with the support of the national institute for documentation, innovation and education research or through collaboration with universities, research bodies, professional and cultural associations;
- social reporting: publication and dissemination of the results achieved, through indicators and comparable data, both in terms of transparency and of sharing and promoting improvement of the service with the community.

The national evaluation system comprises the evaluation of school directors (not yet implemented) and of learning. It is carried out by the national institute for the evaluation of education and training system, through periodical and systematic checks on the skills and know-how of students and the overall quality of the training offer at education and vocational education and training institutes, including in the context of lifelong learning.

In relation to the promotion of quality assurance and quality culture in VET, a key role is also played by the Italian National Reference Point (NRP) of EQAVET, hosted by the National Institute for Public Policy Analysis ([INAPP](#)).

The accreditation of VET providers, as implemented in Italy for over twenty years, can be considered the main tool chosen by public administrations to ensure the quality of the training offer: accreditation is in fact the device for access to the public training system and is aimed at verifying ex ante the possession of the requirements of training providers, to monitor the processes and evaluate the results of the services provided. In Italy the accreditation system is based on national guidelines (established with the State-Regions Agreement in 2008) which are developed, contextualised and enriched at regional level.

The Italian NRP supports the implementation of the European Recommendation on VET 2020 and the Osnabrück Declaration and the national process for improving quality assurance, disseminating scientific and technical knowledge and those practices and tools for continuous improvement, self-evaluation and quality assurance; it also supports VET providers in the implementation of self-assessment and peer review based on the European EQAVET peer review methodology at provider and system level.

The Italian NRP carries out the following activities:

- to bring together and involve all relevant stakeholders at national and regional levels,

including Centres of Vocational Excellence, in order to contribute to the implementation of the EQAVET framework;

- to take concrete initiatives to implement and further develop the EQAVET framework;
- to support self-assessment as a complementary and effective means of quality assurance;
- to participate actively in the EQAVET network activities, providing updated descriptions of the national quality assurance arrangements based on the EQAVET framework;
- to engage in European EQAVET Peer Reviews at system level to enhance the transparency and consistency of quality assurance arrangements and to reinforce trust between the Member States.

The Italian NRP also coordinates the National Board under the auspices of the labour ministry. The National Board includes as members the main stakeholders and representatives of the national institutions involved in the issue of quality assurance in VET:

- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;
- Ministry of Education and Merit;
- Regions and Autonomous Provinces;
- social partners;
- training providers;
- education institutions.

CHAPTER 12.

Validation of prior learning

Italy's legislative framework for the recognition of prior learning was put into place with the Legislative Decree 13/2013, which established the national system of certification of competences, and the inter-ministerial decree of June 2015, which defined the operational framework for the recognition of regional qualifications at the national level.

On 5 January 2021, in agreement with the Ministries of Labour, of Education, of University and Research, of Public Administration and of Economy and Finance, Italy [adopted](#) the guidelines for the interoperability of awarding bodies of the National system of certification of competences.

The guidelines, also agreed by the regions and autonomous provinces, set the rules for operationalising the services of the competent public bodies for the identification, validation and certification of competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, in support of the individual's right to lifelong learning (Law No 92 of 2012). They also complete the regulatory framework of the National system for the certification of competences (Legislative Decree No 13 of 2013) (36) .

According to the decree, competences specific to certain qualifications related to the national repertory are referenced to the national qualifications framework (NQF), are subject to identification, validation and certification. The national repertory was included in the Atlas of work and qualifications. The terminology is created by the National Institute for Public Policy Analysis (INAPP) to support the technical group responsible for the national framework.

The competences are assessed on request and may also be recognised by public bodies (subject to internal arrangements) in terms of credits to aid their portability.

The labour ministry collects data by competent bodies, as well as through INAPP and the National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies (ANPAL) and submits them to the national technical committee to verify that minimum service standards and performance indicators are met.

The Italian regions are the main hub for services for labour and vocational training on the territory. Within the system supporting active labour or vocational training policies, they are tackling the issue of the certification and validation of competences, contextualising and differentiating tools and approaches.

The 30 June 2015 (37) decree also included measures relating to the functions required for providing validation and certification services:

- 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.

