



Vocational education and training in Italy

Short description





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Foreword

The 2014 Italian Presidency takes place in a challenging context. Although the decline in employment under way since the second half of 2012 virtually halted last winter, the unemployment rate has continued to rise following the increase in labour market participation. Italy has been hit hard by the economic and financial crisis and unemployment has grown by almost six percentage points since 2008, reaching its highest level since the 1970s. Young people have been hit hardest during the recession, their unemployment rate doubling since 2008 and reaching a staggering 40% in 2013.

Italy is among the EU Member States where manufacturing still makes up a considerable share of its economy, especially in the north and the centre of the country. Italy's highly fragmented productive structure compared with the other leading Member States is common to every sector, and especially so in the south. Data on education attainment, employment and unemployment, as well as the OECD skills surveys, suggest that Italy faces the double challenge of a labour market that, in southern regions, cannot fully absorb the human resources available, and skills mismatch due to education choices that do not give people the opportunity to find jobs. Low returns on education and training do not encourage people to update and upgrade their skills, though this is important for enterprises to be able to innovate, be competitive and create new jobs.

Understanding this interplay between economy, labour market, and education and training is one of the prerequisites to devising effective policy responses. To identify potential areas of growth, define types and levels of qualifications, the skills and competences needed, and provide education and training that is relevant to the labour market requires the cooperation of the education and training and employment sectors, social partners and third sector organisations. This is important to ensure that vocational education and training (VET) gives people the opportunity to acquire a mix of skills that combines theory and practice, allowing them to perform a specific occupation, but also gives them the opportunity to progress and return to education and training to be able to upgrade and complement their skills. Collaboration and support structures are needed to help small and microenterprises engage in training.

Italy has set itself the strategic objective of strengthening VET, recognising the important role that it can play in supporting its enterprises and empowering its people. The recent policy package focuses on the youth guarantee scheme and measures to reduce red tape for enterprises and promote inter-firm cooperation. These reflect the need to link education and training better with the labour

market, extend work-based learning schemes, ensure teachers' and trainers' professional development, and strengthen vocational guidance. The initiative to offer apprenticeship-type schemes in higher education and in fields of studies and types of programmes that are traditionally perceived as general and academic education is innovative. Within the context of the European alliance of apprenticeship it will be important to see and discuss how these offers will be taken up by education and training providers, learners and enterprises.

This report provides an insight into the Italian VET system. By presenting its main features and current developments, we hope that it will contribute to a better understanding of VET in Italy, the challenges ahead and the policy measures devised.

James J. Calleja
Director

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Table of contents

Foreword.....	4
Acknowledgements	6
List of tables and figures.....	9
CHAPTER 1. External factors influencing vocational education and training	11
1.1. Population and demographics	11
1.2. Economy and labour market indicators.....	12
1.2.1. Employment.....	12
1.2.2. Unemployment.....	14
1.3. Education attainment.....	16
1.4. Participation in formal and non-formal education and training.....	18
1.5. Forecasting labour market needs: national occupation information system	20
CHAPTER 2. Vocational education and training in a lifelong learning perspective	22
2.1. General education and vocational education and training in Italy	22
2.2. VET governance.....	26
2.3. VET at upper secondary level.....	26
2.3.1. Technical and vocational school programmes.....	26
2.3.2. Three- and four-year leFP programmes.....	28
2.4. VET at post-secondary level.....	30
2.4.1. Post-secondary higher technical training.....	30
2.4.1.1. Programmes at IFTS	32
2.4.1.2. Programmes at ITS	33
2.4.2. Post-leFP programmes and others.....	33
2.5. Post-higher education VET.....	35
2.6. Apprenticeship-type schemes.....	35
2.7. Adult education: <i>Centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti</i> (CPIA)	39
2.8. Continuing vocational training.....	40
2.8.1. Under the public system.....	40
2.8.2. Training provided and financed by the private sector	42
2.8.3. Training provided by employers	42
2.8.4. CVT providers.....	43

CHAPTER 3. Framework conditions for promoting vocational education and training	47
3.1. Legislative framework for funding continuing vocational training.....	47
3.2. Tax incentives for education, training and continuing professional development.....	48
3.3. Guidance and counselling	49
3.3.1. Establishing a national lifelong guidance system.....	50
3.3.2. The youth guarantee	51
3.3.3. Other recent initiatives	52
3.4. Validation of non-formal and informal learning.....	52
3.5. Training teachers and trainers	55
3.5.1. Teacher training	55
3.5.2. Trainer training.....	57
3.6. VET provider and provision quality assurance	58
List of abbreviations	60
References.....	61
Web pages	63
Relevant national legislation	64
ANNEX 1. Mapping Italian education and training programmes to ISCED-11 classification	68

List of tables and figures

Tables

1. Participation rate in education and training by gender and age group (2011, %)	19
2. Major characteristics of technical and vocational school programmes	26
3. Major characteristics of three- and four-year leFP programmes	29
4. Major characteristics of programmes at IFTS and ITS	31
5. Average number of apprenticeship contracts by age group and geographic area of work: absolute values and % variation, 2010-12	38
6. Courses delivered in the context of education provision for adults, 2011/12	40
7. Enterprises with 10 employees or more that provided training in 2010 by type of training and economic sector (%)	43
8. Professional skills and competences to be acquired through training courses provided by companies employing 10 people and more by sector and age group, 2010 (%)	44
9. Strategies to counter the crisis by geographical area (%)	46
10. General features of VET teachers and trainers	56
11. Correspondence between regional accreditation systems and EQAVET indicators	59

Figures

1. Projected old-age dependency ratio (%)	11
2. Employment by economic sector in % of total employment, 2008-13	13
3. Employment rates by age group and highest level of education attained (%), 2008 and 2013	14
4. Unemployment rates by age group and highest level of education attained (%), 2008 and 2013	15
5. Total unemployment rates by region (15 years and over), 2008 and 2013 (%)	16
6. Early leavers from education and training aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training in 2008 and 2013 (%)	17
7. Young people with at least an upper secondary qualification (% of 20 to 24 year-olds) by sex, 2008 and 2013	18
8. VET in Italy's education and training system (ISCED-11)	24
9. VET in Italy's education and training system (ISCED-97)	25

Italy



Area:	301 263 km ²
Capital:	Rome
System of government:	Parliamentary Republic
Population:	60 million (59 685 000 at 1 January 2013)
Year of EU entry:	1952 (founding member)
Currency:	Euro (EUR) (Member of the euro area since 1999)
Per capita GDP:	EUR 22 807 (2012)

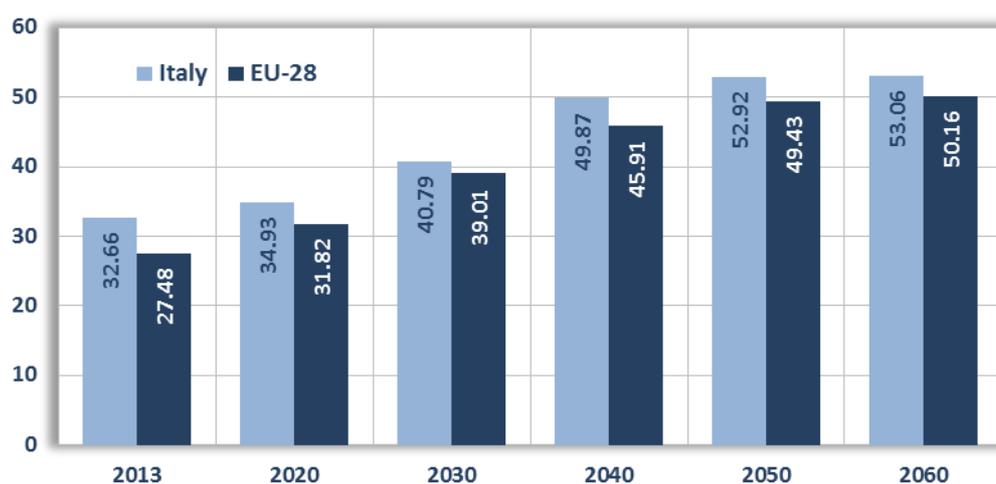
CHAPTER 1.

External factors influencing vocational education and training

1.1. Population and demographics

According to Eurostat, in 2013 the population was approximately 60 million. The falls in 2012 (-2.04%) and 2013 (-1.56%) compared to 2010 are mainly due to changes in the migration flows which previously counterbalanced the declining birth rate. The old-age dependency indicator has increased progressively during the past two decades. In 2020 (34.93%) it will be higher than in the EU-28 (31.78%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. **Projected old-age dependency ratio (%)**



NB: This indicator is defined as the projected number of persons aged 65 and over expressed as a percentage of the projected number of persons aged between 15 and 64.

Source: Eurostat: *Projected old-age dependency ratio*. Data code: tsdde511.

Last update: 1.4.2014. Date of extraction: 7.5.2014.

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&language=en&pcode=tsdde511>

A positive trend until 2008 was due to higher fertility among migrant women but this turned negative in 2009-11.

According to the latest reform ⁽¹⁾, the retirement age for both men and women will be raised to 66 years by the end of 2018. At the same time, the minimum retirement age has been set at 65 years for men and not less than 62

⁽¹⁾ Decree-Law 201/2011, Chapter IV, Article 24, which became Law 214/2011.

years and six months for women, starting from 2012, and conditional on payment of at least 20 years of contributions.

These patterns show the urgent need for change in organisation and allocation of resources to the different subsystems of the overall national lifelong learning framework to promote migrant sociocultural integration and active ageing.

1.2. Economy and labour market indicators

The economy entered into a new recession in 2011 that continued until the first half of 2013. GDP in 2013 decreased by 1.9% while in the EU-28 it increased by 0.1%; in the last quarter of 2013 the negative growth reversed and was once again positive (+0.1%), but became negative again in the first quarter of 2014 (-0.1%). The government has been struggling to reduce spending. Its fiscal deficit was steadily reduced to less than 3% in 2013 compared to 4.6% in 2010 and 1.5% of the GDP before the crisis. Italy's huge public debt was about 132.6% of the GDP in 2013, up significantly from 127% in 2012.

Italy has a diversified manufacturing sector, with the second largest share in the EU and roughly the same total and per capita output as France and the UK. However, the country is divided into a developed industrial north, where most of the private companies are based, and a less developed south with a significant infrastructure gap.

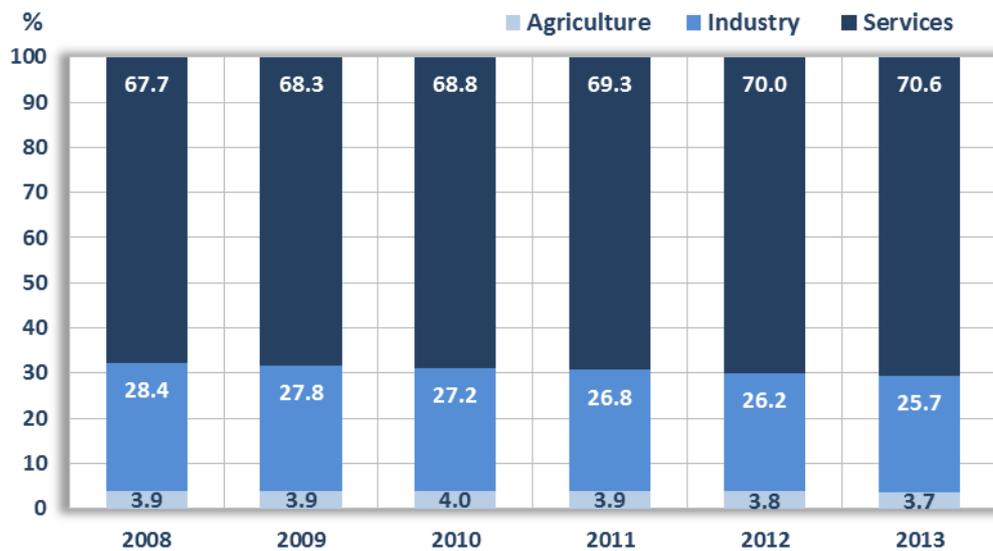
When examined by economic activity (Figure 2) and compared with the EU average (22.4%), data on employment confirm Italy's manufacturing focus: 25.7% are employed in industry. As in other EU Member States, employment in the services sector has been on the rise.

Nationally, 95% of private enterprises have fewer than 10 employees. In the South, with an average of 2.3 employees, the share of micro companies is higher than the national average, both in the services and industry sectors. Big industrial companies are mainly located in the north-west, micro and small industrial enterprises are prevalent in the north-east; 45% of employees nationally work in small industry. Large companies in the services sector are located in the centre where their share of employees (public and private) is 68%.

