

Achieving the Lisbon Goal: **The Contribution of Vocational Education and Training Systems**

Country Report: Italy

Authors: Giorgio Allulli, Gabriella Di Francesco, Chiara Pecorini, Ismene Tramontano

This report is one of a series of European country reports. It has been written to support a larger report: Achieving the Lisbon Goal: the contribution of VET, prepared by the Lisbon-to-Copenhagen-to-Maastricht Consortium for the European Commission. This report is not intended as an official view. But rather independent insight into specific aspects of National VET systems in Europe.

The logo for ISFOL, consisting of the letters 'ISFOL' in a stylized, blue, serif font. The 'I' and 'S' are connected, and the 'F' is a simple vertical bar. The 'O' and 'L' are also connected to the 'F'.

Theme 1: Progress of National VET Systems towards Meeting the Challenges of Lisbon

1. Strategies and Barriers for Improving the Status, Flexibility and Attractiveness of Initial VET (IVET)

Following the transfer to the Regions of responsibilities regarding vocational training (Decree No. 616 of 24 July 1977), the Framework Law 845/78 allowed the context within which the Regional Authorities may act autonomously to be regulated in a unitary manner in order to create a **flexible vocational training system** close to local needs.

During the following decade, the recognition of training as a strategic resource for young people, workers and enterprises called attention to the need for a review of the entire vocational education and training system. A first step was made in this direction with the approval of Law 236/93, under which the structuring of a national continuing-training system could begin.

The Labour Agreement signed by the Government and the Social Partners in September 1996 envisaged a real strategy for the innovation of the system, focusing on a series of specific objectives, including access to lifelong learning and an overall reorganisation of the training system, in part through extensive institutional renewal. With specific reference to **initial vocational education and training**, the objectives of the Agreement worth noting are:

- The overall increase in schooling levels (quantitative and qualitative) by raising the compulsory schooling age and introducing the right to training;
- The establishment of an integrated system for the certification and recognition of training credits;
- The creation of a system of permanent recognition of the quantitative/qualitative training supply.

In line with the recommendations of the above Agreement, **Law 196/97** introduced:

- The identification of *requirements for the “accreditation” of training providers* to be entrusted with managing the activity; the re-launching of apprenticeship training;
- The introduction of “*guidance*” and “*training*”; *practical work or experience*;
- The definition of criteria for skill certification and the creation of a system for credit recognition.

However, in this scenario, Italian VET was less **attractive** than general education. In 2001 only **26% of 15-24 year-old, young jobseekers**, were involved in vocational training pathways and in the same year only **25.3%** of upper secondary school students chose, a **vocational school**.

Subsequently, **Law 144/99** on initial training introduced the institution of *obbligo formativo* (compulsory training), i.e. the compulsory requirement to remain within one of the three strands of the education system (education, vocational training, apprenticeship) until the age of 18. This provision led to a reform of initial training. The law also introduced the new strand of Higher Technical Education and Training (*IFTS*).

Recently, Law 53/03 set out the reform of the education and training system, while Law 30/03 set out a reform of apprenticeship and introduced new and more flexible employment contracts.

Law 53/03 introduced the “diritto-dovere all’istruzione e alla formazione professionale” (right/duty to participate in education and vocational training) for at least 12 years. This law has improved the **attractiveness** of vocational training by allowing the *right/duty* to be fulfilled by attending vocational training. The *right/duty* can in all cases be fulfilled by obtaining a vocational qualification.

2. Reducing the Number of Early School-leavers

For over a decade, Italy has been involved in an intensive process of qualifying its population in general, and workforce in particular. Above all, in the case of the younger generations the gap with the other advanced countries has been partly narrowed. However, this does not mean that Italy has reached satisfactory educational levels for the population as a whole. In 2002, analysing the population aged over 15, 30% of Italians had at most a primary-school certificate. Holders of an upper secondary certificate accounted for 37.1% of the total, while 7.5% had a university qualification.

Considering that the process of schooling has taken place later than in many other advanced countries and that the younger generations are less numerous than the older, less qualified ones, the effects are more clearly illustrated by analysing the educational levels of the population aged 25-64, in which the percentage of holders of an upper secondary certificate rises to 44% and university graduates to 10%.

Progress has also been made in dealing with early school-leavers, as evidenced by the fall in the percentage of young people aged 18-24 who drop out of school with low levels of education. In the early 1990s they represented 38% of the reference generation. In 2000, that rate fell to 25.3% and then to 23.8% in 2002. If the drop out rate continues to diminish at this rate, we estimate that in 2010 Italy will have a drop-out rate of less than 10%.

Briefly, in Italy in the last ten years school **attendance and the productivity of the system have** grown sharply at all levels.

In particular, from 1990/91 to 2000/01:

- Upper secondary-school attendance rates have increased from 68.3% to 86%;
- The percentage of young people obtaining an upper secondary certificate has increased from 51.7% to 72.7%;
- The percentage of students enrolling for university has increased from 30.6% to 49.6%;
- The percentage of graduates has increased from 9.4% to 18.2%.

3. Increasing VET at Tertiary Level

Vocational education and training at tertiary level is carried out by public and private university institutions, which organise ‘*Level I and II*’ master’s degree courses, both lasting one year.

For access to the '*Level I*' master's courses, it is necessary to hold a degree certificate (three-year course), while access to the '*Level II*' Master's courses requires a specialist degree certificate (two years, following the three-year degree course). In both cases, it is necessary to pass an admission interview.

The '*Level I and II*' master's courses for young graduates who intend to continue their studies and professionals who need to retrain provide knowledge and skills of a professional nature, as well as on a technical-operational or design level.

The courses, with compulsory attendance requirement, are structured to include classroom lessons, individual study, practical work and lab activities, and are completed with a training period within institutions, bodies or enterprises. These may be organised in collaboration with public or private bodies or institutions.