The Decree describes the tasks and activities that personnel responsible for providing services for the identification, validation and certification of competences should exercise in the various phases of the process: access to the service/welcoming; recognition/identification; and assessment and certification. The European qualifications framework level for each function is also indicated.

It should be noted that regions, in their position as awarding bodies, offer a direct guarantee on the criteria and methods adopted for recruitment of personnel entrusted with providing such

functions and verification of their professional requisites, in compliance with the principles of collegiality, neutrality, impartiality and independence. In those regions where the regional rules and services system is already accessible, provider competence training has already been planned and implemented. Where work is still in process 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 of the theme, INAPP has prepared a multimedia training package, which has been designed in an open-source environment (Moodle) and provided on a MOOC (massive online open course) platform, to transfer all the information, know-how, methodologies and tools useful for managing the various phases of the process to service providers.

For more information about arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning please visit [Cedefop's European database](#).

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- [36] Decreto Legislativo 16 gennaio 2013, No 13, Definizione delle norme generali e dei livelli essenziali delle prestazioni per l'individuazione e validazione degli apprendimenti non formali e informali e degli standard minimi di servizio del sistema nazionale di certificazione delle competenze, a norma dell'articolo 4, commi 58 e 68, della legge 28 giugno 2012, No 92 [Legislative Decree 16 January 2013, No 13, Definition of the general rules and essential levels of performance for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning and of the minimum service standards of the national skills certification system, pursuant to article 4, paragraphs 58 and 68 , of the law 28 June 2012, No 92]
- [37] [Decreto Interministeriale 30 giugno 2015, Definizione di un quadro operativo per il riconoscimento a livello nazionale delle qualificazioni regionali e delle relative competenze, nell'ambito del Repertorio nazionale dei titoli di istruzione e formazione e delle qualificazioni professionali di cui all'articolo 8 del decreto legislativo 16 gennaio 2013, No 13](#). [Inter-ministerial Decree of 30 June 2015, Definition of an operational framework for the national recognition of regional qualifications and related competences, within the National directory of education and training qualifications and professional qualifications referred to in Article 8 of the decree legislative 16 January 2013, No 13]

CHAPTER 13.

Incentives for learners

Individual vouchers and other subsidies

Both the regions and autonomous provinces, and the inter-professional joint funds, finance personalised continuing vocational training (CVET) programmes, through vouchers for tailored training interventions and other tools, such as 'endowment' (38) , mainly targeted to the employed.

Vouchers for the unemployed

In Italy there is no national voucher system. Inapp carried out a detailed survey of programming, within which, in particular in the CVET supply chain, data on voucher system in the regions is detected. In the period 2021-23, many regions financed individual training vouchers for the (un)employed. The Latium region issued in 2022 (on the ESF+ plan) a notice for EUR 1 million for vouchers in the road haulage sector for participation in professionalising training courses to contribute to the immediate insertion of unemployed and unemployable persons in the labour market. The Campania region issued in 2022 (on the ESF plan) a notice for vouchers for participation in accessible training courses addressed to persons with disabilities to improve their employability.

In 2023 Tuscany within the Employment Pact issued public notices for the funding of individual training vouchers for unemployed persons included in the GOL programme and/or in CIG. The Veneto Region, within the framework of the Veneto ESF+ 2021-27 PR, Objective "Investment for employment and growth" issued a notice for the granting of Individual Training Vouchers linked to the training pathways of Health Care Workers.

Vouchers for employees

From the results of the [OFP Inapp](#) survey it emerged that in the years 2020-23 notices using vouchers as a training tool for continuous training interventions issued by the Regions/Autonomous Provinces was issued in 11 Italian Regions for 37 notices.

The Piedmont and Veneto Regions are those that make the most use of this measure, the former financing 9 notices with almost 21 million euros, the latter 7, but for a value that reaches 43 million euros. In percentage terms, while in Piedmont the voucher instrument accounts for over 80% of the calls for tenders and 70% of the allocated resources, in Veneto these percentages drop to 30% and 48% respectively.

The other two regions that make the most use of vouchers are Tuscany with 6 calls for tenders, for a total value of almost EUR 6.2 million, accounting for 35.7% of the resources, and Lombardy with 4 calls for tenders, financed with an endowment of about EUR 100 million, accounting for 77% of the total resources allocated.