1.2.1. Employment

Since the outbreak of the economic crisis in 2008, employment has decreased from 58.7 to 55.6% and is generally lower than the EU average across all age groups (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Employment by economic sector in % of total employment, 2008-13



Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS: *Employment growth and activity branches: annual averages*. Data code: lfsi_grt_a. Date of extraction 12.5.2014.
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_SDDS/EN/lfsi_grt_a_esms.htm

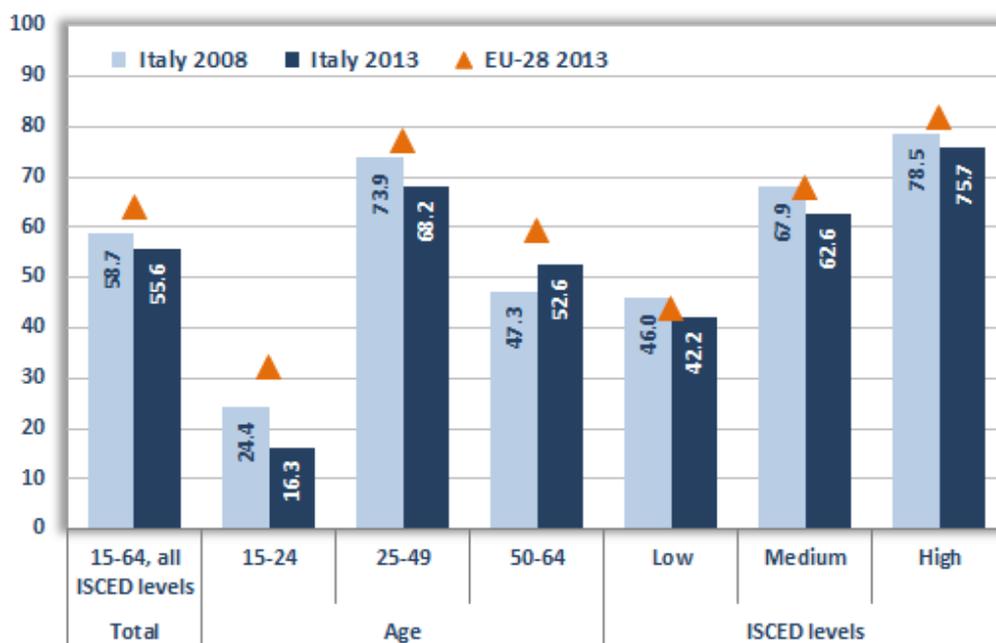
While young people's employment rates are generally lower than rates for the adult population, as young people are more likely to be in education than their older counterparts, youth employment is considerably lower in Italy compared to the EU average. This gap widened since the beginning of the worldwide crisis in 2008 and now stands at 16.3% versus 32.3%.

While employment among those holding low qualifications is in line with the EU average, the labour market still struggles to absorb work force with medium and high qualification levels. Overall employment for those holding a university degree was 75.7% in 2013 and those with medium-level qualifications 62.6%, while the EU-28 averages were 81.7% and 67.7% respectively. The difference is even bigger for the 15 to 24 year-olds as only 23.1% of young people with high qualifications are employed, compared to 54.7% in the EU-28.

However, in the Italian education and training system most of the higher qualifications are acquired within general education and not within VET. The only higher education qualifications acquired within VET are those offered in higher technical institutes (*Istituti tecnici superiori, ITS*) (ISCED 554 ⁽²⁾ see Section 2.4.1).

⁽²⁾ This refers to the new categories as used in the international standard classification of education (ISCED) 2011 (Unesco, 2011; Unesco-UIS, 2011).

Figure 3. **Employment rates by age group and highest level of education attained (%), 2008 and 2013**



NB: Data presented in this chart are based on the level of ISCED-97. Low education attainment refers to at most lower secondary education, medium education attainment refers to upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education, and high education attainment refers to tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS: *Employment rates by sex, age and highest level of education attained*. Data code: lfsa_ergaed. Date of extraction: 8.5.2014.

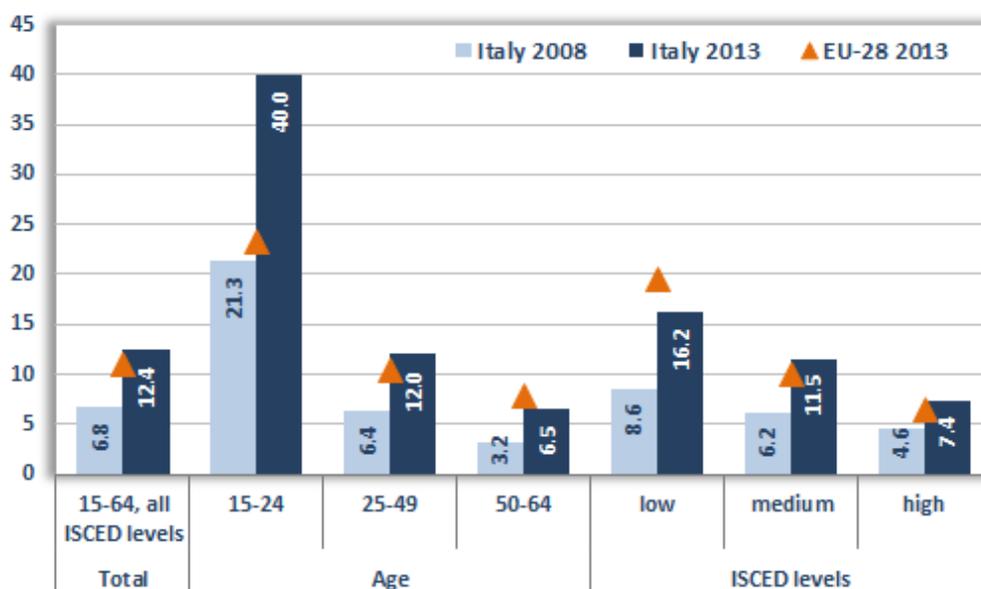
http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_ergaed&lang=en

Employment for those of 20 to 34 years with medium-level VET qualifications (from ISCED 354 programmes with EQF level 4 qualifications) is slightly lower than the EU-28 average.

1.2.2. Unemployment

In 2013 unemployment reached its peak since the 1970s, increasing to 12.2%, slightly over the 10.8% of the EU-28 average. It has been increasing constantly in recent years due to worsened labour market conditions in the aggravated financial crisis, which turned in to a structural crisis (Figure 4).

Figure 4. **Unemployment rates by age group and highest level of education attained (%), 2008 and 2013**



NB: Data presented in this chart are based on levels of ISCED-97. Low education attainment refers to at most lower secondary education, medium education attainment refers to upper secondary and post-secondary non tertiary education, and high education attainment refers to tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS: *Unemployment rates by sex, age and highest level of education attained*. Data code: lfsa_urgaed. Date of extraction: 12.5.2014.

http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_urgaed&lang=en

While higher education attainment still provides a shield against unemployment, recent labour market dynamics confirm that holding a university degree does not reduce the risk of unemployment to the same extent as in some European countries. In the current economic crisis, unemployment rates have also increased among those with tertiary education to 7.4%, and to 11.5% for people holding an upper secondary qualification (EU-28 averages were 6.5% and 10% in 2013). Unemployment is highest among graduates from humanities or classical studies that do not offer any direct opportunity to enter the labour market. Further, those who are employed often hold jobs requiring a lower level of qualifications.

Unemployment of 15 to 24 year-olds at all attainment levels reached 40% in 2013 and it is generally higher than in the EU-28. There is also a wide gap between the north and south of the country (Figure 5), and the situation of specific target groups varies considerably.

Figure 5. **Total unemployment rates by region (15 years and over), 2008 and 2013 (%)**



Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS: *Unemployment rates by sex, age and NUTS 2 regions*. Data code: lfst_r_lfu3rt. Date of extraction: 13.5.2014. http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfst_r_lfu3rt

Unemployment among women in this age-group also increased from 24.7% in 2008 to 41.4% in 2013; in the southern region it reached 52.2% and 57% in the Islands. Long-term unemployment rose from 3% in 2008 to 6.9% in 2013.

The government's response to high youth unemployment is to strengthen VET. A comprehensive package of measures was approved at the end of 2013 to improve vocational guidance, prevent early leaving from education and training, increase education and training offers, promote apprenticeships and traineeships, increase staff and improve teachers' professional development. Special attention will be given to the national plan implementing the youth guarantee. The recently published Job Act (Law 78/2014) includes measures to boost employment and simplify bureaucracy for enterprises. It also includes initiatives to simplify short-term and apprenticeship contracts to align them better to labour market needs. Comprehensive reform of the employment services is planned to help match better labour demand and supply through partnerships between businesses, public institutions and non-profit organisations (see also Chapters 2 and 3).

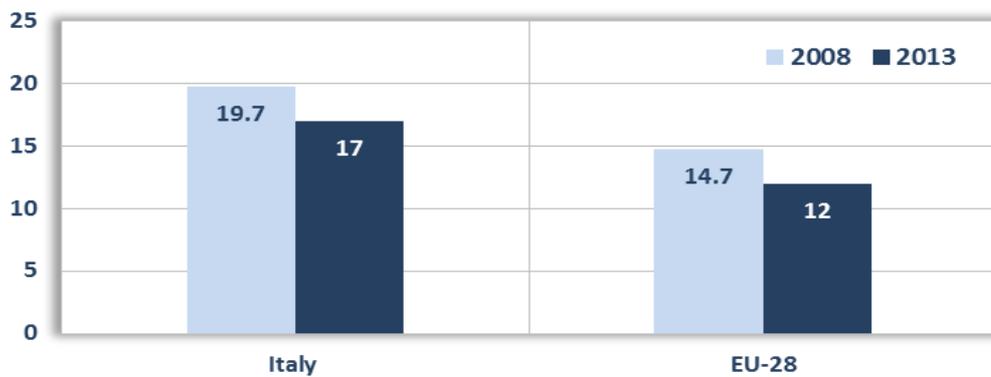
1.3. Education attainment

Data on employability or wage gaps explain Italy's low rank with regard to the relevant Europe 2020 benchmarks: 17% early leavers from education and training (EU target: 10%); and 22.4% of 30 to 34 year-olds with tertiary education attainment or equivalent (target of 40%). Italy's national goal for the Europe 2020

target for completion of tertiary education or equivalent remains below the 26% intended to be achieved in 2013 despite a considerable increase from 19.2% in 2008 (EU-28 figures are 31% in 2008 and 36.8% in 2013).

The share of young people leaving education and training early is steadily decreasing but still high (Figure 6). In VET, almost half of the learners are at least one year behind in their training, which, as evidence shows, increases the probability that they will leave prematurely.

Figure 6. **Early leavers from education and training aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training in 2008 and 2013 (%)**



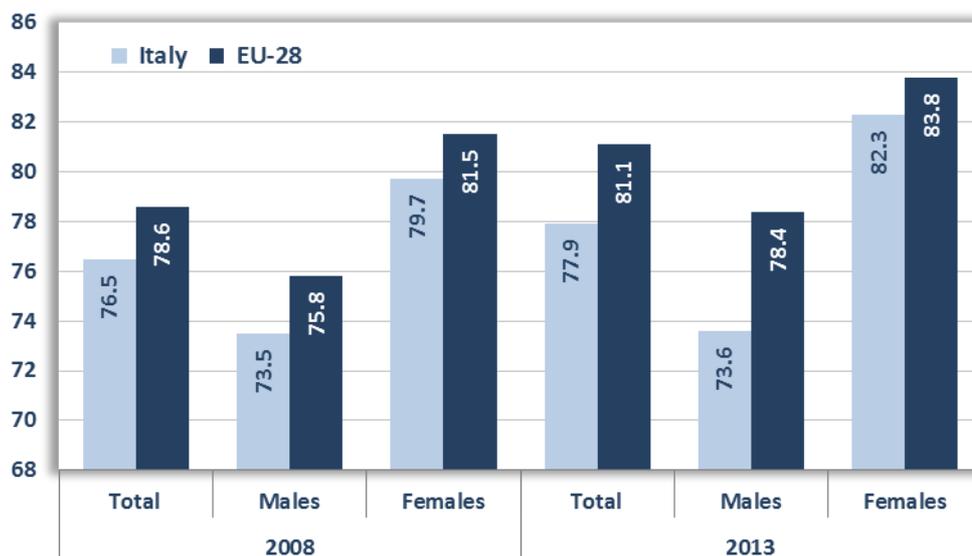
Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS: *Early leavers from education and training by sex, % of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training*. Data code: t2020_40. Date of extraction: 23.5.2014.
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&language=en&pcode=t2020_40

Despite progress, early leaving is likely to remain higher than the EU target; a more conservative goal of 16% was set in the national reform programme. Italy is also strongly committed to implementing new integrated VET and labour market policies which target young people and are specifically designed to reduce early leaving through alternative training opportunities and tools to validate young people's skills.

The proportion of 20 to 24 year-olds with at least upper secondary attainment is lower than the EU-28 average.

Women are often more qualified than men: 73.6% of the male population aged 20 to 24 have completed at least upper secondary education, ISCED 344-354, compared to 82.3% women (Figure 7). The percentage of women in 2013 who held an upper secondary school diploma rose to 83.8% compared to 81.5% in the EU-28. Nevertheless, women's employment rates are lower compared to men's, due to several obstacles in accessing the labour market. The gender gap is particularly evident as the lack of opportunities and the wages gap widely increased in the past three years.

Figure 7. **Young people with at least an upper secondary qualification (% of 20 to 24 year-olds) by sex, 2008 and 2013**



NB: Data presented in this chart are based on levels of ISCED-97. Low education attainment refers to at most lower secondary education, medium education attainment refers to upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education, and high education attainment refers to tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS: *Educational attainment and outcomes of education*.

Data code: tps00186. Date of extraction 14.5.2013.

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tps00186>

1.4. Participation in formal and non-formal education and training

According to the Eurostat adult education survey (AES) ⁽³⁾ the level of adult participation in education and training in Italy reached 35.6% in 2011 for both formal and non-formal education and training, (against the EU average of 40.3%); the figures are 2.9% for formal and 34.3% for non-formal learning. Compared to 2006, when the first AES survey was carried out, Italy's rank at European level is virtually unchanged (22nd), even though the share of adults undergoing education and training has risen, as a result of an increased participation in non-formal education and training activities (34.3% in 2011 compared to 20.2% in 2006).