During the '*Level I and II*' master's degree courses, periodic checks are made to ascertain the skills acquired and a final test (without scores) is set.

Following the approval of Ministerial Decree 509/99 introducing the system of university training credits in Italy⁽⁵⁾, at least 60 credits are required to earn the university qualification issued at the end of the '*Level I and II*' master's courses.

Moreover, the occupationally-based post-secondary pathways include:

- The regionally-run *post-secondary vocational training pathways*, which focus directly on teaching specific occupational skills, have a high theoretical, technical, technological and management content, including through practical work and in-company experience;
- The *Higher Technical Education and Training (IFTS) pathways*, which focus on the preparation of senior technicians to meet the demand of the public and private sectors

Post-secondary vocational training pathways, managed by the Regional Authorities, aim to provide students with specific vocational skills that have a high theoretical, technical, technological and managerial content, partly through practical work and on-the-job training periods. Post-secondary training can be accessed by people with an upper secondary school-leaving certificate or an upper secondary-education level, and by generally unemployed workers who wish to obtain a certificate or vocational qualification to spend immediately in the labour market. The organisation of courses is linked to the training requirements of the local business fabric and often represents a response to the enterprises' requirements. The courses are generally divided into short cycles of one year's duration and very occasionally lasting two years. The right of disabled people to vocational training is sanctioned by Law 845/78 and Law 104/92, the latter assigning the Regional Authorities the task of promoting vocational qualification and guidance for the disabled, depending on their abilities and opportunities.

With the enactment of Article 69, Law 144/99, the supply of post-secondary training has increased with the creation of the *Higher Technical Training and Education (IFTS) pathways*; they imply a strong integration, both at a system-governance and operational level, of the various institutional actors involved. This integration will be fully defined when the action is designed, since a consortium consisting of representatives of school, university, vocational-training and world-of-work must be established in order to have

⁽⁵⁾ The university training credit is a measure of the workload done by the student to acquire knowledge and skills in a certain subject. The "workload" is the sum of the hours employed by the student in assisted study (face-to-face lessons, practical work, labs, etc.) and individual study (self-learning) activities. Conventionally, a credit is equivalent to a total of 25 hours of work.

access to State subsidies. The objective of the *IFTS* pathways is to train intermediate technicians to meet private and public sector labour demand, particularly in sectors affected by technological innovations and market internationalisation. The *IFTS* pathways planned by the Regional Authorities can be accessed by those possessing an upper secondary school-leaving certificate or by those with certifiable skills acquired during previous education, training and work pathways following the completion of their compulsory-schooling cycle, taking the qualification obtained into account for the purpose of fulfilling the compulsory-training requirement. Participation is free and there is no age limit. The curricula, whose minimum standards have been set at national level, aim, on the one hand, to strengthen cultural knowledge and basic skills and, on the other hand, to provide people with in-depth transversal and technical-vocational skills (as envisaged by EU Level 4). Pathways between 1,200 and 2,400 hours include on-the-job training activity equal to 30% of the overall amount of hours. An important element of vertical and horizontal mobility is the recognition of training credits. This can take place a) upon accessing the pathway through the assessment of the skills acquired by an individual during a previous training and/or work experience or b) upon completing the pathway, providing the opportunity to spend the skills acquired during the *IFTS* pathway in subsequent education, training and work pathways. At the end of the *IFTS* pathway, students who successfully pass all the exams - which aim to assess the skills they have acquired - obtain a final certificate recognised at national level and issued by the Regional Authorities. In case of partial completion of the pathway, students are provided with an intermediate statement (*Dichiarazione Intermedia*) stating the skills acquired for the purpose of training-credit recognition by further education, training and work pathways.

See: www.crui.it
www.indire.it

4. Incentives for Updating Knowledge & Skills

a. Government

Launch of Multi-Sectoral Funds and Continuing Training

In 2002, following an agreement with the Social Partners, the Government launched the **Joint Multi-Sectoral Funds for Continuing Training**. The funds are financed by a percentage of total wages and are managed by joint bodies for the continuing training of workers. The joint bodies are composed of the Social Partners and their task is to promote and finance actions and training plans at corporate, sectoral and local level, based on agreements between the parties.

To date 10 Funds have been launched, 3 for managers and 7 for other workers. They embrace industry, the craft sector, cooperation, trade, tourism and the service sector. The largest funds are being distributed at the local level.

The overall objective is to involve at least half a million workers in negotiated continuing-training actions over the next two years.

DATI PETTENELLO

Regional Authorities

The Regional Authorities have launched integrated local or sectoral actions under the last two years of ESF programming. These actions are increasingly designed to provide support for more qualified activities and job opportunities by encouraging:

- The review of curricula and pathways;

- The integration of the actors and skills involved in supply
- The flexibility of transfer between the various systems of education, work and vocational training;
- The enhancement of adult VET (occasionally by shifting substantial amounts of resources from Level I training to subsequent levels and to alternating training).

See data about tipology and dimension www.welfare.it/fse

Employment Services

The declared and central objective of the reform of the employment services and the labour market (2002 White Paper and Law 30/03) is to pave the way for a system that will give greater transparency to the skills actually possessed by the active population, ensure better knowledge and greater possibility of truly exploiting the opportunities to train and re-train, encourage wider use of personalised guidance and training pathways and services and individualised vocational pathway support, and to raise the general thresholds of qualification and education.

On this basis, following the restructuring of local services will be increasingly geared to the adoption of integrated policies focusing on qualification.

(data from the *Isfol* Survey on the increase in services and their nature in recent years).

Nonetheless, a sufficiently structured and well-established system of supply for adult education is not yet widespread and the local availability of integrated services is still subject to significant social and geographical differences. Furthermore, work on drafting of a method of skill description and fixed common standards is not yet complete (although some progress has been made).

b. **Employers**

The Role of Social Partners in Vocational Training

The role of Social Partners in planning and monitoring VET resources and activities is well established both centrally and locally. They take part in planning and in setting guidelines and belong to the advisory committees for vocational training programmes.