In 2022, the Apulia region issued a new notice financed by the ESF 'PassImprese2020' for vouchers for continuing vocational training courses for female entrepreneurs and businessmen, female employees (middle managers and executives) and self-employed workers as well as professionals registered with private Associations and Associations.

In 2023, the [Piedmont](#) region in the framework of the ESF+ 2021-2027 programming approved the Guideline Act for individual continuous and permanent training with a catalogue of short vocational training courses with skills certification and training vouchers for employed workers.

In 2023, the [Lombardy](#) region issued a notice addressed to companies for continuous training with catalogue-based company vouchers under the ESF+ 2021-2027.

Vouchers from Interprofessional Funds

The notices issued by the Interprofessional Funds also include the possibility of disbursing vouchers. According to [OFP Inapp](#) data, between 2018 and 2022 there were 68 notices providing for this modality and 16 Contracting Bodies that disbursed them. Fon.Coop and Fondo Dirigenti PMI are the only two Funds that have provided for the eligibility of this measure in all the notices they have issued. The former, with its 14 notices, is the Fund that has issued the most and has provided for an allocation of almost EUR 54 million. The second one published 3 for EUR 405 000. Among the Funds that have mostly contemplated the provision of vouchers are Fonditalia (6 notices for over 58.5 million, i.e., in relative terms, 75% of the notices and 85% of the resources allocated by the Fund in the reference period) and Fondartigianato (8 notices, with an endowment of over 47 million, i.e., over a quarter of the notices and 30.9% of the resources). In other cases, the role of vouchers appears much more limited and differs from fund to fund: many of the funds provided for vouchers in a single call, to which a very small share of resources was allocated.

Individual training vouchers

The Autonomous Province of Bolzano, the Regions of Abruzzo and Veneto have planned calls for continuous training financed through the use of individual vouchers between 2020 and 2022.

The Region of Tuscany finances in 2023 (Regional Programme ESF+ 2021-27 priority 1 'Employment' specific objective D, activity 1.d.2 'Training vouchers for employed persons, entrepreneurs, members of cooperatives and self-employed professionals for participation in training courses aimed at strengthening and updating professional skills') individual training vouchers aimed at self-employed persons, to strengthen and update professional skills and improve their career prospects, for a total of Euro 1.5 million.

Study leave

Under provisions of [Law 53/2000](#) (art.5), the regions and autonomous provinces grant leave for training for workers, acknowledging their right to lifelong training.

[38] Endowment consists of 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 (training providers) accredited to provide such services. The amount of the endowment varies in proportion to the level of employability of the subject and the services included in the individual programme. The beneficiary is never given the sum allocated directly: the financial relationship is only established between the providing public body and the accredited public or private operator that provides the service. For some services, the operator receives the relevant public refund based on the outcome of the specific activity and not on its simple provision.

CHAPTER 14.

Incentives for enterprises to boost their participation in VET provision

Tax credits, exemptions and reductions in social security contributions

The 2018 Budget Law established that [tax credit for 4.0 training](#) is granted to enterprises for 40% of the expenses relating to the corporate cost of salaried personnel for the time they are occupied in training activities. This can amount to a maximum of EUR 300 000 per year for each enterprise and is granted for stipulated training activities, thanks to corporate or territorial collective contracts. The training activities permissible for requesting tax credits must involve issues connected to the introduction of digital technology innovations: 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, man-machinery interface, additive manufacturing, the internet of things and machines and the digital integration of corporate processes.

Law 232/2016 introduced financial incentives for companies involved in dual training. 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 enterprise (such as those with fewer than 10 employees) are entitled to total social security exemption for the first 3 years. 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.

Wage subsidy and training remunerations

Employers willing to offer apprenticeships 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.

Other incentives

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 designed for small enterprises that generally find it difficult to organise structured training courses.

CHAPTER 15.