If we consider only non-formal education and training, Italy's average is closer to other Member States (34.3% in Italy, 36.8% in EU-28). However, data

⁽³⁾ Eurostat AES analyses adult learning activities, distinguishing between formal and non-formal learning, both in and outside the workplace.

show that Italy is still among Member States with high gender gap indicators, especially in non-formal education and training. As in other EU countries, adult participation decreases considerably in the older age groups: a generation gap of 21.9% in EU-28 and of 20.7 in Italy is registered. In the EU-28 youth participation was 48.5% while elderly people reached 26.6%; in Italy it was, respectively, 43% and 22.3% (Table 1).

Table 1. **Participation rate in education and training by gender and age group (2011, %)**

	Type of training					
	Formal or non-formal education and training		Formal education and training		Non-formal education and training	
	EU-28	Italy	EU-28	Italy	EU-28	Italy
Gender						
Males	40.7	37.3	5.8	2.6	37.5	36.2
Females	39.9	34.0	6.7	3.2	36.2	32.5
Age groups						
25 to 34 years	48.5	43.0	13.6	9.7	40.8	38.2
35 to 54 years	42.4	38.0	4.9	1.3	39.8	37.5
55 to 64 years	26.6	22.3	1.6	:	25.6	22.3
Total	40.3	35.6	6.2	2.9	36.8	34.3

Source: Eurostat, AES 2011 (last update: 9.12.2013; extracted on: 4.4.2014).

Among the employed, the largest share of adults participating in education and training is those with higher ranking job positions. There is participation in a range of non-formal activities: 34.5% were involved in training on the job; 30.9% attended conferences, workshops and seminars; 3.7% took private lessons; 29.5% participated in non-formal education and training activities provided by the employer; 11.7% in activities organised by schools and universities; and 18.4% attended courses delivered by sport clubs.

The share of adults unable to attend an education and training activity, though interested, is 25.4%. Family commitments (44.3%) and the cost of the courses (43.4%) are the main reasons for not participating in education and training. Among women, family commitments are the main obstacle to participation (53.6% compared to 31% declared by men). In addition to the cost of the courses, men identify work commitments as the main obstacle (38.3% compared to 18.5% declared by women).

EU-level (Eurostat) data show that the generation gap is widespread in many countries, both in lifelong learning participation and in continuing vocational

training (CVT) provision by enterprises. A specific analysis of the benefits of training courses in Italy (Angotti and Belmonte, 2012), using an ISFOL adult learning behaviours survey (Indaco-adults 2012), shows that many adults in the age cohort above 54 years emphasise non-material benefits, such as better knowledge and skills, improved networking and social skills, and increased job satisfaction; material benefits are not always stressed and training courses are infrequently associated with benefits such as wage increases, career advancement and promotion. Non-formal activities – other than courses – appear to be more attractive. Nonetheless, analysis of the actual benefits of training provides interesting insights into the ‘unexpected effects’ of training; participation leads to material benefits which are above the learner’s expectations. This is particularly the case for adults over 54: despite the fact that they participate less, and that they claim to be less motivated to participate in training, training seems to have produced unexpected benefits, particularly material ones. Such benefits can act as an incentive to improve the potential of the mature population, especially in terms of employability for the world of work.

1.5. Forecasting labour market needs: national occupation information system

Over the past 10 years, ISFOL on behalf of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche sociali, MLPS) ⁽⁴⁾ has been managing and promoting an information system to support actions designed to prevent skill mismatches. The system ⁽⁵⁾ contains data from a wide range of studies and surveys, among which it is worth mentioning:

- survey on occupations (*Indagine campionaria sulle professioni*): a sample survey on the 800 occupation units listed in the national occupation classification (Level 5), started in 2007. The survey involved around 16 000 workers and covered about 300 variables clustered in a 10-section questionnaire. Based on the US O*Net survey ⁽⁶⁾ model, it aimed at measuring the importance and complexity of each variable in carrying out a job. The 2013 results are available online;

⁽⁴⁾ Hereafter referred to as Ministry of Labour or as MLPS.

⁽⁵⁾ Available at ISFOL: *Professioni, occupazione, fabbisogni* [Occupations, employment, needs]: <http://professionioccupazione.isfol.it>

⁽⁶⁾ US occupation information network, see O*NET online: <http://www.onetonline.org/> [accessed 13.8.2014].

- permanent audit of occupational needs (*Audit permanente dei fabbisogni professionali*): a sample of 35 000 enterprises selected by size, sector and geographic area, it provides qualitative information on workers' skills needs. The training needs identified will be subsequently listed in the occupation unit profiles included in the information system. Conceived as an annual survey, its first results are available online and the second-edition ones will be delivered in July 2014;
- other studies and research to forecast medium-term sector skills needs using scenario-based methodologies;
- forecast studies on mid-term recruitment needs (five years) conducted at national and regional level using a model based on the Energy-Environment-Economy Model of Europe (E3ME Model) ⁽⁷⁾.

ISFOL's information system is connected to other systems managed by public bodies such as the National Institute of Statistics (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, ISTAT), the Workers Compensation Authority (Istituto Nazionale per l'Assicurazione contro gli Infortuni sul lavoro, INAIL) and the MLPS. This enables users to access information on occupations (including ISTAT's workforce survey, INAIL statistics on industrial accidents and the MLPS portal helping match labour demand and supply ⁽⁸⁾). Data comparability is ensured by a commonly adopted classification for occupations. The system features several tools to support job search, encourage career mobility and offer career guidance. In the first two cases users can identify the skills needed either to access the labour market or take up a new occupation; in the third case they can compare their personality traits with those deemed suitable for a given occupation according to the classification drawn up by Holland (1985).

⁽⁷⁾ Cambridge Econometrics: *E3ME: our global macro-econometric model*:
<http://www.camecon.com/EnergyEnvironment/EnergyEnvironmentEurope/ModellingCapability/E3ME.aspx> [accessed 13.8.2014].

⁽⁸⁾ ISFOL: *Professioni, occupazione, fabbisogni [Occupations, employment, needs]*:
<http://professionioccupazione.isfol.it>

CHAPTER 2.

Vocational education and training in a lifelong learning perspective

2.1. General education and vocational education and training in Italy

All young people have the 'right/duty' (*diritto/dovere*) (Law 53/2003, p. 7) to pursue their education and training for at least 12 years before reaching age 18. The aim is that young people should not leave education and training without a qualification. However, compulsory education lasts 10 years, up to 16, and includes the first two years of upper secondary general education or VET.

Young people finish lower secondary education at age 14. At this stage, learners sit a state exam to acquire a certificate (EQF level 1) which grants admission to the upper secondary level where young people have the opportunity to choose between general education or VET.

At upper secondary level, young people may opt for:

- (a) five-year programmes which include the two last years of compulsory education and three years (under the right/duty of education and training) in:
 - (i) high schools (*licei*). These provide general education programmes at upper secondary level;
 - (ii) technical schools;
 - (iii) vocational schools (Section 2.3.1).High schools (*licei*) offer artistic, classical, linguistic, scientific, human sciences, music and dance strands ⁽⁹⁾. Within the artistic strand, learners can specialise in figurative arts, architecture and environment, design, audiovisual and multimedia, graphics or stage design in the second period. The qualifications awarded after successful completion of high school, technical and vocational school are at EQF level 4 and a state leaving exam at the end of them gives access to higher education;
- (b) vocational education and training programmes organised by the regions (IeFP; Section 2.3.2).
- (c) an apprenticeship-type scheme (after age 15) (Section 2.6).

⁽⁹⁾ For more information on general education programmes see Eurydice: *Eurydice: Italy*.
<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Italy:Overview>

At post-secondary level, the Italian system features higher technical training (IFTS, ITS; Section 2.4.1) and short programmes or courses (post-leFP and others, see Section 2.4.2). VET courses also exist at post-higher education level (Section 2.5).

Tertiary education (ISCED levels 665, 667, 766, 767, 768, 864) is divided into higher education programmes at the university and higher education programmes at non-university institutions:

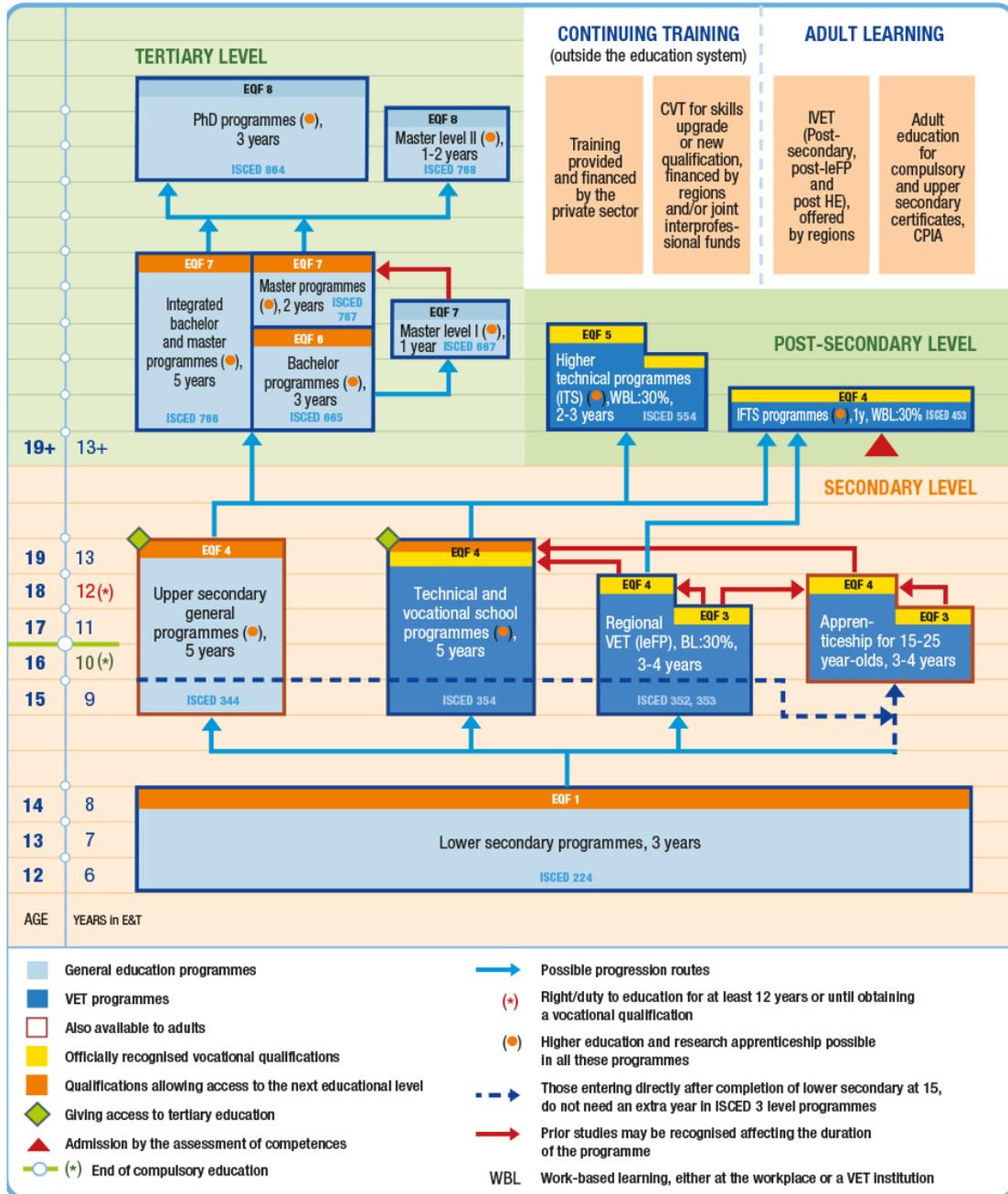
- (a) universities: can be public or private and follow the three cycles of the Bologna structure: bachelor (*laurea*); master (*laurea specialistica/magistrale*); and specialisation or PhD programmes (*masters universitario di secondo livello, dottore di ricerca*);
- (b) higher artistic and musical programmes (*alta formazione artistica e musicale*) which are non-university programmes based on the three-cycle structure.

Italian VET provision also offers opportunities in adult education (Section 2.7) and CVT (Section 2.8).

In Italy, the term vocational education and training tends to be 'reserved' for specific programmes primarily under the remit of the regions and autonomous provinces (such as leFP).