The national ESF monitoring committee has counterparts at the regional level. There are also coordination groups (at national and local level) of institutions and social partners dealing with certain aspects of training policies of special interest: apprenticeship and training periods, Higher Technical Education and Training (IFTTS), lifelong learning, and short university degrees.

The aim is to ensure that guidelines, curricula content, development of opportunities and programming of resources are all properly established.

In the past three years, the trade union and employers' organisations have drawn up national and local projects relating to the analysis of vocational and training needs. Their objective is to provide the training system with information on trends, on changes in work and its descriptors, and also on vocational contents.

Apprenticeship

In recent years broad action has been undertaken at the strong behest of the social partners to strengthen and extend the institution of apprenticeship so as to improve both its quality and its diffusion. The aim is to ensure that even young people who drop out of education for various reasons have an opportunity to obtain a good qualification of average level.

Consequently, it was decided to reinforce the real and perceived value of apprenticeship pathways by the following means:

- Better definition and recognition of acquired skills;
- Transparent and certain job opportunities, among other based on the recognition of training credits;
- Stronger and better qualified training content of pathways;
- Closer control over the structure of teaching and the whole process.

dati monitoraggio

Training and Negotiation

Possibilities to support individual and collective investment in training and updating are incorporated in all national labour contracts and in some company and local level contracts.

Two main devices exist:

- Individual leave for study purposes (paid or unpaid)
- Training as a strategic element in the management of innovation and human resources.

However, depending on the category, type and size of enterprises, there are wide differences in whether these devices are effectively used, the extent of their activation and how they are implemented through specific agreements. Naturally, there are sectors in which training has become a strategic factor and a strong tradition of development and management has formed. Others are unlikely to go beyond a declaration of intent.

There are more meaningful and widespread projects run by the Social Partners with funds from central Government and the Regional Authorities that aim to support the training of internal professional profiles with greater ability to take part in the negotiation and coordination of training and re-training projects.

See: www.cnel.it for negotiation's contents

c. ***Other stakeholders***

In addition to central government, the local authorities mentioned earlier and the social partners, stakeholders from the "private market" for continuing training have also played a role of some importance in recent years. They have been approached more and more often by individuals and by companies. The phenomenon would appear to be diminishing at present, possibly owing to the economic situation, but it is worth noting that obviously these opportunities have been exploited by the "strong" sections of the active population and by enterprises with a higher innovation rate.

There are no organic data on this aspect. **A survey by Isfol estimates DATI**

See: Publication and Survey **TITOLI esatti**

d. ***Please provide examples (if any) of the contribution of VET to successfully promoting inclusion***

Some important examples in recent years are:

- Training and job insertion of non-EC workers (particularly in the North-East and the Centre of Italy)

- Projects to train and place workers who are unemployed, have been expelled from the market or have “mobility” status (approximately workers in the last three years). In the past four years the actions have always been successful in combining emergency measures with medium-term projects to provide better qualifications, thus combining tools that were previously kept separate (financial support, training, guidance, job insertion plans).

See: OFF Publication

Document on European Social Dialogue

CTP IRRE Piemonte Network www.

Camera dei Deputati, “La Formazione Continua in Italia. Rapporto 2003”, Report presented to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Parliamentary Acts, XIV Legislature, Doc. XLII No. 3, Rome, Senate Printing Works

5. Meeting the Challenges of an Aging Population

In Italy “continuing training” or lifelong learning includes a complex set of educational solutions and learning activities ranging from initial to adult training, either vocational or targeted to workers.

Focusing on adults we can identify two types of activities:

- Lifelong learning addressed to all citizens for the acquisition of initial pre-occupational skills. This is provided in particular by the “Centri territoriali permanenti per l’educazione degli adulti” (CTPs – Permanent Territorial Centres for Adult Education) run by the MIUR (Ministry of Education, University and Research, Ministerial Order 455/97);
- Continuing-vocational training, including all learning schemes following on from initial training and targeted at the vocational retraining and updating training of workers.

However, in Italy, there are substantial differences in learning and training opportunities among workers, whether employed by private sector enterprises or self-employed. These differences are due to a set of factors that include belonging to a weak social and vocational category, having a low-qualified job, being poorly educated, being a woman and, last but not least, *being in an old age group*. In fact the ISFOL-ABACUS 2001-2002 Surveys (“Attitudes and behaviour of workers with respect to continuing training”)¹ show that levels of access to continuing training increase among workers in the central age groups and among young workers compared with people in the older age groups.

Considering a national average of 31.8% of workers in open-ended employment² who receive training, those in the 25-34 age group represent 34.9%, those in the 35-44 group 34.3% and those aged 45-54 only 28.6%; the percentage drops to 21.5% for the age group that includes workers over 54 years old.

In the case of workers with low educational qualifications and low job grade (for instance, sales people and blue collar workers), the training rate falls sharply in the middle to high age groups, from 45 years onwards.

¹ See Roberto Angotti, “La domanda di formazione continua espressa dai lavoratori” in Camera dei Deputati, “La Formazione Continua in Italia. Rapporto 2003”, Report presented to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Parliamentary Acts, XIV Legislature, Doc. XLII No. 3, Rome, Senate Printing Works.

² Employees of private sector enterprises.

A similar pattern can be observed in the case of self-employed workers. Compared with a national average of 42.9%, trained workers represent 48% of workers in the young and middle age groups (25-34 year olds and 35-44 year olds) but only 32.2% of the over 54s.

In line with the strategic objectives of the new EES (full employment, with mid-term objectives for 2005 of a 50% average employment rate in the EU for older workers, i.e. those aged between 55 and 64), the Programming Complement for the NOP "System Actions" Ob, 3 contracted to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (and approved in February 2004) envisages that, among the measures designed to increase the availability of manpower and promote *active ageing*, Measure D1 should promote and experiment models and tools for that purpose.