Guidance and counselling

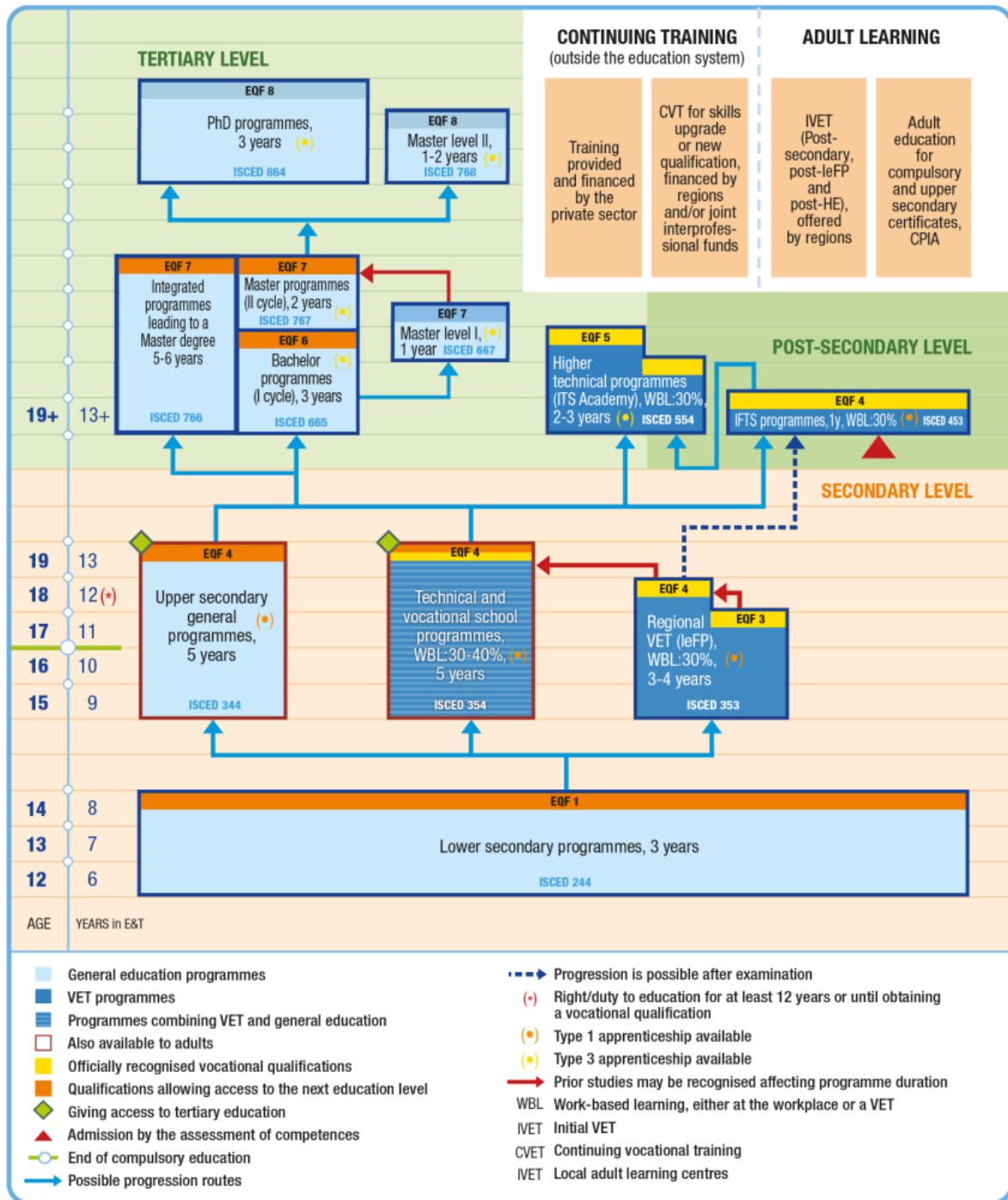
Guidance within the VET system is promoted and implemented through different initiatives at national, regional, and local levels. Education and career guidance is provided by teachers and school counsellors (a new role of school tutor is with guidance services is under implementation as from 2023-24), as well as external guidance experts and professionals. The aim of the provision of guidance activities is to improve self-knowledge and self-assessment of personal capacities, attitudes and expectations.

As part of the national recovery and resilience plan, a new guidance system was legislated in 2022 ([Decree n.328](#) of 22 December 2022); the [new system](#) foresees a new model of integrated guidance services from the first level of education, and more and targeted services from secondary education. It introduces the role of tutor for teachers in education, personalised support for learners accessible digitally (e-portfolio), teacher training and the creation of a unique guidance online platform.

Please see:

- [Cedefop's labour market intelligence toolkit](#);
- [Cedefop's inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices](#).