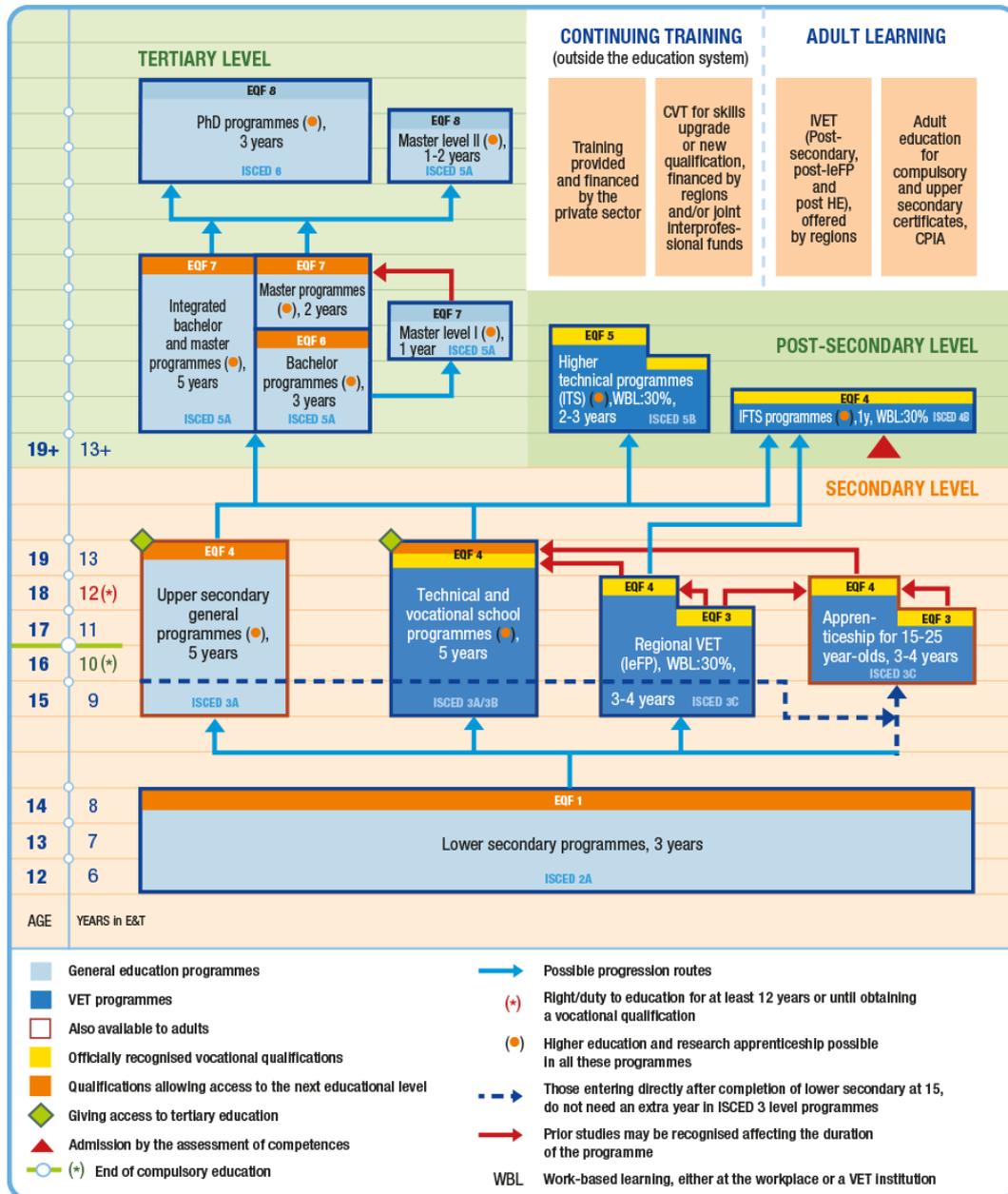
From a European perspective the term 'education and training' comprises all types and levels of general and education and vocational education and training (VET). Irrespective of the provider or governance scheme, VET can take place at secondary, post-secondary or tertiary level in formal education and training or non-formal settings including active labour market measures. VET addresses young people and adults and can be school-based, company-based or combine school- and company-based learning (apprenticeships). Therefore, the term VET also covers the technical and vocational schools.

Figure 8. VET in Italy's education and training system (ISCED-11)



Source: Cedefop, in cooperation with ReferNet Italy.

Figure 9. VET in Italy's education and training system (ISCED-97)



Source: Cedefop, in cooperation with ReferNet Italy.

2.2. VET governance

Responsibilities are shared among the different actors involved in planning and organising VET as follows:

- the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) sets the framework for VET in national school programmes (technical and vocational schools) for ITS and IFTS;
- the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (MLPS) sets the framework for leFP, while the regions and autonomous provinces are in charge of planning, organisation and provision;
- regions and autonomous provinces are also in charge of planning, organisation and provision of ITS, IFTS, post leFP, post-higher education, and most of the apprenticeship-type schemes;
- goals of CVT under the public system are set by the Ministry of Labour, while CVT activities are managed by either regions and autonomous provinces or social partners;
- social partners play an important role in promoting company-level training plans (single or group of companies) to be financed by the regions or by the joint interprofessional funds;
- the social partners have a general advisory role in VET policy, from which VET provision is then defined;
the social partners contribute to designing and organising active labour market policies (ISFOL, 2012, p. 15).

2.3. VET at upper secondary level

2.3.1. Technical and vocational school programmes

In technical school programmes (*istituti tecnici*) learners can acquire the knowledge, skills and competences to carry out technical and administrative tasks.

In vocational school programmes (*istituti professionali*) learners acquire specific theoretical and practical preparation enabling them to carry out qualified tasks in production fields of national interest.

Table 2. Major characteristics of technical and vocational school programmes

	Technical programmes	Vocational programmes
Training partners involved	Technical schools under the remit of the Ministry of Education (MIUR)	Vocational schools under the remit of the Ministry of Education (MIUR)
Admission requirements	Learners aged 14 with completed lower secondary education; ISCED 244	
Main economic sectors	Economics: administration, finance and marketing; tourism	Services: agriculture; health and social care; food and wine and hospitality; trade
	Technologies: mechanics mechatronics and energy; transportation and logistics; electronics and electro-technics; ICT; graphics and communication; chemical and biotechnologies; fashion; agriculture, food processing and agro-industry; construction, environment and territory	Industry and crafts: industry and handicraft with two branches: industrial and handicraft productions; maintenance and technical assistance
Corresponding ISCED level and orientation/destination	354	354
Balance between general and vocational subjects	60% general subjects – 40% vocational subjects	
Balance between school- and work-based training	Depends on schools and alternance projects set up	
Length of programmes	5 years (1 056 hours per year) at the end of which programme learners sit a State examination	
Certificate awarded	Upper secondary school leaving diploma (allows to continue studies at tertiary education or higher technical education and training programmes); EQF level 4	
Progression opportunities	ITS and tertiary level/universities	

Source: Cedefop, based on: Cedefop ReferNet Italy (2014); ISFOL (2012); MIUR: I choose, I study.
<http://www.istruzione.it/orientamento/>

The certificate awarded mentions the branch and length of the studies, the final marks, the points assigned through ‘school credit’, the points assigned through training credits and the additional points given by the examination board (if applicable), the subjects included in the curriculum and the total number of teaching hours dedicated to each subject.

The certification models are drawn up by the Ministry of Education (MIUR). Diplomas and certificates are written in four Community languages so that they can be understood in the different Member States.

2.3.2. Three- and four-year leFP programmes

The leFP programmes (*percorsi triennali e quadriennali di istruzione e formazione professionale*) offer young people the opportunity to fulfil their right/duty to education and training. The training is designed and organised by the regions.

Over the past few years, increased cooperation between the State, the regions and the provinces has made these programmes more flexible. In 2011, regulations issued by the State-Regions conference, have introduced several important systemic elements:

- (a) a set of training standards for basic skills to be developed in the three- and four-year programmes;
- (b) a set of minimum standards (valid at national level) for technical and vocational skills in relation to the occupation profiles included in the national qualifications register (*Repertorio nazionale delle qualifiche*);
- (c) intermediate and final certifications that are valid at national level.

The national qualifications register created in 2011 ⁽¹⁰⁾ contains the national occupation 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 occupation profile need to be described in terms of learning outcomes and to be allocated the corresponding EQF level.

The leFP programmes are organised in modules and aim to develop basic, transversal and technical-occupational skills. This modularisation allows learners to change areas of study through recognition of credits.

On-the-job training activities (especially internships) play a key role and are carried out under the supervision of two tutors, one from the training centre and one from an enterprise. Methods include traditional classroom teaching, simulations, role play, and cooperative learning. Active teaching methods are highly recommended to meet learner needs.

⁽¹⁰⁾ State-Regions conference agreement 137/CSR of 27 July 2011.

Table 3. Major characteristics of three- and four-year leFP programmes

	Three-year leFP programmes	Four-year leFP programmes
Training partners involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training centres (accredited by the regions according to criteria nationally established); • vocational upper secondary institutes ^(a) (set in vocational schools – <i>istituti professionali</i> – in subsidiarity regime) 	
Admission requirements	Learners aged 14-17 with completed lower secondary education; EQF level 1	Learners aged 17-18 holding a professional operator certificate (three-year leFP programme)
Main economic sectors	Clothing; footwear; chemical production; building; electric systems; electronic systems; graphics; thermal-hydraulic systems; artworks; woodworking; pleasure craft building and maintenance; motor vehicle repair; mechanic systems; wellness; catering; tourism and hospitality; administration; retailing; logistics; agro-food processing; agriculture and maritime services	Building; electric systems; electronic systems, graphics, arts; woodworking; motor vehicle repair; automation systems operation and maintenance; industrial automation; beauty treatments; waiting and bar services; business services; commercial sales; retailing; agriculture; tourism; sports and leisure entertainment; clothing; hairdressing; cookery; thermal systems; tourism and hospitality and agro-food processing
Corresponding ISCED level and orientation/destination	352	353
Length of programmes	± 1 000 hours a year ^(b)	
Certificate awarded	Professional operator certificate (<i>attestato di qualifica di operatore professionale</i>) - awarded by the regions and nationally recognised; EQF level 3	Professional technician diploma (<i>diploma professionale di tecnico</i>) - awarded by the regions and nationally recognised; EQF level 4
Progression opportunities	Further specialisation year within the same area; a third or fourth year in upper secondary education usually in technical and vocational schools. The first level of vocational attainment enables learners to enrol in the regional courses (second level qualification) and to apply for an occupation-oriented apprenticeship.	Directly into IFTS. An additional fifth year in technical and vocational schools and passing the relative state leaving certification exam gives access to academic tertiary education or ITS ^(c) .

^(a) Since school year 2011/12 and according to the agreement set at the Joint conference (129/CU) of 16 December 2010.

^(b) Depending on the type of provider the total of hours may vary.

^(c) Agreement signed in 2010.

Source: Cedefop, based on: Cedefop ReferNet Italy (2014); Eurydice: *Eurydice: Italy*.
<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Italy:Overview>; MIUR: I choose, I study. <http://www.istruzione.it/orientamento/>

These programmes are financed by the regions through Ministry of Labour funds or through their own financial resources. Currently, four-year vocational programmes are not evenly offered across all country.

Statistics (ISFOL, 2013a) show that over 300 000 people enrolled in three-year leFP programmes in 2012/13. Of these, almost 163 000 were enrolled in programmes at upper secondary vocational schools and almost 128 000 in training centres. This represents an increase of 18% in enrolments compared to the previous year, a positive trend due to increase in enrolments in three-year leFP programmes at upper secondary vocational schools. Learners in these leFP programmes train for occupations in catering (58 424), while those enrolled in training centres prefer training for occupations in the wellness sector (32 240 students).

During 2012/13, an increase in enrolments was also registered in the four-year leFP: 9 471 more students enrolled in 2012/13 compared to previous year.

Data from ISFOL show that in 2013, 50% of those who have acquired a leFP qualification in the past three years are employed (ISFOL, 2014a).

2.4. VET at post-secondary level

2.4.1. Post-secondary higher technical training

These programmes were reorganised in 2008 (DPCM 25.1.2008) and mainly aim at developing professional specialisations at post-secondary level to meet the requirements of the labour market in the public and private sectors. There are two different options:

- higher technical education and training programmes (*istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore*, IFTS);
- programmes at the higher technical institutes (*istituti tecnici superiori*, ITS).

They are planned and organised by the regions and autonomous provinces in the context of the territorial plans adopted every three years and their provision varies across the regions.

Table 4. Major characteristics of programmes at IFTS and ITS

	Programmes at IFTS	Programmes at ITS
Training partners involved	Planned by regions and delivered by at least four VET providers from the school system, vocational training, university, business sector	ITS are set up as foundations comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a higher secondary education institution, (either private or public) belonging to a technical or vocational association; • a training provider accredited by the region for higher education; • an enterprise in one of the sectors covered by the ITS; • a university department or other body; • a local authority.
Admission requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • young people and adults employed or not, holding a professional technician diploma; or a four-year leFP; or • admission tests to assess competences for those who do not have an upper secondary education leaving certificate, as long as they have appropriate skills to be academically successful; • EQF levels 2-4 	Completion of upper secondary education (<i>diploma di istruzione secondaria superior</i>) and above; however, the target groups may vary according to the programmes established for the regions (not specified in the regulations)
Economic fields/technological areas	20 higher technical specialisations ^(a) agriculture, industry and manufacturing; tourism; transportation; public services and private services of public social interest; insurance and financial services	Energy efficiency; sustainable mobility; new life technologies; new technologies for 'made in Italy'; innovative technologies for cultural heritage activities; information and communication technologies
Corresponding ISCED level and orientation/destination	453	554
Length of programmes	Two semesters (800-1 000 hours) which include theory, practice and lab work	Four semesters (1 800-2 000 hours) 30% of which is devoted to completing an internship, possibly abroad; possibility of six-semester programme in cooperation with universities
Certificate awarded	Higher technical specialisation certificate (<i>certificato di specializzazione tecnica superiore</i>) recognised at national and EU level, EQF level 4	Higher technical education diploma (<i>diploma di tecnico superiore</i>); EQF level 5

Progression opportunities	There is no direct progression opportunity unless an upper secondary diploma is acquired. However, credits can be recognised in higher education and for intermediate and final certifications	While there is no direct progression opportunity, they give access to all those progression opportunities offered by an upper secondary qualification. Credits can be recognised in higher education and give access to public competitions. ITS programmes offer the opportunity to complete a high-level apprenticeship.
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^(a) Defined in the decree of 7.2.2013.