In addition, the Ministry of Labour has allocated³ a total of €50 million to promote company-level training plans and tailor-made actions targeted to all the categories of workers employed by private enterprises with less than 15 staff members and some of the categories employed by those with more than 15. These include part-time workers, workers with fixed-term contracts or economically dependant workers, as well as workers with reduced working hours, modulated or flexible contracts, or contracted for a project under Law 30/2003, workers receiving ordinary or extraordinary wage supplementation benefits, **workers aged over 45**, and workers holding only a primary school certificate or having only completed compulsory schooling.

6. Effectiveness and Efficiency of VET

Italian VET is not as **attractive** as general education. In 2001 only **26% of 15-24 year-olds, young job seekers**, were involved in vocational training pathways and, in the same year, of those at upper secondary school only **25.3%** chose a **vocational school**.

However, as mentioned earlier, with the approval of the recent education and training reform (Law 53/03), initial vocational training acquires a different role in the Italian education and training system, completing the process begun with Law 144/99, which introduced compulsory training and approved the principle of the equal dignity of attending initial training courses or secondary school.

A new channel for vocational education and training has been established, in which young people can enter directly after lower secondary education. Those who follow this channel will no longer risk reaching a dead end, as occurred in the past for initial vocational training. After acquiring the qualification they will be able to continue to study and attain a vocational certificate and then, if they wish, study for an additional year, enabling them to enter university or higher technical education and training.

Law 53/03 has thus radically changed the minor role assigned in the past to regionally-run initial vocational training, which was to simply provide a link or interface between schools and the world of work. Initial vocational training has been extended to three years, highlighting its role as an alternative to the education pathway and strengthening the component consisting of the teaching of basic skills.

A general overview of **funding policies** shows that in the case of **vocational education**, the Ministry of Education bears the costs of salaries and refresher training of the teaching and management staff of vocational schools, the salaries of non-teaching staff and the

³ Cfr Decreto Direttoriale N. 296/03

cost of adult education programmes. The Local Authorities finance all the operating and maintenance costs of schools. In the future, competencies in this field will be transferred to the Regional Authorities.

As for vocational training, the Regional Authorities manage their own funds and the financial resources allocated to them by the Ministry of Labour and the ESF. The ESF plays particularly important role in financing regionally managed vocational training.

The State is investing more in VET than other providers. However, in recent years employers have also acquired a deeper culture in the field of training, which is now viewed as instrument for economic growth.

For the future the trend seems to be towards increasing involvement, not only financial, of the State as a result of the reform of initial training, which now becomes an integral part of the education system (see Theme 1 Question 1).

As for continuing training, closer involvement on the part of the Social Partners is needed, above all through the management administration of Multi-Sectoral Funds (See Theme 3 Question 12).

Theme 2 Innovation in Teaching and Learning Processes

7 - Improvements in Learning Processes and Contents

The pedagogical and didactic innovations to the system mainly relate to:

- The development of **modular pathways in vocational training**, offering greater opportunities to create tailor-made pathways, mix different vocational categories and objectives, achieve new and more significant balances between theory and practice as well as a greater diversity of job opportunities.

This approach is pursued through planning policies developed at the programming stage, criteria for the accreditation of providers and priorities for the allocation of resources, which are mainly reserved for projects that meet these methodological and didactic standards.

- The creation and development of a standardised **system of skill description and classification** for the education system, vocational training, continuing training and work.

The system is agreed and developed by mixed working group composed of representatives of the national education and training system (particularly Level II technical and vocational education and adult education), the Regional and Autonomous Provincial Authorities (responsible for vocational and continuing training) and the Social Partners.

- At present a **review of the curricula and programmes** for secondary education and vocational training is under way. In outline, it is based on:
 - Strengthening basic technical and scientific disciplines;
 - Developing on-the-job learning (study periods and alternating training, etc.);
 - Increasing the opportunities for more diverse and tailor-made internal pathways and pathways between systems;

- Finally, the government has launched an overall **reform** of the structure and contents of education (which is the subject of major debate among politicians and experts). Its primary objectives are:

- Raising the compulsory school-leaving age;
- Providing training opportunities with a guaranteed qualification up to the age of 18;
- Increasing language and IT skills;
- Allowing for more flexible and varied pathways, partly as a means of reducing the school drop-out rate.

The opportunities of expanding and recognising work-based learning paths remains poor.

8 - Improving the Integration of Different Learning Sites; Integration of Formal and Informal Learning

The two systems are still very separate. Long, formal school education is socially recognised as playing a strong central role.

There is no acknowledged link between the two systems of learning except in the case of a few advanced training experiments that are beginning to give greater importance and recognition to context learning (secondary and university education now occasionally include among their admission requirements elements linked to both life and professional experience that give rise to training credits).

No method (tools and descriptors, locations and actors, value) has yet been developed for the recognition of existing and/or acquired skills. Some experiments have been conducted by enterprises or as part of actions in support of mobility and employability measures. However, while these offer a methodological background they are not yet widely established.

The reform of the employment services and labour market undertaken over the last two years aims to make such practices more widespread by adopting analytical tools (balance of skills, curricula, etc.) and instruments of transparency (personal training booklet, workers' register) to enhance acquired skills and ensure more efficient management of individualised vocational pathways.

The institutions and the Social Partners continue to work together to develop methodologies and standards. In particular:

- The Regional Authorities and the Social Partners are working on the general vocational training system;
- The Ministry of University and Education, the Ministry of Labour and the Regional Authorities are centred on lifelong learning;
- The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, the Regional Authorities and the Social Partners are developing the personal training booklet and non-formal learning.

9. Evaluation and Quality Assurance of VET Provision

The question of evaluation in Italy must be examined separately for the two sub-systems: general and vocational education and vocational training. Different solutions and models have been adopted to assess the quality of schools and VET providers.