Vocational education and training system chart



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop, & National Institute for the Analysis of Public Policies (INAPP). (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – Italy: system description. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2024). Vocational education and training in Europe: VET in Europe database – detailed VET system descriptions [Database]. www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/italy-u3

VET Programme Types

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| EQF 3-4 | | | |
| Regional IVET (IeFP), WBL: 30%, 3-4 years ISCED 353 | | | |
| Initial Regional VET programmes (IeFP), ISCED 353, leading to EQF level 3 and EQF level 4 qualifications, (Vocational Education and Training pathways - (Istruzione e Formazione Professionale - IeFP)) | | | |
| EQF level | 3-4 | ISCED-P 2011 level | 353 |
| Usual entry grade | 9 | Usual completion grade | 11-12 |
| Usual entry age | 14-15 | Usual completion age | 17-18 |
| Length of a programme (years) | 3 or 4 years | | |
| Is it part of compulsory education and training? |  Full time education is compulsory until the age of 16, but young people must stay in education or training until age 18 to accomplish 12 years of education and/or vocational training (right/duty). | Is it part of formal education and training system? |  |
| Is it initial VET? |  | Is it continuing VET? |  |
| Is it offered free of charge? |  For State-owned schools and regional IVET programmes | Is it available for adults? |  |
| ECVET or other credits | Not applicable | | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school-based learning; • work practice/dual system (practical training at school and in-company practice); • self-learning; • apprenticeships. |
| Main providers | Training providers accredited for IVET (IeFP) and State professional institutes in a subsidiarity status |
| Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies | 30% |
| Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical training at school ($\leq 70\%$) • in-company practice ($\geq 30\%$) |
| Main target groups | Programmes are available for young people. |
| Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age) | Learners must hold a lower secondary school leaving diploma and have passed the relevant State examination (final State examination of the first cycle of education). |
| Assessment of learning outcomes | Learners need to pass a final examination. The objective of the exam is the assessment of basic, technical-professional and transversal competences as well as multidisciplinary written, oral and practical tests. For these, the learners must take a practical test and draw up a technical sheet; they must also take an oral test. The participation of two sector (labour market) experts, as members of the examination committee is a prerequisite. |
| Diplomas/certificates provided | Upon completion of a 3-year programme, learners obtain a professional operator certificate (<i>Qualificazione di formazione professionale di area tecnica</i> , EQF level 3); upon completion of a 4-year programme learners obtain a professional technician diploma (<i>Qualificazione di formazione professionale di area tecnica</i> , EQF level 4). |
| Examples of qualifications | Clothing operator, footwear operator, building specialist, graphic specialist, construction operator, construction technician (39), etc. |
| Progression opportunities for learners after graduation | Those who obtain a professional operator certificate can attend 1 additional year leading to a professional technician EQF 4 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 (ISCED 354) and obtain the upper secondary technical or vocational education diploma (EQF level 4) or enrol in a higher technical education and training ISCED 453 programme and obtain the higher technical specialisation certificate (<i>Certificato di specializzazione tecnica superiore (IFTS)</i> , EQF level 4). |
| Destination of graduates | Information not available |







| | |
|--|---|
| Awards through validation of prior learning | Information not available |
| General education subjects | ✓ |
| Key competences | Information not available |
| Application of learning outcomes approach | ✓ They refer to minimum level of basic competences as well as to general and specific technical- professional competences in terms of learning outcomes. |

[39] As described in national context.

EQF 4

Technical and
vocational school
programmes
5 years
ISCED 354

Initial VET, technical and vocational school ISCED 354 programmes (programmi quinquennali negli istituti tecnici o professionali) leading to EQF level 4 upper secondary education diploma (technical or vocational) (Diploma di istruzione tecnica o professionale)

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| EQF level | 4 | ISCED-P 2011 level | 354 |
| Usual entry grade | 9 | Usual completion grade | 13 |
| Usual entry age | 14-15 | Usual completion age | 18-19 |
| Length of a programme (years) | 5 | | |
| Is it part of compulsory education and training? |  Full-time education is compulsory until the age of 16, but young people must stay in education or training until age 18 to accomplish 12 years of education and/or vocational training (right/duty). | Is it part of formal education and training system? |  |
| Is it initial VET? |  | Is it continuing VET? |  |
| Is it offered free of charge? |  For State-owned schools | Is it available for adults? |  |