Source: Cedefop based on: Cedefop ReferNet Italy (2014); Eurydice: *Eurydice: Italy*. <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Italy:Overview>; MIUR: I choose, I study. <http://www.istruzione.it/orientamento/>; ITS Umbria: *Cos'è ITS [What is ITS]*. <http://www.itsumbria.it/pagine/its>; Indire: <http://www.indire.it>.

2.4.1.1. Programmes at IFTS

Higher technical education and training programmes are available in 20 specialisation areas at national level. The specialisations are described in terms of minimum education standards, adopted at national level (decree of 7.2.2013), and may be further defined at regional level, according to the specific local labour market conditions. These programmes also include common skills in the relational and managerial areas. A compulsory internship is included, accounting for 30% of the total workload. At least 50% of the teachers must come from the world of work or have practised the profession in the field.

IFTS programmes are planned by the regions and must be delivered by at least four VET providers from the school system, vocational training, university, business sector by exploiting the added value of integrating complementary systems; they may either set up a formal partnership – depending on regional guidelines – as a temporary association or as a consortium, or be organised within POLI IFTS ⁽¹⁾.

A recent ISFOL survey on labour market outcomes of IFTS former students (ISFOL, forthcoming) shows that between 2010 and 2013, 5 960 students were enrolled in the 249 IFTS courses offered in the 10 regions surveyed. Of these, 57.3% were employed in the last quarter of 2013. Compulsory internship played a key role in their employment.

Further, 26% of the students received a job offer from the company where they did their internship, 84% of former IFTS students declared themselves to be in stable and continuous employment, and 51.1% of these declared that their job is in line with the education and training received under IFTS.

⁽¹⁾ Multi-actor providers accredited by regional administrations.

2.4.1.2. Programmes at ITS

These offer non-academic training opportunities at tertiary level, for a total of 29 national professional profiles, as identified and described in the inter-ministerial decree of 7 September 2011, laying down general rules for ITS diplomas and related national professional profiles, assessment and certification of skills, and supplemented by ministerial decree of 5 February 2013 (Decree 82/2013).

These programmes train specialised technicians in six technology areas considered strategic for the country's development.

Both young people and adults with at least an upper secondary education diploma can access ITS programmes. They also represent one of the possible ways to complete an apprenticeship programme ⁽¹²⁾ with the purpose of promoting young people's return to the VET system.

At least 50% of the training must be delivered by providers from the world of work and the professions.

ITS are set up as foundations (*Fondazione di Partecipazione*). The national legislation provides that the founders include:

- a higher secondary education institution, either private or public that, in keeping with Article 13 of Law 40/2007, belongs to a technical or vocational association (based in the foundation province);
- a training provider accredited by the region for higher education (based in the foundation province);
- an enterprise in one of the sector covered by the ITS;
- a university department or other body;
- a local authority (municipality, province, metropolitan city, mountain community).

At present 63 ITS operate at national level offering 139 programmes.

2.4.2. Post-leFP programmes and others

People who have completed the three- or four-year vocational training leFP and those who have obtained an upper secondary diploma can access specific training organised by regions or the autonomous provinces. These training courses ⁽¹³⁾ are generally targeted at young unemployed people, adults, migrants and the disabled. They generally last 400 to 600 hours and are jointly financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). Upon completion, a regional vocational certificate commonly referred to as a 'second level qualification' is awarded.

⁽¹²⁾ Legislative Decree 167/2011, Article 3, paragraph 2.

⁽¹³⁾ ISCED levels are not indicated as the courses do not lead to national qualifications.

These courses aim at the acquisition of theoretical, technical and managerial skills, though practical work is included and completion of a traineeship is generally required. Admission is often subject to selective procedures that may include entrance tests or interviews; there may be additional specific requisites such as previous specific working experience.

A minimum number of learners are usually required to start a course. Classes are organised according to conditions specified by the course announcement (such as being unemployed, holding a specific qualification or diploma) and not according to learner age.

Courses are job-oriented and should meet the requests coming from the labour market at local level. They lead to a regional qualification corresponding to specific occupation areas, though these are not listed in the national register of qualifications.

Courses are organised in modules or units corresponding to specific themes or to the acquisition of specified competences. Timetables are organised at regional and local level and subsequently defined by the training centre providing the course: lessons may be grouped in a few weeks or distributed throughout the year. The organisation of courses is decentralised and general information on the content of the curriculum is not available at the national level.

Methods may include traditional classroom teaching, simulations, role play, and collaborative learning. Active teaching methods are recommended, meeting learners' needs to acquire cultural and technical/occupational competences through practice. Job placements are mandatory, due to the job-oriented nature of these courses, and are organised in collaboration with enterprises. Distance learning is widespread.

Learners generally undergo intermediate assessments through tests or submission of individual works. They sit a final exam that can be either written or oral/practical, as the examining commission decides. To be admitted to the final exam a minimum attendance for two thirds of the total timetable is required.

These courses are organised by training centres ⁽¹⁴⁾ accredited by the regions and are not homogeneously offered in the country. They lead to a qualification certificate awarded by the regions according to their own specific register, not recognised nationally. There is no national register of qualifications for regional courses.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Eurydice: *Eurydice: Italy: organisation of vocational upper secondary education*.
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Italy:Organisation_of_Vocational_Upper_Secondary_Education#Regional_vocational_education_and_training_28leFP.29

2.5. Post-higher education VET

Those who have completed a university degree can access post-higher education courses offering a specialisation in a given field. These are organised by regions or the autonomous provinces and last between 400 and 600 hours (rarely two years), leading to a regional qualification that corresponds to specific occupation areas not listed in the national register of qualifications. At times these courses may be exclusively addressed to disadvantaged groups (such as migrants, Roma population, disabled people, certain age groups) with the aim of increasing their labour market integration.

2.6. Apprenticeship-type schemes

Apprenticeship in Italy designates a work contract with a specific training purpose; it includes both on-the-job and classroom training. The apprenticeship contract, which is distinct from other work-based learning, must be drafted in a written form. It defines the roles and responsibilities of all parties as well as 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 1 January 2013, labour social security insurance.

Apprenticeship-type schemes were reformed in 2011 ⁽¹⁵⁾ aiming to promote the integration of young people into the labour market. Workers registered in so-called 'mobility lists' ⁽¹⁶⁾ can participate in this scheme to qualify or requalify (usually they are offered a place in the 'professional' apprenticeship scheme, see paragraph (b) below).

Employers willing to offer apprenticeships can benefit from several incentives. They can hire an apprentice at an entry grade level up to two levels lower than the final qualification to be obtained and/or pay a salary equal to a

⁽¹⁵⁾ Consolidated act on apprenticeships (Legislative Decree No 167/2011) approved on 25 October 2011 and entered into force on 25 April 2012.

⁽¹⁶⁾ 'Mobility list' refers to collectively dismissed workers waiting to be placed in other jobs.

percentage of the salary of a qualified worker, according to the provisions of the collective agreement applied. They can take advantage of a reduction in social security contributions, according to the enterprise size. Companies with up to nine employees (micro enterprises) are exempt from paying social security contributions (100%) for the first three years of the contract ⁽¹⁷⁾; 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 10% of the taxable social security contribution.

Companies recruiting apprentices registered in the mobility lists, can benefit from a subsidised contributory scheme, corresponding to 10% of the salary for 18 months of the contract and, in addition, receive an incentive equal to 50% of the mobility allowance, if received by the employee, for a period of 12 months (24 months if the employee is older than 50 years).

The Jobs Act (Law 78/2014) introduced a new feature only for those employed under the apprenticeship leading to a professional operator certificate and a professional technician diploma contract (point (a) below). These apprentices receive a salary on the basis of the number of hours spent in training, calculated at 35% of the total number of training hours, unless differently decided via collective bargaining. The social security contribution paid by the apprentice is also reduced at 5.84%.

The Jobs Act established that only enterprises with up to 50 employees, can hire apprentices if, in the previous 36 months, they have retained 20% of the previous apprentices.

Social partners, beyond their advisory task at national and local levels, perform a crucial role in professional apprenticeship regulation. They define, through collective bargaining, contents, provisions related to specific occupations, and tools to carry out training. They also establish the professional qualification to be acquired and the certification procedures, as well as setting out the necessary requirements for tutors/trainers at the enterprise.

The apprenticeship system includes three types of contract:
(a) apprenticeships leading to a professional operator certificate and a professional technician diploma (*apprendistato per la qualifica ed il diploma professionale*):

These schemes allow young people aged 15 to 25 to fulfil their right/duty to education and training. There are no specific entry requirements but learners need to bridge the year between the end of lower secondary and the start of

⁽¹⁷⁾ This measure was introduced by Law 92/2012 and refers to apprentices hired from 1 January 2012 until 31 December 2016.

apprenticeship in an upper secondary school programme or in leFP, unless they are already 15 years old. These schemes are regulated by the regions and autonomous provinces through specific State-Regions conference agreements. Content, shared between theoretical and practical learning, the specific qualifications offered and the number of training hours are established by the regions and autonomous provinces according to minimum standards agreed at national level. The duration of the contract is determined according to the certificate or diploma to be achieved: it may not exceed the three- or four-year training period nor be less than the national minimum standard set at 400 hours per year, though further training at enterprises can be agreed through collective bargaining. These apprenticeship schemes last three or four years and offer the possibility to acquire qualifications at operator or technician level (in 22 and 21 occupation fields respectively: *attestato di qualifica di operatore professionale* (EQF level 3) or *diploma professionale di tecnico* (EQF level 4). These qualifications are part of the national qualifications register. After obtaining the operator certificate the apprentice may proceed to the fourth year to obtain a technician diploma, in the same occupation. Access to university is possible after successful completion of secondary education and an additional one-year course at an education institute;

- (b) professional apprenticeships (*apprendistato professionalizzante o contratto di mestiere*):

This scheme targets 18 to 29 year-olds who want to acquire a qualification provided for in the collective bargaining agreements and required on the labour market. Training comprises two parts:

- (i) acquisition of key skills (120 hours over a three-year period) regulated by the regions and autonomous provinces and provided by training centres;
- (ii) acquisition of vocational skills for specific occupation areas provided directly by companies. The occupation areas and the training content are defined by collective bargaining agreements.

These programmes have a maximum duration of three years (exceptionally five years for the crafts sector) and award a regional qualification.

- (c) 'higher education and research' apprenticeships (*apprendistato di alta formazione e ricerca*):

Despite its name, this scheme leads to an array of qualification levels encompassing EQF levels 4-8. It targets 18 to 29 year-olds and fulfils various purposes. Learners can acquire qualifications that are normally offered through school-based programmes, in higher education or at

universities, including a doctoral degree. Apprentices can also engage in research activities in private companies or pursue traineeship required to access the liberal professions (lawyer, architect, business consultant); this has not yet been regulated by collective bargaining.

Regions and autonomous provinces, in agreement with the social partners and public education and training centres, decide the duration of contracts, the organisation of programmes, and ensure that they are compatible with fully school-based curricula. They also define higher education credits (*crediti formativi universitari*) learners obtain at schools, universities or training centres and the skills to be acquired through on-the-job training at the enterprise. In the absence of a regional regulation, ad hoc arrangements between education institutions and enterprises are possible.

Training cost allocation is defined by the local authorities, according to the national, regional and European Social Fund regulations.

Over the past few years the number of apprenticeship contracts has dropped. The latest available data also include apprentices hired under the previous regulations. In 2012, 469 855 apprentices were employed (stock data), 4.9% less than the previous year. However, the reduction is lower than that registered in the previous year (-6.8%) and flow data show that, in the first half of 2013, 128 802 apprentices were hired.

Table 5. **Average number of apprenticeship contracts by age group and geographic area of work: absolute values and % variation, 2010-12**

Macro area	Absolute value 2010	Absolute value 2011	Absolute value 2012 (*)	% variation on previous year 2011	% variation on previous year 2012
(annual average)					
North	291 333	279 295	261 726	-6.2	-4.2
• north-west	153 708	142 618	136 227	-7.2	-4.5
• north-east	137 625	130 678	125 499	-5.0	-4.0
Centre	136 656	127 825	120 248	-6.5	-5.9
South and islands	100 195	91 370	87 881	-8.8	-3.8
Italy	528 183	492 490	469 855	-6.8	-4.6
of which aged under 18					
North	4 788	4 296	2 565	-10.3	-40.3
• north-west	1 638	1 353	703	-17.4	-48.1
• north-east	3 150	2 944	1 862	-6.5	-36.7
Centre	905	790	356	-12.8	-54.9
South and islands	1 875	1 446	922	-22.9	-36.3
Italy	7 568	6 532	3 842	-13.7	-41.2

(*) Provisional data.

Source: INPS: Archivi delle denunce retributive mensili Emens.

The largest reduction is evident among apprentices under age 18 (-41.2%), mainly due to the changes introduced by the new legislation for this specific age group. Apprentices account for 13.9% of total national employed people (aged 15 to 29) while apprentices aged under 18 are 0.8% of the total number of apprentices. Professional apprenticeship is the most common type at three quarters of total apprenticeship contracts.