The problem of evaluating the national school system has recently been acknowledged and the need for organic and systematic evaluation has become urgent as a result of the major innovation of granting autonomy to single schools. Decree Law 258 of 20 July 1999 established the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Educational System (INVALSI), whose main task is to evaluate and monitor the educational system. Decree 258 of 20 July 1999 contains provisions for reorganisation and for a clearer division of responsibilities among the bodies entrusted with providing technical support to the Department of Education for evaluation, documentation and educational research.

Evaluation of the administrative and managerial aspects of the educational system is the task of the central and local agencies of the Department of Education. Supervision covers, in particular, the use of funds, resources and services and the implementation of school and university policies. However, a national evaluation of the quality of education has not yet been performed.

In order to establish functional criteria and methods and assess the necessary resources for a national evaluation, in the academic year 2001-2002 the Ministry of Education launched three pilot projects to assess the competencies acquired by students in some fundamental subjects (Italian, mathematics, history, science and a foreign language) and the level of implementation of the plan for the training supply (Piano dell'Offerta Formativa, POF) provided by each school.

Another instrument for quality evaluation is self-evaluation conducted on a voluntary basis by schools, institutions and universities engaged in education and training.

The schools and institutions providing university education make an evaluation of their educational and teaching activity and the results achieved during the course and at the conclusion of their annual activity.

By contrast, the vocational training system in Italy is based on a market system. Each year the Regional Authorities launch tenders to find vocational training centres or agencies that can provide initial and continuing training courses to meet the demands of people and employers.

To ensure that all training centres applying for funding for providing vocational training activities meet minimum standards of quality, the State-Regions Conference (22 May 2003) and the Ministry of Labour passed a decree setting minimum quality standards to be met by training centres or agencies in order to be **accredited** by Regional Authorities and so be allowed to offer their training activities.

Only the providers that can demonstrate they have achieved the minimum level required are allowed to take part in regional tenders. It must be stressed that in order to ensure the quality of the services provided accreditation introduces quality standards not only for training providers but also for the vocational skills of trainers employed.

Moreover, in recent years, the main focus of in-service training of trainers has been to support the organisational restructuring of vocational training bodies, the certification of trainer skills, the accreditation of vocational facilities, the reform of the employment services, the use of new learning technologies (eLearning), the management of alternating training and apprenticeship training, the design and implementation of integrated actions for the development of lifelong learning, training and vocational guidance, and the monitoring and evaluation of training actions.

10. Teachers and Trainers

The system's human resources (teachers and trainers) are the key to ensuring the effective implementation of a reform involving changes in professional activities, both in terms of specialist know-how and pedagogical/relational abilities as well as their ability to interact with different local actors (enterprises, employment services, guidance centres, etc.).

In Italy, teachers and trainers work in the two sub-systems: the vocational education system (national, controlled by the Ministry of Education) and the vocational training system (regional, controlled by the Regional Authorities and the Ministry of Labour). Trainers also work in private enterprises providing continuing-training activities targeted to workers.

With the innovations introduced by the recent reform of the Italian vocational training and education system, teachers working in vocational education are also active in the field of *initial VET*.

Besides the teaching staff, normally involved in classroom teaching for scientific, technical and general knowledge subjects, there are also laboratory assistants with technical and practical duties to support teaching staff.

Trainers working in regional Vocational Training take part in both *initial VET* and continuing VET, performing various duties: classroom teaching; design, tutoring; guidance; needs analysis; monitoring and evaluation, etc.

- Trainers in initial VET generally work in vocational training centres answering to public bodies such as regional, provincial and municipal authorities and in private vocational training centres operating under agreements with them.
- Trainers in continuing VET work in public vocational training centres and those with agreements as stated above and in the Permanent Local Centres set up within State schools for adult education. Trainers are sometimes also involved in the employment centres in guidance and job insertion/tutoring activities.

Nowadays, in the Italian education and training system teachers and trainers have different recruitment procedures, career advancement and contractual position. With regard to recruitment:

- In the sub-system of vocational education, teachers with an open-ended contract are recruited exclusively by public competition; teachers with open-ended contracts are recruited by a permanent classification from which school managers can draw at their own discretion. The access requisite for teachers is a degree in a subject related to the teaching subjects;
- In the vocational training sub-system, there are no particular procedures placing constraints on trainer recruitment. In practice, trainer recruitment takes place mainly through direct and informal channels (reply to job offers by a vocational training body, as a former student, etc.). Formal recruitment procedures are the exception, prevailing mostly in public VT centres (for example, public examinations) as opposed to private centres working under agreements with the public sector. To become a trainer employed in vocational training, the educational qualification is not a constraint. Until now

vocational-accreditation initiatives have been fairly limited and there is no recognised national register for trainers. It must also be stressed that at present the vocational accreditation of VT trainers is regulated by Decree 166/2001, issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, regarding the "accreditation of training and guidance facilities". In order to ensure the quality of the services provided, accreditation introduces standards not only for training structures, but also for the vocational skills of the staff employed in them.

Regarding the training of teachers and trainers, initial training (pre-service) of teachers is provided by the *SSIS (Scuola di Specializzazione per l'Insegnamento Superiore - Higher Education Specialisation School)*, which prospective teachers enter after completion of a 5-year degree course. This training involves both a common section, aimed at training in general psychological and pedagogic skills, and specific training in certain subjects.

Whereas training of in-service teachers is mainly focused on updating and vocational re-qualification, not only in strictly technical matters related to the subjects but also in more innovative areas such as methodological skills (monitoring-evaluation), communicative and relational skills (with households, enterprises and institutions working locally, etc.), language skills, organisational and managerial skills (relating to school autonomy and new functions of support, tutoring and co-ordination in teaching, educational and management contexts) and IT skills (ICT literacy and use of new technologies in teaching).

The recent law on the new vocational education and training system (Law 53/2003) states that *in the future* the management of in-service teacher training must be entrusted directly to the universities, in collaboration with public and private research institutes, accredited and qualified organisations and professional associations in order to match national needs with various local training needs.