ECVET or other credits Not applicable

| | |
|---|---|
| Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school-based learning (contact studies, including virtual communication with the teacher/trainer); • work practice (practical training at school and in-company practice); • self-learning; • apprenticeship. |
| Main providers | Schools |
| Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies | 30-40% |
| Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical training at school • in-company practice |
| Main target groups | Programmes are available for young people and adults with lower secondary qualifications (40) . |
| Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age) | Learners must hold a lower secondary education certificate (school leaving diploma) and have passed the relevant State examination (final State examination) of the first cycle of education. |
| Assessment of learning outcomes | At the end of 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. |
| Diplomas/certificates provided | Learners who successfully pass the final State examination of the second cycle (upper secondary VET) of education receive, depending on the kind of secondary school (technical or vocational) the upper secondary education diploma - technical schools - or the upper secondary education diploma - vocational schools. |
| Examples of qualifications | Catering operator, wellness operator, etc. (41) |
| Progression opportunities for learners after graduation | Those who complete VET can enter the labour market or continue their studies in tertiary education (ISCED 665, 766 programmes) or higher technical education and training pathways (ISCED 453 programmes offered in the IFTS system and ISCED 554 programmes in ITS institutes) |
| Destination of graduates | Information not available |
| Awards through validation of prior learning | Information not available |
| General education subjects | ✓ |

| | |
|--|---|
| Key competences | Information not available |
| Application of learning outcomes approach | <p>✓</p> <p>The specific regulations for each training provision (specialisation) include learning outcomes expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. The student's education, cultural and professional profile indicates:</p> <p>(a) the general learning outcomes which shall be shared by all pathways;</p> <p>(b) the learning outcomes which shall be peculiar to the specific pathways of technical and vocational schools; in compliance with the EQF provisions, learning outcomes shall be described in terms of competences, skills and knowledge in this case as well.</p> |
| Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners | Information not available |

[40] Adults can attend evening or distance courses at Technical and Professional Institutes, without age limits.

[41] As described in national context.

EQF 4

IFTS programmes,

1 year,

WBL: 30%

ISCED 453



post-secondary, 1-year long higher technical education and training (istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore, IFTS) ISCED 453 programmes leading to EQF level 4 high technical specialisation certificate (certificato di specializzazione tecnica superiore)

| | | | |
|--|-----|---|-----|
| EQF level | 4 | ISCED-P 2011 level | 453 |
| Usual entry grade | 13+ | Usual completion grade | 13+ |
| Usual entry age | 19 | Usual completion age | 20 |
| Length of a programme (years) | 1 | | |
| Is it part of compulsory education and training? | ✗ | Is it part of formal education and training system? | ✓ |
| Is it initial VET? | ✓ | Is it continuing VET? | ✗ |
| Is it offered free of charge? | ✓ | Is it available for adults? | ✓ |

Adults who want to improve their professional skills or retrain can access IFTS courses. There is no age limit for enrolling in these courses. The courses are accessible both to people seeking employment and to workers who wish to update or perfect their professional skills.

ECVET or other credits Not applicable

| | |
|---|--|
| Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school-based learning • work practice/dual system • self-learning • apprenticeship |
| Main providers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools/training centres: these pathways are designed and managed by at least four training partners (a school, a vocational training centre, a university, an enterprise or another public or private centre) which formally cooperate (42) • Enterprises |
| Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies | 30% |
| Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in-company practice • practical training in educational centers, through simulation labs or school workshops |
| Main target groups | Programmes are available for young employed and unemployed people and adults with an upper secondary education diploma. |
| Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age) | Learners must hold an upper secondary education diploma. Higher technical education and training courses are also open to: holders of a professional technician certificate; young people admitted to the fifth year of general upper secondary education (<i>Liceo</i>); people who do not have an upper secondary education qualification, but had their educational, training and vocational experiences validated. |
| Assessment of learning outcomes | To complete a VET programme, learners need to pass a leaving examination, based on the features characterising regional labour markets and referring to nationally defined and established in State-regions agreements occupational profiles. |
| Diplomas/certificates provided | Higher technical specialisation certificate (<i>Certificato di specializzazione tecnica superiore</i>) |
| Examples of qualifications | Higher technical specialisation certificate in Assistant manager for travel agency and tour operator (43) . |
| Progression opportunities for learners after graduation | Those who complete VET can enter the labour market or higher technical programmes (ITS). |
| Destination of graduates | Information not available |