2.7. *Adult education: Centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti (CPIA)*

Adult education is a set of programmes/courses or education and training activities aiming to update adult vocational skills or improve their literacy. Under the remit of the Ministry of Education (MIUR), it is provided by provincial centres for adult education (*centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti*, CPIA) that were recently restructured ⁽¹⁸⁾.

The centres are organised to establish a close link with local governments, the business world and the regulated professions, and to provide education according to learning levels:

- (a) first-level programmes, delivered by the CPIA, leading to a first-cycle qualification (a compulsory education certificate) and certification attesting basic skills related to compulsory education (*certificato delle competenze di base acquisite in esito all'assolvimento dell'obbligo di istruzione*);
- (b) second-level programmes, delivered by education institutions offering technical, vocational and artistic programmes, leading to an upper secondary education diploma: these may be technical schools, professional schools and artistic licei (*diploma di istruzione tecnica, professionale e di licei artistici*);
- (c) Italian language courses, delivered by the CPIA for working age foreign adults, holding a qualification obtained in the home country. These courses lead to a certificate stating at least A2 level mastery of the Italian language according to the common European framework for languages designed by the Council of Europe.

⁽¹⁸⁾ *Schema di Regolamento recante norme per la ridefinizione dell'assetto organizzativo didattico dei Centri d'istruzione per gli adulti [Regulation framework for the reorganisation of the adult education centres]*, introduced by MIUR in October 2012 (DPR 263/2012).

Table 6 shows the type and number of programmes delivered in the context of education provision for adults, based on the *Adult education: monitoring report 2012* of Indire, the National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research (National Agency for the Development of Education) (Indire, 2013).

Table 6. **Courses delivered in the context of education provision for adults, 2011/12**

Type/level of courses	Number of courses
First cycle of education (lower-secondary education)	3 881
Upper secondary education	3 049 (318 provided in correctional institutions)
Italian and social integration courses	4 929 (1 789 level A1; 2 314 level A2; 826 upper than A2)
Short modular courses on functional competences, literacy, numeracy, ICTs	8 117 (1 366 in correctional institutions)
Total	19 976

Source: Indire (2013).

According to the same report, 50.7% of those who attended adult education were Italian (164 647), and the remaining 49.3% were migrants (160 388). Gender analysis shows 51% of the students were women, 167 216 women against 157 819 men. More than 60% of foreign students were aged 20 to 39 and over 65% were unemployed; 23% held at least a diploma or certificate of upper secondary education. A total 140 000 certificates of Italian as a second language were awarded, 14% awarding a level higher than A2 (7 060).

2.8. Continuing vocational training

2.8.1. Under the public system

Goals of continuing vocational training (CVT) are set by the MLPS, while CVT activities are managed by either regions and autonomous provinces or social partners. Social partners play an important role in promoting company-level training plans (single or group of companies) to be financed by the regions or by joint interprofessional funds:

- (a) regions and autonomous provinces:
regions or autonomous provinces manage CVT activities benefiting from both national funding ⁽¹⁹⁾ and funding from the ESF. Regions select the appropriate target group at local level and must report to the government. Italian legislation recognises workers' right to lifelong learning and envisages allocation of funds to support training. It also finances training leave in accordance with the regulation on working hours, by funding training vouchers. These funds can be used for training projects submitted by the workers themselves or by the companies on the basis of contract agreements, envisaging partial reduction of working hours;
- (b) joint interprofessional funds for continuing training:
social partners, under the supervision of the MLPS, manage joint interprofessional funds for continuing training (*Fondi paritetici interprofessionali nazionali per la formazione*). These funds are based on an interconfederal agreement between social partners and finance learning according to company needs, to foster innovation and development, ensuring the competitiveness of the companies and employability of workers. They are used to finance training plans at company, sectoral and territorial levels, including individual training programmes and system activities, such as training needs surveys. In 2013, the funds were extended to cover other workers, such as apprentices, members of cooperatives, and entertainment workers. Part of the amount collected by the funds each year will be used to fund redundancy pay. To date there are 18 authorised funds.

In 2013 there were 18 joint interprofessional funds; 63% of all private enterprises participated (793 000 in total) and provided training for 77% of their employees (about 8.9 million). Microenterprises (with less than 10 employees) count for 84.3% of participating enterprises. Despite the economic downturn, during 2012-13, participation in the funds increased thanks to new subscriptions (an additional 8% of enterprises). From January 2012 to June 2013, over 37 800 training plans were approved, aimed at around 2.5 million participants belonging to over 68 000 enterprises. The total cost of the plans was around EUR 1 024 billion, mostly allocated for enterprise-targeted initiatives. Enterprises made a significant contribution, covering 38% of the total cost (the rest being paid as referred above), with a peak of over 39.9% for individual plans. Almost 30% of the plans cost from EUR 2 500 to EUR 5 000 and more than 70% did not exceed EUR 20 000.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Law 236/1993 and Law 53/2000.

2.8.2. Training provided and financed by the private sector

Training is available that does not use public resources but is funded through the contribution of users. This training includes private schools of languages or ICT, awarding international certifications against the payment of a fee, or private schools of aesthetics and fashion. There is also training provided by the third sector, such as free universities or universities for the third age, voluntary associations, and NGOs. This also includes in-house training activities not funded through public funds (ISFOL, 2012).

2.8.3. Training provided by employers

Enterprises' demand for continuing training has increased compared to previous years: 35% in 2011 versus 27.5% in 2008. However, this is still largely dependent on enterprise needs, so training initiatives are unevenly distributed across the country and the different productive sectors.

Recent anti-crisis measures adopted by the government contributed to expanding CVT provision. As examples, joint interprofessional funds can also finance targeted training plans or active labour policy measures, including compulsory short and medium-length training programmes on transversal and basic skills (including languages and ICT).

Recent data on employer-provided training ⁽²⁰⁾ confirm that Italian enterprises have been investing in human capital but still at a lower level than in most EU Member States. As a result, the training market, particularly its private non State-regulated sector, has expanded in demand and supply (the latter aimed at both employed and unemployed workers).

Enterprises with at least 10 employees that offered training to their workers increased from 32.2% in 2005 to 55.6% in 2010, mainly in the services and construction sectors (Table 7). This trend is confirmed by other indicators, including increase in participation between 2005 and 2009 (from 28.8% to 33.2%) indicating that 2.8 million workers were involved in training activities, especially in construction and industry. In 2010 the participation rate reached 36% and the gender gap decreased (+3.0% in 2010).

Around 71 million training hours were provided by enterprises for their employees in 2010 (they were 60 million in 2009); this equates to 23 course hours per employee at an average cost of 53 PPS (purchasing power standard) per hour. Enterprises provided training for an overall cost of EUR 3 896 million (EUR 3 537 million in 2009). Costs increased proportionally to the company workforce.

⁽²⁰⁾ Eurostat, continuing vocational training survey (CVTS4); ISFOL Indaco survey (in line with Eurostat CVTS); ISFOL intangible assets survey.

Data collected in 2012 ⁽²¹⁾, show an increase in the number of participants in training activities provided by enterprises, in the number of training hours, and in the investment in training by the enterprises. However, there was a slight reduction in the number of enterprises offering training to their employees, significant since the reduction mirrored the deepening economic downturn. However, companies that regularly invest in training have maintained their levels of investment.

Table 7. **Enterprises with 10 employees or more that provided training in 2010 by type of training and economic sector (%)**

Economic sectors	Any type of vocational training	CVT courses	Other forms of CVT
Industry (except construction)	53	45	38
Construction	67	59	44
Wholesale and retail trade, transport, accommodation and food service activities	49	40	37
Information and communication; financial and insurance activities	79	66	70
Real estate activities; professional, scientific and technical activities; administrative and support service activities; arts, entertainment and recreation; other service activities	60	50	48
Total – All NACE activities	56	47	41

NB: Other forms of training include: (a) CVT in work situation; (b) job rotation, exchanges or secondments; (c) learning/quality circles, and (d) continued training at conferences, workshops, lectures and seminars.

Source: Eurostat CVTS4, 2010.

Recent data ⁽²²⁾ confirm that over the next few years the technical and social skills gap will be greater. The skills most required at the moment are those necessary to use production techniques and technologies and those related to the management of customer relations, while the demand for written/oral communication, numeracy and literacy is still weak (Table 8).

2.8.4. CVT providers

There is a range of different providers, both public and private. Consulting and/or training organisations play a relevant role, while enterprise representative organisations and chambers of commerce provide a minor (albeit not negligible) contribution. Machinery and software providers, along with other enterprises and public sector training organisations, have played a significant role, whereas schools and university institutions have been less active.

⁽²¹⁾ By ISFOL Indaco/CVTS.

⁽²²⁾ Eurostat CVTS4, 2010.

Table 8. Professional skills and competences to be acquired through training courses provided by companies employing 10 people and more by sector and age group, 2010 (%)

Skills	Basic computer	Professional computer	Managerial	Team work	Interpersonal	Problem solving	Administrative	Foreign languages	Technical and operational	Literacy	Numeracy
Economic sectors (NACE activities)											
Industry (except construction)	14.2	20.9	23.6	30.8	23.8	32.0	21.7	15.8	59.6	6.3	3.5
Construction	11.5	13.2	17.7	25.9	17.6	27.1	18.1	4.5	68.3	5.2	4.0
Information and communication; financial and insurance activities	27.0	35.0	52.4	48.5	69.6	47.1	44.8	19.6	56.8	20.3	7.5
Other services	16.6	23.4	26.4	33.1	41.2	34.4	23.0	14.2	52.5	9.1	4.5
Total	15.1	21.0	24.5	31.4	31.5	32.5	22.2	13.2	57.9	7.7	4.1
Size class											
10-19 employees	13.4	19.1	18.6	27.8	28.9	30.7	18.8	8.3	56.6	6.3	4.5
20-49 employees	14.6	20.3	24.6	32.3	30.7	30.4	22.8	13.0	58.1	8.0	4.0
50-249 employees	19.3	25.2	38.3	38.5	37.8	39.7	30.3	25.3	59.7	9.1	2.7
250-499 employees	25.7	36.7	57.3	47.6	48.3	44.0	37.0	40.8	68.8	16.6	4.0
500-999 employees	34.8	46.4	67.5	62.1	61.7	54.5	40.5	49.3	74.5	26.4	4.5
1000 employees or more	44.5	52.2	84.5	73.3	73.8	69.1	45.5	59.1	71.9	33.4	5.7
Total	15.1	21.0	24.5	31.4	31.5	32.5	22.2	13.2	57.9	7.7	4.1

Source: Eurostat CVTS4, 2010.

The 2012 ISFOL vocational training provision survey (OFP, *offerta di formazione professionale*)⁽²³⁾ shows that, in 2011, half of the training providers delivered continuing vocational training courses. Most of the providers are small-size organisations (on average, each provider has five classrooms and 150 workstations per student and 82% have a lab). In 2011, providers delivered (through public funding) more than 40 000 courses, totalling over 9 million training hours for 670 000 students. Each VET provider offered an average of 17 courses in a year, involving a total of 280 individuals. According to this survey, most training programmes covered basic computer (37.4%) and environmental protection, labour safety and other content mandatory by law (29.1%). Training initiatives aimed at developing personal skills or at training workers in production techniques and technologies were less common, as were those related to accounting and finance, personal services, transportation, office or secretarial professions.

More recently, courses have increased, despite the crisis. The system was able to maintain appropriate provision levels and, in part, to develop them. This happened thanks to innovations in the governance of the regional systems and the organisation of training providers (Angotti et al., 2014).

Among other difficulties caused by the crisis, 17.2% of providers suffered a decline in demand by individuals and businesses, and 4.2% experienced difficulty in accessing loans. Only a few providers (11.5%) do not seem to have been particularly affected.

The most significant consequences of the crisis include reduced activity in more than one third of the cases (38.4% of the respondents rank this first) and the delayed payment of wages to employees (19.8% of the cases). This is followed by the practice of recruiting staff under atypical contracts (17.1%) and staff downsizing measures (17.0%).

Nevertheless, VET providers have reacted positively by putting in place effective strategies to counter these problems, broadening and diversifying VET provision; 64.7% initiated the search for new markets and 45.7% expanded their territorial networks. Approximately 25% of the providers introduced technological and organisational innovations, while 22% accessed specific anti-crisis sources of financing and updated and upgraded personnel skills; 17.2% activated/expanded their extraterritorial networks and searched for new markets. (Table 9).

⁽²³⁾ ISFOL: *L'indagine ISfol OFP: Highlight*.

<http://www.isfol.it/highlights/pubblicazioni/highlights/offerta-formazione-professionale-regionale/offerta-di-formazione-professionale-regionale-in-italia>
[accessed 31.3.2014].

Table 9. **Strategies to counter the crisis by geographical area (%)**

	Geographical area				Total Italy
	North-west	North-east	Centre	South and islands	
Broadening and diversifying training provision	63.8	71.3	65.8	61.2	64.7
Enlarging the network of local actors	52.3	58.2	46.9	34.3	45.7
Introducing organisational and technological innovations	28.2	34.3	18.7	23.0	25.2
Scouting or accessing specific anti-crisis funding sources	26.4	37.6	14.7	18.1	22.7
Updating and requalifying staff	25.2	23.2	31.9	13.8	22.4
Activating/enlarging extraterritorial networks	17.2	18.5	14.1	9.6	14.0
No specific action adopted	1.8	0.3	2.4	3.0	2.1
Other	2.7	0.8	1.1	0.6	1.2

Source: ISFOL, OFP survey 2012.