With regard to pre-service training for initial and continuing VET trainers, there is no specific initial training pathway designed to provide specific skills. This type of training aims to strengthen technical skills relating to specific subjects and skills in the field of teaching methods, some of which supported by ICT.

In-service training activities targeting VT trainers are mainly provided by the Regional Authorities, under the institutional framework that confers them power over matters of training.

In recent years, in-service training activities for trainers have mainly been designed to support the organisational restructuring of vocational training bodies, the certification of trainer skills, the accreditation of vocational facilities, the reform of the employment services, the use of new learning technologies (eLearning), the management of alternating training and apprenticeship training, the design and implementation of integrated actions for the development of lifelong learning, training and vocational guidance, and the monitoring and evaluation of training actions. Moreover, in recent years, the use of distance learning has developed considerably in the vocational education and training system, both for teachers in vocational education ('FOR-TIC' Project) and for trainers in vocational training ('FaDol' Project).

In **continuing and initial training in private enterprises**, the main practitioners are company trainers and apprenticeship tutors.

These may be company employees or free-lance experts. The recruitment mechanisms for company trainers are similar to those of trainers working in the vocational training field. With regard to the initial and continuing training of company trainers, there is no training

pathway for the acquisition of specific skills and the trainer is not generally subjected to a regular evaluation of skills. Access to the profession of company trainer (*formatore aziendale*) is not publicly regulated; occasionally, company-level contracts may envisage access forms and requirements and career development. No compulsory curriculum exists and nor is there a nationally recognised professional register. On some occasions, *sector-level professional associations* have played the role of accreditation bodies for trainers operating in the company- and management-training private market *by establishing selective accreditation criteria* or offering autonomous training initiatives..

Specific rules have been approved for company tutors (*tutor aziendale per l'apprendistato*) operating in the new apprenticeship system - which aims to strengthen the role of alternating training within the context of initial training. Decree 22/00 issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies defines the features, tasks and skills of this profile, which plays a central role in ensuring the quality of on-the-job training. In particular, company tutors for apprenticeship have the task of supporting apprentices during their apprenticeship in order to transfer the skills needed to undertake work and help to integrate off-the-job training initiatives with on-the-job training. The tutors also evaluate the skills acquired by the apprentice for the purpose of final certification at the end of the apprenticeship.

Theme 3 Building European Competences for a European Labour Market

11 - Challenges & Policies in Relation to the Lisbon Employment Strategy

The Kok Report for Italy states the following:

Despite new policies introduced since 1997 and improvements registered, the employment rate continues to be one of the lowest in EU especially referring to women and older workers. Unemployment at about 5% in the centre-north compared to 18% in the South, where an urgent intervention to reduce regional gaps is required.

Undeclared work is particularly significant. Overall levels of educational attainment and participation in training are low. In recent years, increased immigration has contributed to increasing the labour supply.

Increasing Adaptability

- Simplify the regulatory environment to address the imbalances between open-ended and fixed-term contracts and to counter the segmentation of the labour market.
- Pursue further reductions of non-wage labour costs, especially for the low-paid, and simplify further the business environment. Removing disincentives in the tax system and improving law enforcement capacity would also contribute to transforming undeclared work into regular employment.
- Encourage a review of wage bargaining system to take account of regional labour market differences.

- Improve dissemination of innovation and raise levels of investment in R&D in the south.

Make Work a Real Option for All

- Improve the level, coverage and effectiveness of unemployment insurance and of active labour market measures, especially in the South, and tackle with urgency the development of effective employment services nation-wide. The situation of young people and of immigrants deserves particular attention.
- Increase the coverage of childcare facilities and remove obstacles to part-time work to raise female participation.
- Develop comprehensive strategies for active ageing, in particular by ensuring appropriate incentives to retain workers longer in the world of work and discouraging early retirement.

Investing in Human Capital

- Raise educational attainment of the whole workforce, prevent early school leaving and ensure quality and labour market relevance of tertiary education.
- Strengthen incentives to promote lifelong learning and increase access to training in particular for the low skilled.

Compared with the earlier analysis it needs to be pointed out that in Italy employment has increased uninterruptedly from 1993 to the present time

	1993	2003
Employment rate	51.9 %	56 %
Unemployment rate	10.2 %	8.8%

In parallel, since 1998 unemployment has gradually declined. These positive results are not ascribable to real economic growth but to the spread of a new “employability culture” in Italy. New organisational models, new management tools and new forms of contract have been introduced, initially by Law 196/97 and later by Law 30/2003, allowing Italy to achieve the objectives set at Lisbon.

However, an employability culture needs to take account of the magnitude of the change in labour relations, the cost of restructuring the system and the role of the State in the new labour market.

The achievement of the objectives set at the European level is further jeopardised by difference in employment rates between the North and the South of Italy and in the management of employment priorities between the generations. A trade off will have to be made between bringing young people into employment and retaining the older people.

All the stakeholders – central government, local governments, social partners, and practitioners – firmly believe that it will only be possible to reform the national qualification system radically and ensure a true system of lifelong-learning and good quality basic training for all if a more appropriate and effective system of rules is developed, one capable of endowing the qualification pathways with true value.

In order to attain this objective, action is being taken on several levels at the same time, involving both the qualification system and the frameworks.

In particular:

- Integration is being increased between qualification systems and between training and work through credits, certification of skills and “bridges”.
- The functioning of rules for the qualification system is being improved by clarifying the roles of the various actors and training channels, identifying the programming bodies, performing needs analysis and defining service standards.
- Lifelong-learning opportunities are being developed, and hence also adult-qualification opportunities, and skills acquired on the job, etc are being recognised.

An essential condition for the improvement of the national qualification system is a better needs analysis that allows for the definition of professional profiles, pathways and certification procedures and the recognition of acquired knowledge and skills.