| | |
|--|---|
| Awards through validation of prior learning |  <p>Higher technical specialisation qualifications are based on a system of minimum levels of general (basic and transversal standards) and technical-professional competences (44) , nationally recognised and structured into course credits (<i>Unità Capitalizzabili - UC</i>).</p> <p>There's no possibility to acquire partial qualifications.</p> |
| General education subjects | Information not available |
| Key competences | Information not available |
| Application of learning outcomes approach |  <p>Level description includes learning outcomes descriptors in terms of competence and knowledge; they are also provided with assessment criteria.</p> |

-
- [42] In addition to schools, vocational training centres, universities, and enterprises, IFTS pathways can involve local authorities, professional associations, chambers of commerce, research institutes, NGOs, trade unions, industry consortia, technology parks, innovation hubs, and international organizations. These partners help align training with industry needs and enhance resources and networking opportunities.
- [43] As described in national context and specified explicitly in the [Referencing the Italian qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework report](#) (adopted in 2022).
- [44] Annex A - Unified Conference Agreement dated 29 April 2004; Unified Conference Agreement dated 16 March 2006; Inter-Ministerial Decree dated 7 July 2011.

EQF 5

Higher

Technical programmes (ITS Academy),

WBL: 30%,

2-3 years

ISCED 554

Higher technical ISCED 554 programmes provided by higher technological institutes (ITS Academy), 2-3 years-long leading to EQF level 5 qualifications

| | | | |
|---|--------|--|--|
| EQF level | 5 | ISCED-P 2011 level | 554 |
| Usual entry grade | 13+ | Usual completion grade | 13+ |
| Usual entry age | 19+ | Usual completion age | 19+ |
| Length of a programme (years) | 2 to 3 | | |
| Is it part of compulsory education and training? | ✗ | Is it part of formal education and training system? | ✓ |
| Is it initial VET? | ✓ | Is it continuing VET? | ✗ |
| Is it offered free of charge? | ✓ | Is it available for adults? | <p>✓</p> <p>Anyone holding an upper secondary education diploma can access higher technical education courses.</p> <p>At the end of the higher technical education and training courses, a post-secondary higher technical specialization certificate is issued, allowing access to non-academic tertiary education and training (Higher Technological Education System - ITS Academy) to students holding an initial education and vocational training diploma and whose learning outcomes are at level 4 NQF/EQF, with sub-articulation 4 as shown in Table 3.3 (45)</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| ECVET or other credits | Not applicable |
| Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school-based learning; • work practice; • self-learning; • apprenticeships |
| Main providers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools; • training centres; • enterprises. <p>Higher technical institutes (ITS Academy) are established on the basis of regional territorial plans and should be considered as specific types of participative foundations. The organisational standard states that founders of these institutes may be: an upper secondary school, both technical or vocational, State or fully recognised; a training centre accredited by the region for the purpose of higher training; an enterprise operating in the same production area; a university department or another organisation operating in the field of scientific and technological research; a local institution (municipality, province, mountain community, etc.).</p> |
| Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies | 30% |
| Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical training at school • in-company practice |
| Main target groups | Programmes are available for young people employed or unemployed and for adults (both need to hold an upper secondary education diploma). |
| Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age) | Learners must hold an upper secondary education diploma (either general or vocational). |
| Assessment of learning outcomes | 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. |
| Diplomas/certificates provided | VET learners receive a higher technical diploma upon successful completion. |
| Examples of qualifications | Higher technician for the mobility of people and goods (46) . |
| Progression opportunities for learners after graduation | Those who complete VET can enter the labour market. |

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Destination of graduates | Information not available |
| Awards through validation of prior learning | Information not available |
| General education subjects | Information not available |
| Key competences | Information not available |
| Application of learning outcomes approach | ✓ |
| Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners | Information not available |

[46] As described in national context and specified explicitly in the *Referencing the Italian qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework* report (adopted in 2012). <https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en/referencing-reports-and-contacts>

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