CHAPTER 3.

Framework conditions for promoting vocational education and training

3.1. Legislative framework for funding continuing vocational training

It is estimated that EUR 5 billion a year are spent on non-formal learning activities, with 80% used by enterprises to train their employees, 10% funded through ESF and national resources (Law 236/1993 and 53/2000) and 10% funded through joint interprofessional funds for CVT.

Law 236/1993 finances in-company training, teacher training, system actions, sectoral and territorial plans promoted by the social partners, and individual training (through vouchers). It also allocates a yearly budget of around EUR 100 million which is managed by the regions.

Law 53/2000 finances training leave in accordance with the regulation on working hours, using training vouchers. It recognises workers' right to lifelong learning by granting leave for training activities and establishes that EUR 15 million are allocated annually by the MLPS to support employee training. Almost EUR 400 million come from the ESF to support continuing training financed by the EUR 500 million from the joint interprofessional funds.

The competent authorities for the ESF and Laws 236/1993 and 53/2000 are the MLPS, the regions, the autonomous provinces and the provinces that may delegate other bodies.

The government, regions and social partners agreed to allocate financial resources to promote training programmes for low-qualified workers and for those most affected by the economic downturn. The following measures have been adopted:

- (a) establishment of a specific government unit responsible for collecting data on skills needs and occupation profiles required in specific sectors at local level;
- (b) the labour market reform law (Law 92/2012) provided for the creation of an integrated information system on training and welfare policies for employment at local level;
- (c) broader adoption of outcome-oriented learning methods;
- (d) incentives to adults, also through:

- (i) agreements aimed at providing new employment opportunities for laid-off workers;
 - (ii) use of joint interprofessional funds to provide training opportunities for the unemployed;
- (e) launch of a quality assurance system at regional level.

3.2. Tax incentives for education, training and continuing professional development

The various tax relief instruments established over time and aimed at different targets, services and tax types are not regulated by a single comprehensive policy. The benefits provided are minor as incentives are supplied more often in the form of tax deductions than deductions or exemptions and are mostly targeted at education rather than vocational training activities.

Several tax regulations are currently in force:

- tax relief for self-employed professionals (*agevolazioni fiscali per l'aggiornamento dei liberi professionisti*) (DPR 917/1986, p. 26, Art. 54, Section 5). The law establishes that 50% of expenses incurred by self-employed professionals for refresher courses can be deducted (training-related expenses, such as travel, are also included);
- regional tax on productive activities (*imposta regionale sulle attività produttive*, IRAP). All expenses incurred by enterprises for apprentices or job insertion contracts (including employee wages) can be deducted from IRAP;
- stamp tax. All formal documents submitted while attending a training course provided by the regions or as part of an apprenticeship programme are exempted from stamp duty;
- personal income tax (*imposta sul reddito delle persone fisiche*, IRPEF). Expenses incurred by those who attend higher education or university courses can be deducted from IRPEF (including entrance test fees and also for dependent family members). In the case of private universities only costs equal to those of the state institutions are covered.

Further, all training, updating, requalification and retraining services are VAT exempted when provided by either institutes or schools recognised by the public administration or are non-profit organisations. The exemption also applies to teaching materials costs and board and lodging expenses. Recognised schools or institutes include:

- state schools (*scuole statali*);
- non-state schools that have been granted equal status in the national education system (*scuole paritarie*);
- schools registered in special regional registers;
- private organisations recognised by institutions other than the Ministry of Education (accredited organisations).

3.3. Guidance and counselling

There is no single body responsible for lifelong guidance and counselling but several institutions are involved. Education institutes have traditionally been responsible for guidance in line with the provisions of the MIUR. This is carried out in cooperation with training centres, local guidance agencies, higher education institutes and universities. In particular, at lower secondary level, schools offer vocational guidance to learners who want to attend VET programmes; this includes information days, exhibitions and conferences about the contents and outcomes of VET programmes.

Guidance activities for VET learners are carried out regionally and locally by training centres in cooperation with public employment services, sector and enterprise representatives, schools and universities. The objective is to provide guidance to students moving horizontally and vertically between various training options and also to support the transition into the labour market.

Career guidance services are the responsibility of each regional authority, which may delegate them to the provinces. The main public providers include:

- public employment services (*centri per l'impiego*, Cpl), operating mainly at provincial level, according to regional authority guidelines; they are the reference points for different types of user: job seekers, workers interested in career change, entrepreneurs who are looking for human resources, foreign workers, women returning to the labour market, young people aged 16 that have achieved compulsory education and have to choose a VET or an apprenticeship programme. The main services provided are information, guidance interviews, *Bilancio di Competenze* ⁽²⁴⁾, assistance during job searching and job placement, matching job demand and supply. These services are provided according to user-specific needs;

⁽²⁴⁾ Skills audit.

- work guidance centres at municipal level offering information and second-level guidance to individuals and/or groups to develop individual training and/or job search plans;
- information centres (*Informagiovanì*) at municipal or provincial level providing free information to young people on VET (job offers, competitions, internships, apprenticeships, universities, scholarships, schools), current events (exhibitions, concerts, fairs and other) and volunteering.

Guidance services can also be offered by private organisations such as social cooperatives ⁽²⁵⁾ or chambers of commerce. Information to support individual education and training or career choice is also available on dedicated websites managed by public and private actors.

3.3.1. Establishing a national lifelong guidance system

In 2012, following a proposal of the MLPS, the government and the regional and local authorities agreed to establish a national lifelong guidance system ⁽²⁶⁾. This agreement was a significant step towards integrating guidance activities and networking services at various levels, aiming at:

- promoting a common national strategy for lifelong guidance in education and training and employment;
- defining and developing, via an interinstitutional working group, a national system that may operate in a highly integrated way.

The main goals of this working group are:

- tackling dropout and failure in general education, VET and university with specific actions for young people not in employment nor in education and training (NEET) and those who leave education and training early;
- encouraging and supporting employment and return to employment with specific actions for young people, NEET, women and people over 50;
- promoting social inclusion with specific actions for the disadvantaged, also increasing the participation of families in training choices.

The next steps include identification of standards for guidance services, practitioner competences and tools for monitoring policies and activities.

⁽²⁵⁾ Social cooperatives act in the common interest to promote social inclusion of citizens through management of health and education services, carrying out various activities in agriculture, industry, commerce or services to support employment of the disadvantaged.

⁽²⁶⁾ Joint conference agreement 152/CU of 20 December 2012.

3.3.2. The youth guarantee

In the past year, guidance and counselling has received new impetus with the launch of the youth guarantee programme. Following the 2013 European Council recommendation ⁽²⁷⁾, Italy launched its youth guarantee programme which became operational in May 2014. According to the national youth guarantee plan, every young person aged 15 to 29 years old has the right to receive a good quality offer of employment, a place in training or apprenticeship or an offer to return to education, within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed.

The programme sees a strengthened role for guidance and counselling services as key to success, with stress on profiling. Each young person's individual needs are assessed to provide a personally tailored offer.

Young people interested in receiving information or participating in the programme can register through the web portal *Cliclavoro* ⁽²⁸⁾, regional web portals or the website of the youth guarantee ⁽²⁹⁾. Each young person registering will also choose the employment services that will support her/him (first information, guidance, training agreement, job coaching and job provision). Various institutions and associations, including chambers of commerce, trade unions and employer associations, youth and third sector organisations are involved in communication and providing information. Regional authorities will be entrusted with implementing the plan through memoranda of understanding and the government will launch a reform of the employment services through partnerships between businesses, public institutions and non-profit organisations. These will make matching labour demand and supply easier and promote entrepreneurial initiatives.

After registration and a preliminary interview, young people will be supported through individual guidance to help them define tailor-made training and/or suitable career choices. Those who meet the formal requirements will be offered direct financing (such as bonus or vouchers) to access a range of potential programmes, including job placements via an employment contract, apprenticeships or traineeships, specific training and coaching to start a business or become self-employed.

⁽²⁷⁾ Council of the EU, 2013.

⁽²⁸⁾ MLPS: *Cliclavoro*.
<http://www.cliclavoro.gov.it/Pagine/default.aspx> [accessed 21.8.2014].

⁽²⁹⁾ FSE; MLPS: *Garanzia giovani (youth guarantee)*.
<http://www.garanzigiiovani.gov.it/Pagine/Aderisci.aspx> [accessed 21.8.2014].

By July 2014, 119 092 young people had registered in the youth guarantee web portals. The majority of those enrolled live in Sicily (17%), followed by Campania (16.5%) and Lazio (8%). The public employment services (PES) had contacted 13 770 young people; 5 860 had had their first guidance/profiling interview. Under an agreement with employer associations the youth guarantee website ⁽³⁰⁾ also serves as a matching tool between labour demand and supply as employers can advertise their vacancies there. By July 2014, 3 658 employment opportunities, accounting for 5 312 vacancies, had been published.

3.3.3. Other recent initiatives

'Education starts again' (*l'istruzione riparte*) ⁽³¹⁾ was launched in 2013 and has a budget of EUR 6.6 million. It involves all types and levels of schools that will appoint a guidance counsellor who liaises with other teachers and with the local guidance network. Specific training courses for teachers will be available. Activities to increase awareness and parent involvement are also included in this initiative.

The web portal 'I choose, I study' (*Io scelgo, io studio*) ⁽³²⁾ was launched in early 2014 by the MIUR and targets parents and young people. The portal gathers all basic information on the different education programmes and options. Through this website experts can be asked for advice; it also includes short videos with personalities from business, science and industry explaining how they achieved their goals.

3.4. Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The debate on validation and certification of non-formal and informal learning continues within an increasingly defined regulatory and operational framework, at EU level (Council of the European Union, 2012) and national level ⁽³³⁾.

⁽³⁰⁾ FSE; MLPS: *Garanzia giovani* (youth guarantee).
<http://www.garanziagiovani.gov.it/Pagine/Aderisci.aspx> [accessed 21.8.2014].

⁽³¹⁾ See also Decree-Law 104/2013, Article 8, paragraph 8.

⁽³²⁾ *Io scelgo, io studio*, the portal for information and guidance for learners entering and leaving upper secondary level <http://www.istruzione.it/orientamento/> [accessed 14.8.2014].

⁽³³⁾ Law 92/2012 set the terms for the creation of an institutional system of validation of experience and skill certification; the Legislative Decree 13/2013, provided the relevant conceptual framework and the implementation process.

For many years in Italy, institutions and social partners have widely debated and fundamentally agreed on the importance of ensuring institutional validation of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal contexts. Nevertheless, until 2012 every attempt to create a national legal framework on validation failed due to the rigid rules (legal value of national qualifications) and the complex institutional governance of the education and training system (national level for school and university, regional level for vocational training with overlapping tasks).

Despite the lack of a national framework, much practice and experience have been developed at local, regional and sectoral levels. Several regions began defining and implementing certification/validation systems and created specific services addressed primarily to the unemployed, hit by the economic crisis. A key tool developed was the citizen's training log book (*Libretto formativo del cittadino*): its format and aims can be compared to the European skill portfolio, but it is managed through a public skills audit support service (at regional level).

Development of regional validation systems varies and approaches are quite different, as the two cases presented in the *First Italian referencing report to the EQF* (ISFOL, 2012) illustrate.

Italy introduced legislation on recognition of non-formal and informal learning in 2013, with the Legislative Decree 13/2013 which includes:

- (a) glossary, principles, institutional duties and responsibilities within the public certification system;
- (b) process standards: the way certification and validation must be provided;
- (c) attestation standards: what a certificate contains, what kind of information is being transferred and how it is traceable;
- (d) system standards: division of responsibilities and quality assurance;
- (e) a national register of education, training and professional qualifications, which is the unitary national reference framework for certification of competence.

The register will be made up of all existing registers so far encoded by the competent authorities: MIUR, regions, MLPS and Ministry of Economic Development. Over time it will be harmonised and made more efficient to allow greater permeability between systems and recognition of credits.

The emerging regulatory framework at national level will affect the continuing coordination of respective rules and regional services.

Emilia Romagna case study

The certification system of Emilia Romagna region is founded on the principle that 'each person has the right to obtain the formal recognition of competences acquired'. This is a well-articulated system to certify individual professional background, while allowing individuals, young people and workers, to evaluate and plan their professional and training future. Certified competences (independent of the way they were acquired) are considered to be certain, reliable, credible and usable in education and training, since they refer or can be referred to the essential vocational standards indicated in the regional qualifications system.

The process of evaluation is based on an individual orientation phase, and on the preparation and verification of evidence: formal documents (declarations, collaborations contracts, self-declarations, certificates); output evidence (product sample-report letters, report, software, etc.); and action-based evidence (testimonies, audio-video recordings, log book, direct observation). Where there is insufficient or incomplete evidence, the candidate may choose to sit an examination to demonstrate he/she has the competences that were not proven. At the end of the verification and validation process, the candidate can obtain a certificate of vocational qualification (including all competence units comprising the qualification) or a certificate of competences (concerning one or more competence units of the qualification but not all of them) or even a knowledge and skills sheet (concerning only part of a competence unit). The first two certificates can be acquired only after passing a formal examination, while the knowledge and skills sheet can be obtained after the evidence has been verified.

This certification system is currently in its implementation phase. A first pilot of the validation and certification system of non-formal and informal learning for the award of the healthcare operator qualification yielded excellent results.