Labour Market System

The reform launched with Law 30/2003 aims to promote a more central role for the qualification system, both for entry to work and for adults. It is based on the technical agreement between the Social Partners and the Regional Authorities regarding the definition of a national skill and certification system, in the sense of a qualifications framework that will function as a guideline and reference point for training as well as employment policies.

The law also structures and expands the institution of **apprenticeship**, which must become a strategic opportunity for qualification and job placement, and defines the methods for ensuring the value and recognition of the qualifications acquired. Here, too, the objective is to define pathways and contents of the qualifications in order to allow for greater transparency and value in a lifelong-learning approach. Standards and criteria of the qualification pathways are defined in agreement with the Social Partners.

Flexible Training System and Broader Supply

Reform of the education and VT system. The aim is to promote more suitable and flexible pathways, achieve a lower school drop-out rate and hence effectively more widespread qualification. However, there is heated debate about the effectiveness of the proposed measures and the methods of implementing administrative decentralisation and skill definition.

Development of Continuing Training

The launch of the Funds and increased investment in this area are creating wider opportunities for lifelong learning that did not exist beforehand. There remain the problems of resources and skill standards that must be resolved in order to make the certification and recognition of non-formal learning a real possibility.

12 Involving Stakeholders

a. Please describe the role of Stakeholders or Social Partners in the planning of VET at national, sectoral and corporate level

Framework Law 845/78 conferred the Social Partners a major role in the vocational training system, recognising them as partners of the regional authorities in the planning of training, as well as potential providers of training schemes.

Thereafter, consolidation of the principle of ‘coordination’ meant that the Social Partners were not just ‘partners’ but ‘joint deciders’. The national agreements signed by the trade union confederations between 1985 and 1991 were significant in this respect and paved

the way for the establishment of many joint bodies, in particular the joint bodies now playing an important part in promoting training activities. The trilateral agreements of 1993, 1996 and 1998 stressed the importance of coordination and recognised it as a basic instrument for planning and formulating action strategies.

The White Paper on the Italian Labour Market (2001) paved the way for new relations between the State and the Social Partners, with a shift away from 'coordination' towards 'social dialogue'.

The Social Partners play a key role, which is set to become strategic, in continuing training, since they have become planners of training following the establishment of the Multi-Sectoral Funds.

In fact, Law 196/97 added a key component to the system: the Multi-Sectoral Funds, managed by the Social Partners and supervised by Ministry of Labour, to which employers pay a contribution of 0.30%. The Funds, which finance corporate, sectoral and regional training plans, supplement the work of the Regional Authorities in the continuing training system.

National Level:

Planning and management of the education system: planning based on national criteria is carried out by the local school authorities (the regional and provincial school departments), whose tasks are to identify and prepare the necessary structures and activities (schools, teachers, supply structure, etc.).

Planning (and control) is undertaken in agreement with the local authorities (partly to ensure that all resources in one area are successfully integrated and rationalised) and with the contribution of the social partners: policy and monitoring committees.

Higher technical education and training (*IFTS*) and lifelong learning are designed and developed jointly by the local authorities and the social partners. Vocational training (including in combination with education) is programmed and managed at the regional and provincial level.

The responsibility for the governance of the labour market and vocational training lies with the Regional and Autonomous Provincial Authorities, while the education system has also undergone a remarkable decentralisation process following the latest reforms. The passing of Constitutional Law 3 of 18/10/2001, which amends Title V of the Constitution, and in particular Article 117, has rendered the relationship between State and Regional Authorities more complex, but also more distinct on the subject of education and training, and requires the definition of shared rules to outline a national system of rights that may serve as a framework for the new federalist system and prevent conflicts and overlapping.

This law includes 'the essential levels of the services concerning civil and social rights that must be guaranteed throughout the entire national territory' (Letter M) and the 'general regulations on education' (Letter N) among the issues that are legislated exclusively by the State. On the other hand, education is regulated by concurrent legislation (without prejudice to the determination of fundamental principles, which pertains exclusively to the State) and vocational training and education exclusively by the Regional Authorities."⁴

It is evident that such a high degree of decentralisation, which is designed to ensure that the qualification supply is as consistent as possible with real local needs and conditions, requires a solid frame of reference, minimum common rules guaranteeing the value and

⁴ From the technical document of the trade union organisations and co-ordination of the regional authorities, "National Skill and Certification Standards. System Architecture and Institutional Role of the Regional Authorities", August 2002, also signed by employers' organisations.

quality of the system. This entails, first of all, the existence of national skill and certification standards.

Sectoral and Corporate

Training at this level, when not covered by current planning of vocational and continuing training, is decided by negotiation or agreement among the stakeholders.

However, at both sectoral and corporate level an agreement must be signed for financing to be accorded out of regional or continuing training funds. Moreover, agreements must be signed with institutional stakeholders if recognised certification is sought.

In recent years, national labour contracts have placed increasing focus on training as a strategic lever in the pursuit of innovation and management of flexibility. Moreover, all contracts envisage forms of individual study leave.

In Italy there is no complete data on investment in in-company training or the size of the phenomenon.

b. Which actions to anticipate and recognise skills and qualifications needs (at national, sectoral or regional level) for your country do the European Social Partners identify as important in their recent report?

In recent years the 'Needs Analysis' Project has been launched; it is promoted by the Ministry of Labour on the basis of an agreement with the Social Partners. It has been conducted at national and local level and supplemented with regional actions.

The projects have been carried out by joint bodies composed of the social partners at sector level. The aim is to describe job contents and suggest the most suitable skill classifications in order to "map" the state of the art, trends and probable requirements.

The outcome is a wealth of results, almost too varied (the surveys did not always use the same criteria and methods), which are now being disseminated. The passage from analysis of vocational needs to programming of resources and training guidelines has also begun.

In the meantime, needs analysis, definition of qualifications and establishment of rules for the 'qualifications framework' are the subject of joint and trilateral initiatives and agreements (between the social partners, local governments and national government). These agreements are currently shaping the national system.

In particular, between the year 2000 (State-Regions Agreement) and the technical agreement between the Trade Union Organisations and the Regional Authorities of August 2002, the guidelines have been set down for the creation of a shared national system that seems likely to prove lasting.

"The Regional Authorities and the *CGIL* (General Confederation of Italian Workers), *CISL* (Italian Confederation of Workers' Trade Unions) and *UIL* (Italian Workers' Union) agree that the national standard and certification system must guarantee the right of students and workers to a recognition of the skills acquired in various study and work contexts, at the national level and, for the future, within a European framework. In this way, it allows the right to lifelong learning to be exercised, which presupposes the recognition of training credits wherever they have been acquired and the capitalisation of skills to be certified in the individual's personal booklet. Therefore in Italy, as well, shared rules must be formulated to allow comparability with systems already operating in other European countries, placing special focus on those with a strong federalist system (Spain, Germany,

Great Britain), which have used standards and certification to guarantee the quality of the training supply and the mobility of students and workers.”⁵

13 - Transparency, Recognition & Mobility

Governments (both central and local), Regional and Autonomous Provincial Authorities and Social Partners agree on the need to reorganise the qualification system, which is considered to be still too poorly qualified and diversified. It is believed that the development and renewal of the system (better arrangement and dissemination of training supply) requires an **effective qualifications framework; this consists in a series of rules and procedures that give meaning and value to qualification pathways**, thus guaranteeing their true dissemination, usability and dignity.

Action is being taken on several fronts at the same time. In all the training pathways, and especially in the most reformed or “newest” ones [apprenticeship, Higher Technical Training and Education (*IFTS*), compulsory training, basic vocational training, Adult Education], standards are being defined, using different methods and at different stages of progress.

The Reform of the Education System.

This was started in 1999 and completed with Law 53/ 2003 and makes provision for:

- The compulsory-training requirement up to the age of 18 and the opportunity to meet this requirement through on-the-job vocational training.
- The complete implementation of the decentralised management and programming of supply.
- The reorganisation of school cycles and strengthening of ‘Higher Technical Training’ supply⁶, as well as the connection and integration between education, vocational training, and work.

In order to implement these innovations the methods for recognising and certifying the skills must be defined and, therefore, the system of credits and “bridges” between training levels and channels must be built and put into operation.

Development and Dissemination of Non-University Higher Technical Training - *IFTS*

At present, this is the only training pathway (integrated action between vocational training and education) that has finalised the procedures and criteria for a national system of standards and skill certification, managed by a committee composed of Stakeholders in training and the Social Partners.

Vocational Training System

The Ministry of Labour Decree 174 of 31/5/2001 lays the building blocks for a national system of minimum skill and certification standards. It also provides for the setting-up of a national committee and sectoral committees composed of national and local training organisations and the Social Partners, to define and update qualification standards and profiles.

⁵ From the technical document of The Trade Union Organisations and co-ordination of the Regional Authorities, “National Skill And Certification Standards. System Architecture and Institutional Role of the Regional Authorities”, August 2002.

⁶ *IFTS* – See following paragraph.

The objective of the reform actions is to create a 'qualifications framework' as a condition for effective communication between the various qualification systems (integration) and an expansion and diversification of opportunities within a continuing training approach.

The driving forces or principles of reference identified and adopted in the agreement between the Social Partners/Regional Authorities are:

- o The equal dignity of institutional stakeholders. Decisions regarding the definition of standards and guidelines for the development of the qualification system must be drafted and agreed upon in permanent fora of inter-institutional coordination.
- o The role of the social partners is a central one. Indeed, it is their duty to express the demand for qualification and define the conditions of "employability". They must therefore be involved in all phases and at all levels of the system.
- o The system is structured at the national and regional level and operates as a "circular communication system".

The national level: defines the minimum skill standards, the recognition procedures and is in charge of updates. The National Sectoral Committees come under this level.

The regional level: plans the training supply (on the basis of integrated national standards and according to the specific needs), proposes integrations and updates to the national level, and guarantees certification.

- o A coordination, piloting and evaluation committee is set up within the State-Regions Conference; the Social Partners are also called upon to participate.

The key issues are therefore:

1. The necessity to combine the renewal of contents and guidelines of the qualification system with a structural action that increases its value, usability and effectiveness, primarily through the co-ordination and integration of all the qualification-system channels.
2. The role of the Social Partners and the procedures for dialogue with institutional stakeholders. To support this function the joint training bodies (consisting of trade unions and employers' organisations) have been set up. It is their duty to perform the work analysis and assess vocational and training needs, as well as to develop the supply of continuing training.

Equal dignity and value for all training channels means effectively guaranteeing equal opportunities and equality of rights. In Italy, the average qualification rate (and higher schooling) is still among the lowest in the developed countries, and there is no lifelong-learning and continuing-training system either. Improving the opportunity-based system in terms of quality, value and teaching arrangements thus becomes an essential condition for the spread of higher and more effective qualification levels.

The procedures identified should ensure an objective improvement in the criteria for programming and evaluating qualification supply: improving effectiveness and efficiency.

The creation of a system of national skill and certification standards will allow for the recognition of vocational *acquis*, fostering re-entry into training, mobility and, as a whole, less wasting of professional "capital".

Lastly, the increased flexibility, quality and dissemination of the qualification system should render visible and interesting "trades" and professions that have been neglected or unknown up to now.

Mainly, it is necessary to create structures and organisations designed for the implementation of laws and agreements:

- Set up the national committee and sectoral committees for the national certification system;
- Launch the national and regional joint bodies into full operation;
- Develop regional and inter-institutional agreements for the dissemination of the required programming and coordination procedures.

Lastly, concurrent (regional) legislation is being completed and updated in order to render the system consistent and homogeneous at all levels.

The services provided for by Europass and the National Reference Point are now in place.

See: www.nrp.it
www.europass.it