Lombardy case study

Regional legislation of 2007 requires VET centres to validate credits based on evidence and documents submitted by the applicants: qualifications, diplomas, final marks and any other informal documentation of school results, intermediate certifications of competences awarded by schools and training agencies, concerning practical applications, training experiences or traineeships in Italy and abroad, positive evaluation of extracurricular activities, foreign languages certificates, cultural or work activities, experience gained in various civil society fields concerning personal development, community work and cultural development (work, environment, voluntary work, solidarity, cooperation, sport), certificates acquired in apprenticeship, as a result of work activities or self-training.

Where documents are considered insufficient or incomplete, the applicant may take evaluation tests. VET centres assign a value to the credits: validated credits can account for a maximum of 50% of the training programme.

The validation is a personalised process in which the applicant plays an active role in identifying and reconstructing his/her professional identity, through the use of specific instruments such as drafting a curriculum vitae, orientation activities, personalised advisory services and customised access to other services. At the end of the verification and validation, which lasts a maximum six months, the applicant will receive a certification of competence at the relevant EQF level, which will be registered in his/her training log book.

Source: ISFOL (2012, p. 38).

3.5. Training teachers and trainers

Teachers and trainers have very different profiles and tasks (Table 10). A teacher's professional profile is much more clearly defined and regulated than that of a trainer as far as training, recruitment, duties and skills are concerned. Teachers can also be considered 'content experts', whereas trainers are 'process experts'; depending on the situation, they can play a variety of roles (tutor, learning facilitator, group leader, coach). Trainers are mainly required to support the learning process by guiding and motivating trainees, to strengthen the link between training and work and to update trainee working skills.

3.5.1. Teacher training

The minimum requirement to access the teaching profession is a five-year academic degree and completion of a one-year university course combined with traineeship (*tirocinio formativo attivo*) in schools. The traineeship lasts 475 hours (75 of which are dedicated to teaching disabled students). The teaching activities cover content and methodological/didactic aspects and are performed under the supervision of a tutor. Special attention is given to languages and digital skills in compliance with EU recommendations. Teachers who wish to teach disabled people attend a specific course in formal education and have to pass a State exam to be admitted into State schools.

The Ministry of Education ⁽³⁴⁾ in cooperation with Indire ⁽³⁵⁾ organises updating training courses for teachers. Among these is the national plan for e-schools which supports innovation in teaching methods by promoting the use of new technologies and the development of teachers' ICT skills.

Other plans financed by the ESF cover the understanding of evaluation tests and surveys, improving quality of teaching in maths and science, and increasing the use of new technologies and distance learning ⁽³⁶⁾.

⁽³⁴⁾ For further information see MIUR website: <http://www.istruzione.it> [accessed 21.8.2014].

⁽³⁵⁾ For further information see Indire website: <http://www.indire.it> [accessed 21.8.2014].

⁽³⁶⁾ For further information see Indire: *risorse per docenti [resources for teachers]*. http://risorsedocentipon.indire.it/home_piattaforma/ [accessed 21.8.2014].

Table 10. General features of VET teachers and trainers

Features	Teachers	Trainers
Place of work	State vocational schools; higher technical education and training institutes/higher technical institutes; centres for adult education	Public training centres managed directly by the regional/ provincial/ municipal authorities; private vocational training centres accredited by the regions; higher technical education and training institutes/higher technical institutes; enterprises; consultancy agencies; non-profit agencies; public employment services
Role/tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • face-to-face learning activities to develop basic skills in languages, maths, social/historical and scientific/technological areas; • develop higher skills in specific industry and services sectors as well key competences; • develop key competences for citizenship and lifelong learning (learning to learn, planning, communicating, collaborating, acting autonomously, problem solving, establishing relationships, acquiring and interpreting information) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • face-to-face learning activities with a special focus on professional practice; • professional support for alternance between school and company (such as apprenticeship); • guidance and counselling on vocational training, career and employment; • training for disadvantaged groups (such as dropouts); • promote the establishment of integrated networks between education/training, employment services, enterprises and social assistance services; • facilitate face-to-face and blended learning activities for individuals and groups in corporate organisation and management, languages, marketing, accounting, ICT, to develop higher technical and organisation skills and increase the competitiveness of the productive system
Type of employment contract	Mainly State employees with open-ended or fixed-term contracts	Mainly private employees with open-ended, fixed-term and atypical contracts
Type of recruitment	State certification exam	Recruitment and selection are not regulated by law; public training centres require a public examination.
Professional requirements	Specific subject degree	Degree or upper secondary school diploma and professional experience
Pre-service training	Five-year academic degree (with restricted access) followed by traineeship in schools	Currently not compulsory; not regulated at national level
In-service training	Not compulsory but it is an individual right under the national collective work agreement	Not compulsory

Source: ISFOL data, survey about teachers' and trainers' training, 2013.

The key role played by teachers in ensuring VET quality is confirmed by recent regulations which earmarked substantial funds for teacher training initiatives for 2014 in digital teaching methods, school/work training pathways, and youth disadvantage.

3.5.2. Trainer training

There are no formal requirements to become a trainer but the national collective work contract prescribes that trainers should hold a degree or an upper secondary school certificate as well as professional experience. They should also participate regularly in continuing professional development regardless of their role as a trainer (tutor, counsellor, trainer coordinator). There is no nationally recognised register of trainers.

The ISFOL survey on regional accreditation systems in 2011 showed that 63% of VET trainers have a university degree, around 30% a high school certificate, and 7% a qualification certificate. Universities and colleges of education (*Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione*) are the training providers more often selected by the trainers.

In-service training varies across the regions and tends to be more structured in the northern and central regions. It is mainly designed to improve the skills required by technological innovation and globalisation, foster the recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning and establish reliable standards for validation, and to adjust training interventions to local needs.

Supply of in-service training is determined by the free market and provided by a wide range of institutions, including regional authorities. It is funded by the ESF and, more recently, by joint interprofessional funds for continuing training (*Fondi paritetici interprofessionali*)⁽³⁷⁾. Each region and autonomous province establishes its own standards for trainer training, ensuring high quality VET services financed by public funds. Private training centres which do not use public funds can regulate the training autonomously and do not have to respect specific laws. Some regions offer individual training vouchers to trainers who wish to attend specialised training courses. Large enterprises or public administration departments with permanent internal training services usually contribute to funding these activities or invest directly in trainers' continuing professional development. Some sectors receive special incentives to encourage continuing training, for example medical and nursing staff in the healthcare sector.

⁽³⁷⁾ These funds are managed by the social partners and supervised by the MLPS (Chapter 2).

3.6. VET provider and provision quality assurance

Quality assurance in VET is closely linked to accreditation, the main evaluation tool for public and private VET providers that deliver training financed by public funds.

Different institutional stakeholders – MLPS, regions and autonomous provinces – have invested over the years in defining and establishing mechanisms for selecting accredited bodies, so improving the quality of training provided by public funds.

VET providers are accredited on the basis of quality standards as indicated by the new national accreditation system of training and guidance providers ⁽³⁸⁾. This system has triggered an important reform process in which human resources have been recognised as a key factor for improving the quality of the training system. As a result, people in key functions (management, administrative and economic management, needs analysis, design, delivery), must meet the following requirements:

- level of education and work experience (degree or diploma with work experience);
- upgrading professional skills (at least 24 hours of training per year);
- type of contract.

ISFOL surveys conducted in recent years confirm that accredited training centres increasingly adopt organisation and management models oriented to meet performance requirements and fulfilling the needs of end users. Second-generation accreditation models (in line with the 2008 model) have led to a higher focus on effectiveness and efficiency indicators compared to logistical-infrastructure indicators.

ISFOL findings ⁽³⁹⁾ show a high degree of consistency between the 2008 State-Regions agreement ⁽⁴⁰⁾ and the EQAVET recommendation illustrated in the following conclusions: all regional accreditation systems include requirements aimed at tracking the drop-out/ completion rate of VET programmes. Almost all regions tracked job placement rate after a VET programme/success rate (employability).

Accredited VET providers use mechanisms for identifying training needs in the labour market (and EQAVET quality indicators) for needs analysis.

⁽³⁸⁾ Decree 166/2001; State-Regions conference agreement 84/CSR of 20 March 2008.

⁽³⁹⁾ For a comprehensive view of the comparative analysis consult ISFOL (2013b).

⁽⁴⁰⁾ State-Regions conference agreement 84/CSR of 20 March 2008.

In all regional systems the process of analysing needs is key to ensuring quality education services and meeting labour market demand. This is confirmed by the fact that accredited bodies must include a needs analysis expert among the required roles. Minimum standards for the qualification, previous experience, and commitment to work, in terms of number of days per year and to retrain, are established for this role.

Table 11 compares EQAVET indicators and the regional accreditation systems. EQAVET indicators 3, 7 and 10 were not taken into account as no correlation was found with the requirements associated with the regional accreditation systems.

Table 11. **Correspondence between regional accreditation systems and EQAVET indicators**

EQAVET indicators	Matching items in regional accreditation systems	Number and name of the regions and autonomous provinces where the indicator is met
4. Completion rate of VET programmes	Dropout and/or success rate	21 Piemonte, Valle d'Aosta, Lombardia, PA Bolzano, PA Trento, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Emilia Romagna, Toscana, Umbria, Marche, Lazio, Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicilia, Sardegna
5. Placement rates after completion of VET programmes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • destination of VET learners at a designated point in time after completion of training, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria; • share of employed learners at a designated point in time after completion of training, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria. 	Placement rate after completion of VET programmes	15 Piemonte, Lombardia, PA Bolzano, PA Trento, Veneto, Liguria, Emilia Romagna, Umbria, Marche, Lazio, Abruzzo, Campania, Puglia, Sicilia, Sardegna
9. Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory needs analysis expert among the supervision roles; • structured procedures in place for needs analysis; • relations with the local context. 	21 Piemonte, Valle d'Aosta, Lombardia, PA Bolzano, PA Trento, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Emilia Romagna, Toscana, Umbria, Marche, Lazio, Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicilia, Sardegna

Source: ISFOL 2013b, pp. 36-38.

List of abbreviations

AES	adult education survey
CPIA	centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti (provincial centres for adult education)
CVT	continuing vocational training
leFP	istruzione e formazione professionale (vocational education and training)
IFTS	istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore (higher technical education and training)
Indire	National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research (Istituto nazionale di documentazione, innovazione e ricerca educativa)
ISCED	international standard classification of education
ISCED-11	international standard classification of education, approved in 2011
ISCED-97	international standard classification of education, approved in 1997
ISFOL	institute for the development of vocational training of workers (Istituto per lo sviluppo della formazione professionale dei lavoratori)
ISTAT	National Institute of Statistics (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica)
ITS	istituti tecnici superiori (higher technical institutes)
MIUR	Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca (Ministry of Education, University and Research)
MLPS	Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche sociali (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies)
OFP	vocational training provision, survey (Offerta di formazione professionale, indagine)
PPS	purchasing power standard

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CENSIS, Centre for studies on social investment

www.censis.it

Eurydice: Eurypedia, European encyclopaedia on national education systems: Italy.

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Italy:Overview>

Indire, National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research (Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa).

<http://www.indire.it>

INPS, Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale [National Social Security Agency].

<http://www.inps.it>

ISFOL, Institute for the development of vocational training for workers

<http://www.isfol.it>

ISFOL: ReferNet Italia.

<http://www.isfol.it/refernet-italia>

ISFOL: Professioni, occupazione, fabbisogni [Occupations, employment, needs].

<http://professionioccupazione.isfol.it/>

ISTAT, National Institute of Statistics.

<http://www.istat.it/en/>

Italia Lavoro SpA, Technical agency promoting labour market policies

www.italialavoro.it

Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

<http://italia2014.eu/en/>

MIUR, Ministry of Education, University and Research (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca).

<http://www.istruzione.it>

MIUR, I choose, I study (Io scelgo, io studio), the portal for information and guidance for learners entering and leaving upper secondary level (Il portale dell'orientamento al secondo grado e al post diploma).

<http://www.istruzione.it/orientamento/>

MLPS, Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (Ministero del lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali).

<http://www.lavoro.gov.it>

MLPS: Garanzia giovani (youth guarantee).

<http://www.garanzigiovani.gov.it>

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ANNEX 1.

Mapping Italian education and training programmes to ISCED-11 classification

Education/training programmes	ISCED level 2011
Lower secondary programmes, 3 years	244
Upper secondary general programmes, 5 years	344
Technical and vocational school programmes, 5 years	354
Vocational programmes, WBL: 30%, 3-4 years	352-353
Apprenticeship for 15-25 year-olds, 3-4 years	NO ISCED
Higher technical courses (ITS), WBL: 30%, 2-3 years	554
IFTS courses, 1 year, WBL: 30%	453
Bachelor degree, 3 years	665
Master degree, 2 years	767
Combined bachelor and master degree, 5 years	766
University master, level I, 1 year	667
University master, level II, 1-2 years	768
PhD programmes, 3 years	864

Source: Based on ISTAT.



Vocational education and training in

Italy

Short description

In times of economic downturn and high youth unemployment, Italy has set itself a strategic objective to strengthen VET and to expand apprenticeship-type schemes. A recent policy package, with a focus on the youth guarantee scheme and measures to reduce red tape for enterprises and promote inter-firm cooperation, reflects the need to link education and training better with the labour market, extend work-based learning schemes, ensure teachers' and trainers' professional development, and strengthen vocational guidance. This report provides an insight into Italian VET and recent developments.

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